



Pedagogical exploration of social studies teachers in integrating *likurai* to strengthen student's nationalist character

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ABSTRACT

The study aim to explore the pedagogical strategies of social studies teacher in integrating likurai culture to strengthen student nationalistic character. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The subjects of the study were eighth-grade social studies teachers and the objects were pedagogical orientation, strategies, and implementation of likuari values in learning. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman with validity testing through source triangulation. The results of the study show that likuari integration encourages three main changes: increased student participation in discussions about national symbols; the emergence of historical reflection practices in project assignments; and increased attitudes of tolerance and togetherness as demonstrated in classroom observations. This study contributes to the development of social studies pedagogical studies by offering a likuari integration model as a strategy for developing national character. The findings regarding teacher strategies and student behavior indicators can be the basis for further research to develop an effective and contextual learning model.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the character and sense of identity of the nation's young generation. Character depends not only on cognitive intelligence but also on the balance between students' affective and psychomotor abilities, enabling them to become citizens with character and competitiveness (Ginting, 2024; Trisiana, A., 2020). However, this contrasts with the reality of current globalization, which shows that students' sense of nationalism is fading. According to (Ramawati, 2023), students tend to understand national values only theoretically without applying them in real-life behavior. Several international studies have shown how high consumption of global culture and dependence on social media can diminish the young generation's attachment to national identity. This would not occur if global awareness were properly managed through education (Tabatabaei, 2021). Therefore, formal educational institutions such as schools are significantly



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responsible for instilling nationalist values, including patriotism, discipline, civic awareness, tolerance, and social responsibility. This reality becomes more complex when linked to Indonesia's border areas with other countries, such as Timor-Leste. The strong flow of cross-border influences has the potential to weaken students' national identity due to the geographical and cultural proximity of neighboring countries. According to (Ariely, 2021), globalization is often negatively correlated with patriotism and ethnic identity.

This phenomenon is reflected in students at SMPN 1 Atambua, who exhibit low pride in local culture, reduced discipline, low participation in social activities, and a decline in the values of cooperation and tolerance. This condition indicates the need for a stronger character-building approach in schools. National character formation must be carried out comprehensively through collaboration between families, schools, and the community (Sembiring, Helena R.U. & Ima Rohima., 2017), because national identity is not merely a symbol but is reflected in the mindset and behavior of citizens (Purwaningsih et al., 2022).

Social Studies (IPS) plays a crucial role in shaping national character because its scope directly impacts social life (Suardi, 2021). Research (Pujilestari et al., 2025) demonstrates that IPS learning can shape national character through habituation activities, reinforcement of values in the material, and extracurricular activities. However, the reality of IPS learning in schools remains one-way or teacher-centered, non-contextual, and poorly connects students to the social realities around them. This makes it difficult for national values to be deeply internalized (Andriani Ana & Agung Nugroho, 2023; Sudarmiani, 2022). IPS learning should focus on understanding social context, cultural values, cooperation, and problem-solving in real environments, but this ideal practice remains unfulfilled in many schools, including those in Atambua. Local wisdom is a potential learning resource for strengthening students' cultural identity and nationalism. (Nazli Yonca Aydin, Kezban Celik, Resat Gecen, Sibel Kalaycioglu, 2025) argues that cultural identity may play a significant role and will have a direct impact on a city's progress. Local values can make learning more meaningful, contextual, and relevant to students' lives (Hasni & Said, 2020; Naiyah et al., 2023). However, many schools have not yet fully utilized local wisdom in learning. This is despite research showing that integrating local wisdom into social studies learning strengthens students' national identity and cultural pride (Karsiwan, Lisa Retnosari, Anita Lisdiana, 2020; Sulistyosari et al., 2024). One local wisdom that is very rich in values and close to the lives of the Atambua community is the Likurai dance, a traditional Belu dance that embodies the values of courage, solidarity, discipline, and cultural identity. Likurai has the potential to be an effective learning medium in building students' nationalistic character, but there has been no in-depth study on how social studies teachers can integrate Likurai values into learning to foster national character. Teachers, as learning managers, play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of character building through the educational process. Teachers' pedagogical competence encompasses not only teaching skills but also the ability to design learning experiences that shape students' values and character (T. K. Sakti et al., 2019). However, current research is still very limited in understanding the benefits and impacts of integrating local wisdom into social studies learning and has not fully discussed how teachers apply it pedagogically. Therefore, this study is important to explore the pedagogical practices of social studies teachers in integrating Likurai values as a local culture-based learning approach. Furthermore, this research is practically and theoretically relevant because its follow-up can provide a contextual, applicable, and appropriate learning model to strengthen the nationalist character of junior high school students, especially in border areas.

Teacher pedagogical competence is not only related to mastery of learning theory and classroom management, but also the teacher's ability to understand the socio-cultural context of students. In social studies learning, this competence is crucial because the learning material is directly related to the values, identity, and social dynamics of society. Several studies have shown that teacher pedagogical competence influences student activity, motivation, and learning outcomes (Rokimin et al., 2025). However, most of these studies still place pedagogical competence within a general framework and have not specifically examined how teachers integrate local wisdom as a pedagogical strategy. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the pedagogical competence of social studies teachers in integrating Likurai culture as a means of fostering students' nationalist character. The pedagogical competency that teachers must possess is the ability to manage learning effectively,

namely by understanding student characteristics, mastering theory, developing a curriculum (contextual learning), and evaluating learning outcomes. Furthermore, pedagogical competency is not only related to delivering material, but also the teacher's ability to instill values and shape students' character (T. K. Sakti et al., 2019). Therefore, in the context of this research, teachers have a crucial role as designers of learning experiences for students that enable the natural internalization of cultural values and national character.

Local wisdom pedagogy is an approach that integrates local values, knowledge, and culture (local wisdom) into the learning process to build students' cultural identity, strengthen character (moral, ethical, and social), and preserve regional cultural heritage. Furthermore, implementing this approach can also foster students' 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Encourages contextual, relevant, and sustainable learning, as well as strengthening environmental awareness and community participation (Fitrianto & Farisi, 2025). It can be concluded that local wisdom-based pedagogy emphasizes the use of culture, traditions, and community practices as tangible and meaningful learning resources for students. Therefore, this approach is effective in building character, instilling values of tolerance, responsibility, and love for the environment, and strengthening students' local and national identities (S. A. Sakti et al., 2024). Furthermore, implementing local wisdom-based learning also increases motivation, historical empathy, and multicultural awareness (Firmansyah et al., 2022). Related to this, according to (Hasni & Said, 2020), local wisdom plays a strategic role in strengthening national resilience because it connects cultural identity with learning. Furthermore, (Najiyah et al., 2023) added that local wisdom-based learning can strengthen cultural identity, increase patriotism, and build students' social awareness. This contradicts the research problem, namely that although the likurai culture has strong values, many schools, including SMPN 1 Atambua, have not integrated it optimally into classroom learning. Research results (Sulistyosari et al., 2024) show that integrating local wisdom into social studies fosters cultural pride and forms a resilient character in the face of globalization. Values such as cooperation, tolerance, honesty, caring, and wisdom can be instilled through local culture-based learning activities (Karsiwan et al., 2023). So, in this context, the Likurai dance is a local wisdom that is rich in social, historical and national values and can be used as an appropriate source for contextual learning.

The situation of communities facing limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified professionals, and the cultural influence of neighboring countries can weaken nationalism and even trigger radicalism in border areas. Therefore, it is a shared responsibility for all levels of society and all sectors in border areas because educational institutions cannot be the sole element in addressing this situation. According to (Hermino & Arifin, 2020a), parental and community involvement is often suboptimal, and character education programs are not fully tailored to local needs. In this regard, effective strategies include integrating character values into the curriculum, strengthening the role of principals, teachers, and community leaders, and parental involvement. Several programs based on local wisdom, school-community collaboration, and extracurricular activities have been shown to increase tolerance and the profile of Pancasila students. So that monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up of the program are also very important to ensure sustainability (Eichentopf & Kasperidus, 2025; Hermino & Arifin, 2020b; Zulela et al., 2022). This will create character education based on local wisdom and traditions of border communities, strengthening identity and preventing conflict (Hermino, A., & Arifin, 2020b; Syakroni, A., Setyosari, P., Murtadho, N., & Sulthoni, 2024).

This research is urgent because students live in a multicultural socio-cultural environment, full of cross-border interactions and the potential for shifts in national identity. Therefore, this challenge requires schools to strengthen nationalist values through learning that is relevant to local culture. Areas such as Atambua are vulnerable to external cultural influences, resulting in students often experiencing a lack of understanding of their own cultural identity. (Bredikhin, 2023) noted that border communities often have multiple or layered identities, for example as members of an ethnic group, citizens, and part of a cross-border community. Research by (Kambo, G. A., & Yani, 2023) on Indonesian border communities often seek privilege based on their citizenship status, such as access to basic necessities and job opportunities driven by the socio-economic demands of the community. Therefore, in this context, the implementation of character education needs to connect national values with local culture as part of student identity. This approach aligns with the idea that real-life

experiences are the most effective means of character education (Wahyuni, 2015). By integrating local wisdom, such as likurai, into social studies learning, students understand local culture not only as an ancestral heritage but also as an important part of Indonesia's national identity. Thus, local wisdom-based learning is an important strategy for strengthening national character, especially in border areas.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type, because it seeks to explore in depth the perspectives and pedagogical practices of social studies teachers in consolidating the local wisdom of *likuari* into learning. The population of this study was all social studies teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Atambua, Belu Regency. The research sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) social studies teachers actively teaching; (2) have integrated the Likuari approach at least once a semester; (3) have at least three years of teaching experience; and (4) are willing to be informants. Based on these criteria, the study involved 3 social studies teachers as key informants. This technique was chosen to ensure that the data obtained were truly relevant and in-depth in describing the pedagogical practices of social studies teachers in integrating *likuari* to foster students' nationalist character. Data analysis was carried out thematically through open, axial and selective coding stages. The researcher developed a coding framework containing codes, categories and themes, for example the code 'use-of-local-narrative' which was grouped into the category of *likuari* integration strategies and resulted in an integrative pedagogical theme. Quotes such as "I relate social studies material to Atambua culture so that students understand the meaning of nationalism" were used as analytical evidence. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, researcher triangulation with code checking by co-researchers, and member checking with informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This case study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Atambua, involving 12 classes of eighth-grade students and 3 social studies teachers as key informants. The results showed that teachers have a strong pedagogical awareness of the importance of integrating local cultural values in social studies learning. The teachers not only integrated the Likuari dance, but also other local cultural elements such as *tebe*, *bonet*, and folklore that are still alive in the Atambuan community. Clearly, through interviews with the eighth-grade social studies teachers who were the subjects of the research, they understood the character values contained in the *likurai*, namely peace, tolerance, togetherness, responsibility, and fighting spirit, and the teachers were able to connect the material with character competencies. This can be seen in the following interview results: "Likurai is not just a dance, but there are values of peace, togetherness, and discipline that we can connect with social studies material, especially about nationalism." (Teacher 1, Interview). In addition, the results of interviews with other teachers emphasized the relevance of local cultural values to the objectives of social studies learning: "I think students find it easier to understand the concept of nationalism if we start from culture. Because they feel culture is closer and there is also a sense of pride." (Teacher 2, Interview). In line with this statement, in an interview, the principal stated: "We encourage teachers to use local culture so that students are not only intelligent but also have character and identity." (Principal, Interview). Furthermore, the integration of local cultural values aligns with eighth-grade social studies material, which covers topics such as multiculturalism, nationalism, and social conflict. Therefore, teachers can use these values as an entry point to connect students' local experiences with national concepts. The findings

of this study indicate that the school, specifically the principal and teachers, are aware that education is not merely a transfer of knowledge but also a process of character formation. The results of the study above are in line with the opinion (E. Susanti, 2015), that the transmission of citizenship is an important tradition in social studies learning, namely the process of passing on values to students so that they have a moral compass and become good citizens. Referring to this statement, this awareness can be the basis for teachers' pedagogical orientation in designing and implementing learning based on local cultural values. Through initial observations and interviews, it was shown that students knew *likurai* as a dance and one of their cultures but had not yet fully understood and were able to appreciate this culture in depth. One teacher stated: "When I asked about *likurai* or other regional dances, they knew because they had seen them and even danced, but when asked about the meaning of the dance, they did not understand. In addition, they preferred to follow trends on social media rather than delving into the meaning of regional dances" (Teacher 3, Interview). This statement was reinforced by the statement of one student in the interview: "I know regional dances and have danced during the school anniversary arts performance, but I prefer to see foreign cultures on TikTok." (Student A, Interview). This fact clearly proves that global culture and the flow of digital media, even exposure to popular content, make students more familiar with foreign cultures than their own. Over time, this reality will have an impact on weakening patriotism, as seen in low pride in local symbols, languages, and traditions. Even nationalist values such as cooperation, tolerance, discipline, peace, and responsibility are also starting to fade and are replaced by an individualistic mindset. Therefore, this finding is in line with the results of research (Li et al., 2025), which shows that globalization and migration have made national identity more fluid, so that adolescents adopt multiple identities rather than a single national identity.

In relation to the description above, it is confirmed that social studies is considered less contextual because teachers are not optimal in utilizing local culture that is closely related to students' lives. However, teachers have a pedagogical perspective based on a humanistic and contextual approach. This is evidenced by the teacher's view that students are active subjects who need to learn through real-life experiences, including cultural experiences that exist in society. According to one teacher: "Likurai is not just a dance but is full of positive values including togetherness, peace, tolerance and responsibility, and these values are what we want to instill through learning" (Teacher 2, Interview). Based on this teacher's view, it can be concluded that the teacher has the intention and effort to instill pride in regional culture as part of national identity. Therefore, efforts to integrate local wisdom are seen as strengthening the relevance of social studies learning, bringing the material closer to students' social reality and building their emotional involvement in the learning process.

Strategy to consolidate local wisdom through *Likurai*

The research findings demonstrate that the pedagogical perspective of social studies teachers plays a central role in implementing a learning process rooted in the local socio-cultural context. This fact aligns with the opinion of (Purnani & Mulianingsih, 2020), who stated that teachers must integrate local wisdom into social studies learning to create contextual learning experiences. Furthermore, research findings by (Hurri Ibnu dan Rohmat Widiyanto., 2018), found that social studies learning based on Sundanese local wisdom values can increase social awareness among junior high school students and strengthen cultural identity amidst the current of globalization that erodes local traditions such as *ngaos*, *mamaos*, and *maenpo*. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers' pedagogical interpretations reflect a reflective awareness that education must be aligned with students' cultural and social realities, one alternative being social studies. Teachers believe that *likurai*

can serve as a pedagogical bridge to foster a spirit of nationalism through the local context. Thus, teachers' pedagogical perspectives are not only conceptual but also applicable, manifesting in the belief that preserving local culture is part of character education practices. In this research, the process of consolidating *likurai* values was carried out through participatory and collaborative learning strategies. These strategies included culture-based project-based learning and group discussions.

Table 1. Pedagogical description of teachers in implementing value-based learning

Observed Aspects	Meeting 1 – Values of peace and togetherness in likurai	Meeting 2 – Values of discipline, tolerance and responsibility in Likurai	Interpretation
Preliminary Activities	The teacher shows a video of the Likurai dance and invites students to discuss its meaning.	The teacher reviews the previous lesson and explains the cultural poster making project	This contextual approach makes students enthusiastic and shows pride in their own culture.
Core activities	Students are enthusiastic and actively discuss in groups.	Students create posters on the values of discipline, tolerance and responsibility	There is real positive interaction and mutual respect between students.
Closing Activities	Students are asked to reflect on the importance of the values of peace and togetherness in social and national life.	The group presents the results of the poster and explains the values found, then the teacher relates them to the character of nationalism	Reflection and appreciation help internalize local cultural values as part of national identity.
Student Attitude and Participation	Students are active, orderly, and respect their friends' opinions so that the classroom atmosphere is conducive and interactive.	Students demonstrate tolerance, responsibility, discipline and pride in the results of group work.	There was an increase in positive behavior and a spirit of togetherness among students.
The Role of Teachers	The teacher acts as a facilitator and motivator who links social studies material with the cultural values of <i>likurai</i> .	The teacher becomes a guide and evaluator, providing feedback and appreciation for student activities.	Teachers are important agents in connecting local wisdom with national character.

Based on observations and interviews during social studies lessons integrating *Likurai* values, significant changes in student behavior and attitudes were observed. Observations showed that some students were passive and did not fully understand the meaning of Likurai during discussions. They understood Likurai as a regional dance often performed at traditional ceremonies and other public events. This is consistent with the results of interviews with students who lacked a clear understanding of the meaning of the Likurai dance. However, after the teacher linked Likurai values, including peace, togetherness, cooperation, discipline, tolerance, and responsibility, to the context of social and national life, students began to demonstrate greater enthusiasm for the learning process. They actively engaged in discussions, assisted each other, and demonstrated tolerance in group work, while demonstrating mutual respect for each other's opinions. Furthermore, project-based learning, in which students created posters about Likurai values, fostered a sense of responsibility, tolerance, and discipline. These results align with the objectives of PBL, which are to develop problem-solving, collaboration, independent learning, and communication skills (Jaganathan, S., Bhuminathan, S., & Ramesh, 2024). The findings of this study reinforce the view that the scope of social studies is nothing other than human social life in society. Therefore, society is the primary source in social studies (Andriani Ana & Agung Nugroho, 2023). In essence, social studies subjects have the task of developing students' potential to be sensitive to social problems that occur in society, have a positive mental attitude to improve all inequalities, and be skilled at overcoming every problem that occurs daily, both those affecting themselves and those in society (Maryani et al., 2022). In this study, teachers view *likurai* as a learning medium that reflects social values relevant to social studies competencies, namely cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, peace, and a sense of nationalism. Therefore, by integrating these values, teachers not only teach cognitive knowledge but also build students' affective and social understanding. This perspective demonstrates the application of

authentic contextual teaching and learning where local cultural experiences are used to instill nationalistic values in a meaningful context for students. In line with the view (S. D. Susanti et al., 2020) the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is very relevant in this context because it allows the development of teaching materials, LKS and learning media based on local wisdom that are proven to be feasible, practical, and effective in improving learning activities, critical thinking skills, and students' social character.

Implications of Social Studies Teachers' Pedagogical Exploration in Consolidating Likurai Local Wisdom for Strengthening National Character

In practice, teachers can contextualize textbook-based learning materials and instill the values of discipline, solidarity, tolerance, and togetherness. However, teachers also face time constraints in maximizing their implementation. One teacher stated: "Sometimes it's difficult to connect all the values from *likurai* to the Social Studies material because time is limited. I have to choose which ones can be instilled in one session." (Teacher 2, Interview). Furthermore, not all students can immediately grasp the profound meaning of local culture because teachers rarely apply local culture effectively in their lessons, so some character values require repeated reinforcement. (Korolyov, I., & Domylivska, 2020) define national character as distinctive and relatively stable patterns of behavior and personality traits possessed by members of a nation, formed from the collective experiences, values, and outlooks of that community. Implementing local wisdom is effective in fostering some aspects of character, such as discipline, tolerance, and togetherness, but the development of students' nationalism is slower and requires further strategies. One further strategy is to develop a learning model that addresses pressing issues in accordance with the socio-cultural context of students in Atambua, a border region. Furthermore, the study found that teachers' perceptions of the integration of local wisdom varied. One teacher viewed the values of the *likurai* dance as an opportunity for character education, while another felt the need for additional pedagogical guidance or training. Instruments for assessing nationalist character could include behavioral observations, attitude assessments, and student involvement in activities reflecting nationalist values, such as flag ceremonies, historical discussions, and social activities (Rokimin et al., 2025).

Table 2. The effect of *likurai*-based learning on strengthening students' nationalist character

Indicators of nationalism	Conditions before <i>likurai</i> integration	Condition after integration of <i>likurai</i>	Observation result
Love the country	Students have less understanding of regional culture	Students proudly display their <i>likurai</i> at school events	Enthusiastic about participating in training and introducing culture to other schools
Mutual cooperation	Students tend to be individualistic	Students work together in <i>likurai</i> practice groups	Increased inter class solidarity
Responsibility	Lack of discipline in group assignments	Punctuality and commitment in cultural projects	Teachers noted an increase in discipline
Tolerance and Unity	Lack of respect for friends' cultural differences	More appreciation for local cultural diversity	Class discussions are more open and inclusive

Efforts to consolidate local wisdom of *likurai* not only grow in classroom learning interactions but are also implemented through school activities, namely by creating a positive cultural climate in the school environment. This is because the instilling of nationalistic character can be carried out in learning activities both in and outside the classroom (Sari & Apriani, 2020). The school holds activities with local cultural themes three to four times each year, involving students, teachers, and the surrounding community. One concrete manifestation of this is the school's cultural studio, which is active in reviving and preserving existing local culture. This is evident in various school activities that highlight local cultural themes, such as Likurai performances, folklore competitions, and extracurricular traditional arts activities. The principal explained: "We always encourage teachers and students to involve local culture in school activities. Community support also helps provide

media and cultural resources so that learning is more lively and meaningful." (Principal, Interview). The implementation of local wisdom consolidation cannot be separated from the support of the school environment and community. (Sembiring, Helena R.U. & Ima Rohima, 2017) state that building national character requires the participation and guidance of various components of the nation through character development patterns within the family, character development in educational institutions, and character development in the community. Furthermore, (Zhang, Z., & Wang, 2025) found that research in China found that approximately 4% of adolescents experience a sharp decline in national identity, especially if they have low self-esteem and school attachment. Identity-based education in schools that involves families and communities is crucial for maintaining national stability.

Furthermore, research (Rosyad et al., 2022), indicates that character development outside the classroom is also crucial. Schools that are open to local culture create a collaborative educational ecosystem between teachers, students, and the community. Therefore, school activities involving cultural communities, such as *likurai*, can contribute to strengthening students' sense of collective identity and sense of national belonging. This is because the surrounding environment, such as cultural communities, plays a crucial role in shaping a person's character. A positive environment can shape individuals with positive character, while a negative and unhealthy environment can shape negative ones (Musleh et al., 2023). The research findings demonstrate that the integration of Likurai local wisdom significantly contributes to strengthening students' nationalistic character. This finding aligns with the characteristics of axiological philosophy, which prioritizes the formation and internalization of values, including moral, social, religious, and cultural values, as the primary goal of education. These values are adapted to students' real-life contexts for easy understanding and application (Rosyadi, M., & Azis, 2024). Through evaluation and reflection on learning activities, students can link local cultural values with the spirit of nationalism and unity. Learning outcomes are equivalent to the curriculum and objectives of the Social Studies program itself, aimed at helping students develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to participate and become good citizens in a multicultural and interconnected world (Supriatna Nana dan Neni Maulidah, 2020). Teachers revealed that local wisdom-based learning can foster social empathy and respect for differences. Therefore, Social Studies teachers' pedagogical exploration of Likurai local wisdom not only enriches learning strategies but also serves as an effective way to instill national character values in a contextual and sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

The pedagogical exploration of social studies teachers in integrating the local wisdom of *likurai* at SMP Negeri 1 Atambua in this study proved effective in strengthening students' nationalist character through contextual learning rooted in local culture. The results of this study provide a global contribution to educational studies, especially in border areas. The results show that culture-based pedagogy can strengthen students' national identity amidst globalizations. The practical impacts of this study include: (1) integrating local wisdom of *likurai* in school curriculum development, (2) developing contextual social studies learning materials, and (3) improving teacher competence in implementing culture-based learning to foster students' nationalist character. The limitations of this study include the focus on one school, the limited number of informants, and the uneven implementation of the *likurai* approach across classes. Considering the location of the study, namely a border area, further research is recommended to expand the location and number of participants, as well as explore the effectiveness of various forms of local wisdom in building character, academic competence, and conflict resolution skills in a sustainable manner.

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