



Identifying Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction in Community Pharmacies: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background: The paradigm shift from a drug-oriented to a patient-oriented approach requires health facilities to improve the quality of pharmaceutical services. Meeting customer needs and expectations can increase satisfaction and support the achievement of therapeutic goals.

Objective: Conduct an in-depth analysis of the available literature to identify customer satisfaction factors towards pharmaceutical services in community pharmacies.

Method: A systematic review was conducted by searching articles across three databases: ScienceDirect, Scopus, and PubMed. The search flow is described in the PRISMA Diagram. Inclusion criteria included customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical service articles and research settings in community pharmacies. Exclusion criteria included online or hospital pharmacy articles and review articles, books, theses, dissertations, and reports. Articles are assessed using the Joanna Briggs Institute's critical appraisal instrument.

Result: The findings from the nine articles revealed various factors that influence customer satisfaction, which can be categorized into intangible and tangible factors. Intangible factors include the attitude and communication of pharmacy staff, as well as consultations regarding medications and health conditions. Tangible factors include the facilities and convenience, the availability and variety of medications, prices, and customer demographics.

Conclusion: The identified customer satisfaction factors can be useful to increase pharmacy customer loyalty. Thus, it can encourage customers to make repeat orders.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, factors of customer satisfaction, patient satisfaction, pharmacy community, pharmacy services

1. INTRODUCTION

Pharmacies are among the companies in the healthcare sector that continue to experience growth and development. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that a pharmacy is the provider of pharmaceutical services that are easily and widely accessible to patients. A pharmacy is one of the pharmaceutical service facilities where pharmaceutical practices are carried out by

pharmacists (1). A pharmacy is defined as a facility that provides health services to improve public health. According to data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of pharmacies in Indonesia has increased. In 2021, the number of pharmacies in Indonesia reached 30,199 units. However, the distribution of pharmacies is still uneven throughout Indonesia. In fact, the location of the company is a crucial

factor in running a successful pharmacy business. Location can facilitate the distribution of drugs to pharmacies (2).

Choosing a strategic pharmacy location is considered crucial to equalizing the health status of the community and increasing the growth rate of the pharmacy business. The large number of pharmacies indicates that trade competition between pharmacies is increasingly intense. Additionally, the products offered by pharmacies are largely similar to those found in other pharmacies. In fact, the pharmacy business is a promising one. Medicine is a primary need from fetuses to geriatrics. However, some pharmacies have still gone bankrupt due to various factors. These factors include the location and facilities of the pharmacy, price competition, product quality, and service. Pharmacy business competition is increasingly aggressive, requiring pharmacies to always innovate (3).

The quality of service must also be of high quality due to the paradigm shift from a drug-oriented to a patient-oriented approach. Pharmaceutical service activities, which were initially focused on drug management, underwent changes, requiring pharmacists to enhance their knowledge, skills, and ability to communicate effectively with patients to deliver high-quality service (2). Today's society not only judges drugs by their low prices, but also by the attitude and knowledge of pharmacists in understanding customer needs. The interaction between pharmacists and patients is expected to support the achievement of therapeutic goals, minimize the potential risk of side effects, minimize medication errors, increase safety, and improve the quality of life of patients (2). Patient safety orientation is critical in providing pharmaceutical services. Thus, pharmacies not only sell drug products, but also provide services that meet customer expectations.

The quality of pharmaceutical services in community pharmacies is crucial for meeting customer expectations. Fulfilled expectations will create customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is a measuring tool to assess the quality of pharmaceutical services received by customers at the pharmacy. If the perceived product performance exceeds the buyer's expectations,

they will feel delighted. Customers will demand to get products and services in good condition. The higher the quality customers obtain, the greater the satisfaction they feel. Satisfaction has the potential for customers to recommend the pharmacy to others (4). However, if the customer is not satisfied, it can create a negative image for the pharmacy. Customer dissatisfaction in the long term can lead to a loss of customer loyalty and deter potential new customers from purchasing at the pharmacy. Therefore, satisfaction is considered a crucial factor in the continuity and sustainability of pharmaceutical services at community pharmacies (5). While studies on customer satisfaction in healthcare exist, there is a lack of comprehensive research specifically addressing community pharmacies and the factors that influence customer satisfaction. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the available literature to identify the determinants of customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in community pharmacies.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

a. Study Design

This study used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (6). Article searches were conducted on three databases: ScienceDirect, Scopus, and PubMed. The keywords for the article search were "factors", "satisfaction", and "community pharmacy". Articles obtained from each database were selected based on the title, abstract, and the entire content of the article. The flow of article selection is presented in the PRISMA Diagram, which is shown in **Figure I**.

b. Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion criteria in this study were articles that focused on pharmaceutical services for customer satisfaction in community pharmacies. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria that have been set in this study are as follows: (1) articles that focus on pharmaceutical services in online pharmacies or hospitals, (2) review articles, books, theses, dissertations, and reports.

c. Data Extraction

Filtration was carried out by considering the following criteria: (1) English language articles, (2)

articles published between September 2018 – September 2023 (the last 5 years), (3) research objectives, and (4) articles accessible in full text. Researchers reviewed the articles independently to eliminate duplicates. Additionally, researchers reviewed the titles, abstracts, and full texts of the articles.

d. Quality Assessment

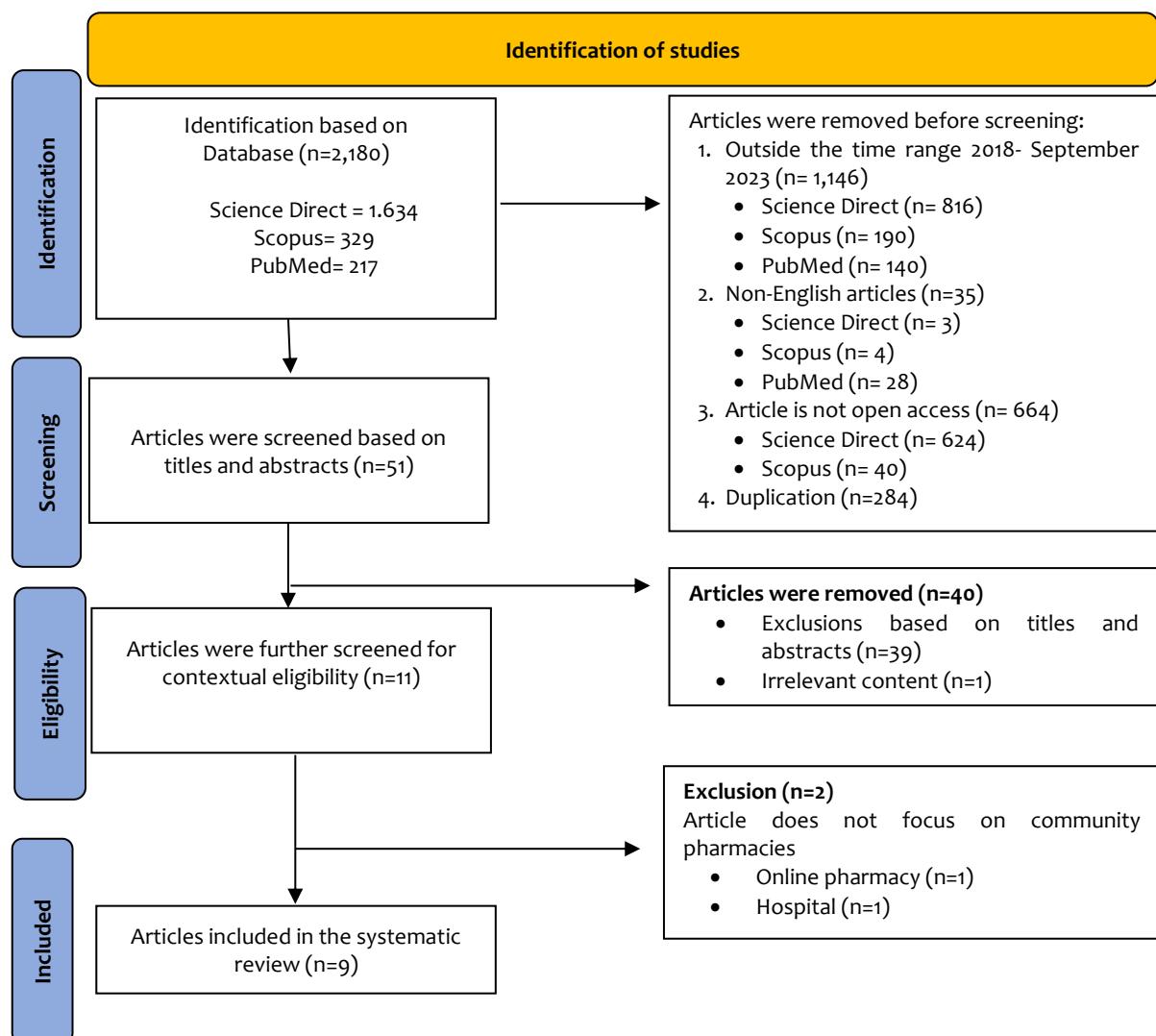
Quality assessment aims to ensure that articles have research methods that meet standards. The evaluation tool for selected articles uses the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tool for Cross-Sectional Studies. The aspects assessed include research methodology, clarity of research questions, respondent selection, research design, data analysis, and interpretation and conclusion of the

results. Thus, the research findings, as detailed in **Table I**, are credible with a minimum assessment result of 5/8.

e. Data Analysis

Factors affecting customer satisfaction are analyzed based on articles related to customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction factors related to pharmaceutical services in community pharmacies in this study are divided into two main categories: tangible factors and intangible factors. Tangible factors are customer satisfaction factors in the form of real products, while intangible factors are customer satisfaction in the form of pharmaceutical services provided by community pharmacies.

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram



3. RESULT

The search in this study obtained nine articles. The articles were then analyzed in relation to tangible and intangible factors that can affect customer satisfaction in community

pharmacies. **Table 2** presents the characteristics of articles that meet the inclusion criteria. **Table 3** summarizes the results of the analysis, namely, factors that affect customer satisfaction in community pharmacies.

Table 1. Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies

Question	Alanazi et al (7)	Kim et al (8)	Chhabra et al (9)	Naser and Abu Sbeat (10)	Xuan Do et al (11)	Carter, Ahmed, and Schneider (12)	Van De Pol et al (13)	Druică et al (14)	De Tran and Dorofeeva (15)
Are the criteria for inclusion in the sample clearly defined?	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	No								
	Unclear		√						√
	Not applicable								
Were the study subjects and the setting described in detail?	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	No								
	Unclear								
	Not applicable								
Was the exposure measured validly and reliably?	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	No								
	Unclear								
	Not applicable								
Are objective, standard criteria used for measurement of the condition?	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	No								
	Unclear								
	Not applicable								
Were confounding factors identified?	Yes	√			√	√	√	√	√
	No		√	√					√
	Unclear								
	Not applicable								
Were strategies to deal with confounding factors stated?	Yes	√					√		
	No		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Unclear								
	Not applicable								
Are the outcomes measured	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	No								
	Unclear								

Question	Alanazi et al (7)	Kim et al (8)	Chhabra et al (9)	Naser and Abu Sbeat (10)	Xuan Do et al (11)	Carter, Ahmed, and Schneider (12)	Van De Pol et al (13)	Druică et al (14)	De Tran and Dorofeeva (15)
validly and reliably?	Not applicable								
Was an appropriate statistical analysis used?	Yes No Unclear	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Score	8/8	5/8	6/8	7/8	7/8	8/8	7/8	7/8	5/8

Table 2. Characteristics of the Article

Title	Author and Year	Location	Instrument And (n) Sample	Key Finding
Assessing patient satisfaction with community pharmacy services: a large-scale regional study in Punjab, Pakistan	Alanazi et al (7)	Punjab, Pakistan	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 900	The average customer satisfaction score is 45.75 from a range of 25-66. Customer satisfaction is influenced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pharmacist attitudes and communication• Drug and disease counseling skills• Facility• Availability and variety of drugs• Price• Customer demographic characteristics
Consumer satisfaction towards Community Pharmacies in Sindh, Pakistan	Kim et al (8)	Sindh, Pakistan	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 415	Consumers are quite satisfied with community pharmacies in Sindh. The four determinants of satisfaction have a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.787 and a Chi-square value of 3,381 (P <0.001).
Satisfaction with services provided by community pharmacists in northwest India: A qualitative exploratory study	Chhabra et al (9)	India	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 314	Overall, the value of the pharmaceutical service elements provided for customer satisfaction, Chi-square 125.68, P < 0.001.
Satisfaction with community pharmacy services in Jordan: A cross-sectional study	Naser and Abu Sbeat (10)	Jordan	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 1,611	Customers are quite satisfied with the service at community pharmacies, with an average score of 148.6 (72.5%) from a maximum score of 205. The value of 68% of customers are satisfied with the cost of drugs, and 74.7% with the location of the pharmacy. While the attitude and skills of pharmacists and counseling factors depend on the demographic characteristics of customers.
Factors influencing customer satisfaction with community pharmacies in Vietnam	Xuan Do et al (11)	Hanoi, Vietnam	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 354	Five factors that influence customer satisfaction include (1) pharmacist attitude and communication, (2) ability to consult on drugs and diseases, (3) facilities and convenience, (4) availability and variety of drugs, and (5) price. Pharmacist attitude and communication are important factors

The role of perceived service quality and price competitiveness on consumer interest and use of community pharmacies	Carter, Ahmed, and Schneider (12)	English: Australia	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 303	determining satisfaction (beta coefficient = 0.207). Multiple regression analysis produced five main factors that explained 41.5% of total customer satisfaction.
How does the general public balance the convenience and services of cognitive pharmacy in community pharmacy practice?	Van De Pol et al (13)	Dutch	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 516	Quality information, counseling, and pharmacist attitude services provide more satisfaction to customers than providing competitive prices. The value is 0.64 (<0.05) for total pSQ (consumers' perceptions of service quality) and 0.20 (<0.05) for pPC (consumers' perceptions of price competitiveness).
Determinants of Satisfaction with Services and Trust in Information Received at Community Pharmacies: A Comparative Analysis to Improve the Implementation of Pharmaceutical Services	Druică et al (14)	Romania	Questionnaire-based cross-sectional study Number of samples (n)= 343	This study compared facilities, including ease of access and convenience, with pharmacist cognitive services on customer satisfaction. The results, the majority of customers preferred ease of access (68.2%) over pharmacist cognitive for counseling (27.7%).
Application of Q methodology to study customer satisfaction with community pharmacy service quality in Vietnam	De and Dorofeeva (15)	Tran Vietnamese	Q-based methodology based on questionnaires Number of samples (n)= 150	The determining factors of customer satisfaction include attitude ($\beta = 631$, $p < 0.001$), low waiting time ($\beta = 0.180$, $p < 0.001$), affordable cost of drugs ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.009$), drug availability ($\beta = 0.157$, $p < 0.001$), and availability of information by pharmacists ($\beta = 0.610$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Number of Articles Based on Customer Satisfaction Determinants

Parameter	Intangible factors		Real factors			
	Pharmacy staff attitudes and communication	Consultation about treatment and disease	Facilities and amenities	Availability and variety of drugs	Price	Customer demographics
Alanazi et al (7)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kim et al (8)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Chhabra et al (9)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Naser and Abu Sbeat (10)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xuan Do et al (11)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carter, Ahmed, and Schneider (12)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Van De Pol et al (13)	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Druică et al (14)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

De Tran and Dorofeeva (15)	v	v	v	v	v	X
Number of articles	8	9	9	7	8	5

4. DISCUSSION

Several factors can be identified that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services provided by pharmacies. Factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services provided by pharmacies are then grouped into tangible and intangible factors.

a. Intangible Factors

1) Attitude and Communication of Pharmacy Staff

Researchers grouped the factors of pharmacists' politeness and friendliness towards customers, the language used in communication, pharmacists' accessibility, and customers' trust in pharmacists into the categories of attitude and communication. The results showed that customers expected these factors to be met by pharmacists. This value is considered very important because satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal and make repeat purchases at the pharmacy. Therefore, pharmacies should consider this value in improving their services. Additionally, pharmacy staff should be well-trained and possess effective communication skills.

Other research also shows that 61 out of 100 respondents felt very satisfied with the attitude, politeness, and friendliness of the pharmacy staff. Customer satisfaction is created because the pharmacy provides good service training for employees. In addition, the pharmacy also has an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) regarding service to consumers so that they are satisfied (16).

2) Consultation

Factors included in consultations about treatment and illness include the pharmacist's skills and abilities in explaining information about how to use, rules of use, drug interactions, and potential side effects of drugs that customers may experience. This

consultation is carried out both verbally and in writing. The pharmacist's ability to provide recommendations to achieve optimal treatment and appropriate indications, sufficient time allocation in providing drug education and consultation to customers, the pharmacist's ability to provide solutions to customer health problems, and the pharmacist's ability to provide alternative drugs. The more the customer's information and education needs are met, the more satisfied they will be with the pharmaceutical services provided by the pharmacist.

The results of this study align with those of other studies, as many as 67 out of 100 respondents reported being very satisfied with pharmacies that provided complete and precise drug information (16). Customers expect to treat their disease without consulting a doctor. Other consultation information related to drug side effects and how to use the drug properly. Quality information will increase customer satisfaction (17).

b. Tangible Factors

1) Facilities and Convenience

Factors included in Facilities and convenience include pharmacy opening hours according to the Vietnam Pharmacy Law (Number 105/2016/QH13), pharmacies are recommended to be open 24 hours. However, most pharmacies in Vietnam are only open from 07.00 to 20.30. These opening hours are considered the right time for customers to buy medicine. Additionally, the cleanliness of the pharmacy also influences customers' choices of pharmacy. Completeness, including the availability of a sufficient waiting room so that customers who are queuing do not jostle, the layout of the waiting room that makes it easy for customers to access, and the counselling room, also play an important role in

customers' decisions to choose a pharmacy. This is done by customers to ensure that their privacy is guaranteed. The distance between the pharmacy location and the customer's home, or the geographical location of the pharmacy, also affects customer satisfaction because of the ease of reaching it. The more complete and convenient the facilities and services are, the more confident customers are in the cleanliness, which in turn ensures that the medicine they obtain is also hygienic and easily accessible, making them comfortable in reaching the pharmacy to meet their needs.

This study aligns with the findings of other studies, specifically that 61 out of 100 respondents were very satisfied with the strategic and easily accessible location. In addition, 73 out of 100 respondents were very satisfied with the cleanliness, tidiness, and comfort of the pharmacy (16). The location of the pharmacy is a crucial factor that can significantly influence the perception of potential consumers and encourage them to shop. According to Tjiptono in (2), "Location refers to various marketing activities aimed at promoting and facilitating the distribution of products, both pharmaceutical goods and services from producers to consumers". A series of strategic location selection activities is conducted to ensure easy accessibility to potential consumers, choosing an attractive location that can attract consumer interest and enhance the image of the products sold. Indicators to consider when selecting a pharmacy location include vehicle traffic conditions, specifically whether the pharmacy is situated in an area with minimal congestion (2). This is important to note, considering that consumers who visit the pharmacy are often sick and need a quiet and efficient place to avoid the crowd. Therefore, the ease of vehicle traffic is related to determining customer interest and satisfaction in choosing a pharmacy to visit. Additionally, parking facilities, ease of access to public transportation, store location, and

store composition are also taken into consideration.

2) Availability and Diversity of Drugs

Availability and diversity of drugs that customers can get, the amount and type of drugs with clear labels. Customers expect to get quality drug products. In addition, customers also expect pharmacies to not only sell drugs but also other products such as beauty products and functional foods. This is a plus, as customers can purchase all their needs at the pharmacy while saving time. This factor, when viewed from a business perspective, can increase pharmacy turnover.

The results of this study are in line with other studies, which state that the availability of drugs in pharmacies produces a coefficient value of 2.797, which means it is greater than **Table 1.98**. This means that the variable of drug availability has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction in pharmacies (18).

3) Pricing

Customers in Australia will trade off their perceptions of service quality against their perceptions of pharmacy service costs. This perception trade-off is critical for pharmacies to understand the relative impact on customer loyalty of improving their pharmacy service quality versus ignoring gross profit or providing discounts. Meanwhile, customers in Vietnam compare the prices of pharmaceutical products or pharmacist services across pharmacies. They tend to choose the pharmacy that offers a lower price than other pharmacies for the drug or pharmacist service they are interested in. The results of research in other articles indicate that reasonable prices are acceptable and contribute to increased customer satisfaction with pharmacies.

This study is in line with other studies that found that the results of the price variable regression coefficient were 0.219 and had a positive value. This means that every additional Rp 1 will increase customer satisfaction by 0.219. Thus, price is a determining factor in customer satisfaction at community pharmacies (3).

4) Customer Demographics

Customer demographics, such as education level, age, and history of chronic diseases. Customers with lower educational levels are likely to be satisfied with the counselling and education provided by pharmacists. Conversely, customers with higher education levels tend to already know about drug information and therefore have relatively no need for it (13). Low literacy skills make it more challenging to know their health conditions and to understand the instructions on drug labels. Therefore, the existence of pharmaceutical services can help them understand the proper use of drugs (19).

Customers who are elderly and have a history of chronic diseases will benefit more from adequate pharmaceutical services, allowing them to feel satisfied with the services provided by pharmacists. The many drugs consumed by customers support this, so information related to drug interactions is very much needed by these customers (13). Geriatric customers with polypharmacy in chronic diseases need more attention in the use of drugs. For customers with conditions like this, minimal information has an impact on drug-related problems that interfere with the achievement of therapeutic goals. Therefore, pharmaceutical services are needed to help them use drugs. Services that can meet their expectations will increase customer satisfaction (20).

This study is helpful for community pharmacies in considering important aspects to improve and maintain customer satisfaction. The relationship between the pharmacy and the customer will be built on mutual trust. Customer needs and expectations can be met, allowing customers to make repeat orders at the pharmacy. Thus, long-term customer satisfaction can create customer loyalty. This study has limitations, namely that not all selected articles discuss the six factors studied. That way, researchers independently group almost the same factors related to the determinants of customer satisfaction.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Six factors influence customer satisfaction in community pharmacies. These factors include the attitude and communication of pharmacists, consultations on drugs and diseases, facilities, and ease of access to pharmacy locations, availability and diversity of drugs, prices, and customer demographics.

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