



Assessment of Public Information Influence on Sexual Harassment of Men by Women in Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT: Sexual harassment is a corrupt practice that exists in society. It involves undue pressure on a specific gender in order to exploit sexual interest by an opposite sex. It becomes necessary to ascertain if male lecturers in tertiary institution are sexually harassed by female students in their bid to take advantage of sexual exploits on their victims. This study investigates the veracity of claims that female students are not the only victims of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions, in spite of public information suggesting such an experience. Students resident in Awka town were used in the study. The attribution theory was considered apt in the investigation since it bothers on attitudes and behaviour related to processed information. The survey research method was also considered apt since it is the view of persons, particularly students, who experience the phenomenon in their respective institutions that is required as basis for the assessment. Results from the study are expected to show if public information exerts any influence in curbing sexual harassment of males, assuming it exists.

Key words: Public information; sexual harassment; gender; tertiary institutions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global refugee crises emanating from wars, conflicts and displacements have brought to the fore incidence of child trafficking and sexual slavery, particularly, among females. The various television stations, particularly, the CNN and BBC-World, have dedicated specific documentary and interview programmes to highlight the phenomena. The presentation in the public domain shows how the pitiable human situation has led to social exploitation for the satisfaction of pleasure.

In Nigeria, for instance, the experience of the “Chibok Girls” as internationally presented, shows the forceful removal of female students from Chibok in Bornu State, Nigeria by males, suspected to be members of “Boko Haram” into sex slavery. The evidence in newspapers and even television presentation of the fate of the girls, show how such sexual harassment has resulted to unwanted and undersigned pregnancies and child-births. According to the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, “these girls have seen the worst that society can do to them, it is now time to give them the best that society can offer” (NTA, 2017). The reported cases of sexual abuse by males on internally displaced persons whether in Nigeria, Congo, Somalia, Sudan or Southern Sudan, reveal that males abuse women sexually in moments of crisis.

Recently, the National Assembly in Nigeria is considering the enactment of a bill against the sexual harassment of females by males in the society. It is also advocating penalties against these persons involved in domestic violence that hurt women. It was seen on “*Assembly Report*” on NTA in the last quarter of 2016, where senators were arguing in favour of penalties against sexual harassment of females by males, like in educational institutions in the country. No one seem to state any case where females harass males sexually, like in educational institutions.

This lacuna in social behaviour perception, even from presented public information sources like messages from both the print and electronic media, seem to create an impression, that females are always the victims while males are the valians. This study, therefore, has been designed to provide an empirical evidence to show if female students sexually harass male lecturers in tertiary institutions, like in the Nigerian situation. This is the focus of the current study.

Statement of Problem

Sexual harassment is a social anomaly which promotes corruption and immorality. It influences the administration of carrots and sticks, depending on how the valian rates the issue on cost-benefit analysis scale. It is the consequence of sexual harassment on student's academic performance and moral development that has attracted valuable airtime to be used on the broadcast medium, particularly on radio or television, as programmes in the provision of public information on the subject. Can males be sexually harassed by women in tertiary institutions? To what extent can public information be used to address the problem?

Study Objective

Three objectives were set as goals to direct this study. The goals were:

1. To ascertain the level of awareness of sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students.
2. To determine the extent to which the incidence occur in tertiary institutions.
3. To find if any relationship exist between public information about the incident and participation in the activity.

It is believed that exposure to information about sexual harassment influences receivers differently as to understand the implications of the social issue.

Research Questions

Three questions were posed to respondents in order to obtain data, capable of helping the study to establish if male lecturers are sexually harassed by female students in tertiary institutions.

The questions posed were:

1. What is the level of awareness that female students harass male lecturers sexually?
2. Is sexual harassment of male lecturer by female students a common practice in tertiary institutions?
3. Can public information eliminate female students' participation in the social activity?

Research Hypothesis

Only one research hypothesis was formulated to test the subject of sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students as follows:

H₀: Female students do not harass male lecturers sexually in tertiary institutions.

H₁: Female students harass male lecturers sexually in tertiary institutions.

It was expected that obtained result from testing the above hypothesis will result in confirming whether female students harass male lecturers sexually or not.

II. CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Sexual harassment can be said to be as old as human history. For instance the various reported cases in the Bible, where males harass females and treat them as spoils of wars are rife. However, it was the counter action, where women harass males in the biblical era that has brought an insight which this study has examined as a credible alternative in dealing with the issue of sexual harassment. For example, the case of Joseph in the hands of Potiphar's wife saw how disagreement to sexual harassment led to punishment. Again, the refusal of John to yield sexually to the escapades of Herod's wife cost him his head. The understanding, therefore, seem to reveal that men who do not yield to sexual overtures of women, often suffer grave consequences.

Home video films have also shown how women, termed "big girls" use men as pawns on the sexual chessboards. They employ men and use them as sex objects in satisfying their urges and "class" mentality. Numerous films show how females use various ploys to attract and deal with males sexually. If it is believed that the movie depicts society and its activities (Schramm, 1974; Owuamalam, 2017). It means that public information, presented through films, could influence content consumers in a specific manner, depending on the reason for watching the film. Shoga (1999, P.44) believes that the behaviour of girls in contemporary times are becoming bizarre. Ofodile (2010, P.13) confirms that "broad day nudity characterized by exposure of the breast regions, exposure of the thighs, exposure of the buttock and other such exotic body exposure... Is tearing our culture and sanity apart". It is sexual harassment that may have led to the tearing apart, whether as homosexuals, such as Lesbians or heterosexuals in cross-gender sexual relations. The *white hunter* is an example of such a film.

In tertiary institutions, particularly universities, corrupt practices abound, relating to an adverse consequences on educational standards in the country. For instance, on the *Assembly Watch* in August 2016, a female senator arguing for stiff penalty against male lecturers who exploit female students sexually for grades was bemoaned. According to her, "girls are sexually harassed by male lecturers for marks and those who refuse are failed". It is this assertion that has stimulated interest in the current study in order to investigate the veracity of who is harassing who and for what reason.

The incidence of girls leading their lecturers into temptation is not new in tertiary institutions. For instance, a bold warming faces any visitor into the Imo State University, Owerri that “indecent dressing is not allowed on this campus”. It is probably in a bid to respond to the views of Nwosu (2008) that loss of moral code enforcement mechanism in tertiary institutions has become a contributory factor to a decadent society. According to her, promiscuity and its indulgence is morally frowned at in a decent society. It is expected that such corrupting vices should be abhorred by community members in tertiary institutions, as citadels of learning.

The incidents of female students dressing amorously before their male lecturers seem to be commonplace in tertiary institutions. Such attitudes send messages to the male lecturer, like “I am available”. The skimpy dressing which reveals the body contour and fires a nervous bloody experience in males is the bait which sex hawkers use as costumes, in soliciting patronage (Owuamalam, 2007). It makes them easily noticeable when make-up and strong romantic perfumes complement the costume in attracting attention and arousing interest in the “creative” female artiste. McGuire (1969) believes that attention leads to comprehension, which generates persuasive influence in the viewer. This persuasive strategy when combined with crossing the lecturers path and offering “any how” after examinations could pulmates the male lecturer to submission even with self-control.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to investigate if female students harass male lectures in tertiary institution. The essence is to understand if females in contemporary times initiate sexual harassment that may necessitate a review of clauses to the anticipated bill on sexual harassment so that persons of all sexes would benefit equally from such a legislative action.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social learning theory (McQuail, 2005) believes that learning does not come only from direct observation, also, by other indirect sources of which mass media content is one. It shows that habits, attitudes and behaviour are products of human exposure to specific information. The extent to which any influence is manifested is dependent on the underlying belief and opinion (Oskamp, 1979). It means that media content influences attitudes and behaviour, based on the nature of influence as persuasion, encountered in the communication experience (Borchers, 2002).

However, public information, whether through direct observation or mediated approaches, provide knowledge which the consumer uses to deal with situations. The provided message affords an opportunity to understand the information content of communication whether as semiotic (Fiske, 2000) or as audio-visual experience (Owuamalam, 2003). The import is that knowledge is required for any planned action.

The processing of in-coming information and what the receiver does with it is vital in understanding issues related to attitude and behaviour. The attitude of persons results from opinion and belief which mould perception as an inert experience. It is the overt experience that explains behaviour.

In this study, the information provided by costume and make-up of female students represent the non-verbal or semiotic communication, directed at their lecturers. The verbal expression of “anyhow”, or “anything”, conjours meaning from the female students to their male lecturers. It is the influence of such communication that leads to the formation of opinion that may lead to the overt experience of sexual harassment.

The Schema theory, according to Wicks (1992, p.119), “suggests that people are active processors of information and that schematic thinking derives from the need to organize thinking for the purpose of cognitive economy”. This theory therefore, explains how male lecturers process in-coming information on costume, behaviour and comments, exhibited by female students. It is how such schemes result in the observed action of the lecturer that explain the incidents of sexual harassment. It explains how interactions are interpreted, like in conversations (Kelior Mann et al, 1989; Tuner and Culingford, 1989). It shows that what transpires between a male lecturer and female student is a function of how the communication experience is evaluated. The result is an over expression (behaviour) of inert (attitude) opinion. It answers **how** an interaction leads to **why** an observed action, which in this case is termed sexual harassment.

However, the attribution theory provides the casual ways through which individuals looked for the reasons that explain observed behaviour (Miller, 2002, p.81). This view is supported by Jasper, Howstone and Fincham (1983, p.4) who believed that “attribution theory in the widest sense of the term..., deals with the ... common sense way of answering ‘why’ questions”. When a female student claims sexual harassment by a male lecturer, has she provided the information that led to such a behaviour? It may be in the answer as to why of such a behaviour that the issue leading to such an action can be deduced.

For instance, the expression of “anyhow” or “anything” by a female student could be interpreted as an invitation to sexual interaction or even intercourse. Again, “he touched my boobs”, has not told anyone how the female student was dressed. It may be the semiotic communication from the dressing of the female that may have led to such undesired action.

When a female student says “he failed me” at an examination, the common sense answer to why comes to the fore. It is the course of an individual’s action that reveals ones personal disposition as an internal attribution. The external attribution, according to Oskamp (1977, p.214) shows “that the cause of a person’s action is a factor outside the person”. The campus environmental situation of “Big Girls who know their way about school,” explain the phenomenon.

The attribution theory, therefore, is considered apt in this study since those hedonic reasons as cost and benefit explain why sexual harassment exist as corruption by both sexes. The exposé above shows why information interpretation leads to the observed behaviour among persons found within tertiary institutions as lecturers and female students.

IV. METHOD OF STUDY

The study is situated in Awka town, where students of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu and St. Paul Universities reside. The student hostels in Iyiagu, Ifitte, Odogwu Awka, Okpuno and Amaobia were purposively selected since they house students from no exclusive particular tertiary institution. This approach provides an opportunity to study sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students in the various institutions where the respondents school. Both male and female students were qualified to participate in the study.

The survey research method was adopted since it made the study of a cross-section of students possible, within the area of study (Nwodu, 2006). It provided the strategy for going into the field (where male and female students reside), in order to investigate the subject matter from those who should know. (Asika, 2002). The study avoided lecturers so as not to introduce bias or justification of any observed action. It is believed that the views of both male and female students will help the study establish if female students sexually harass their male lecturers and why.

Again, five hostels in five different locations as study units in Awka were purposively selected and studied. The sample used in this study was obtained through the Topman’s formular, since the population of students living in the hostels was unknown, when it is realized that “squatters” abound in the selected hostels. It became difficult to state the exact number of students in many rooms in the hostel, hence the difficulty in providing an authentic population for this study. According to the Topman’s formular, (Owuamalam, 2012).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p q}{e^2}$$

Where n = calculated sample size

p = probable positive responses

q = probable negative responses

Z = value used on the Z- score table.

e = margin of tolerable error

In this study, a total of 70 persons were selected from the student hostel at Iyiagu and asked if they are aware that female students harass their male lecturers. The respondents were given only two options of a “Yes” or “No” as answer.

The margin of error was placed of 5%, while the value on the Z-score table was 1.96. The details showed that 40 respondents claimed “No” as their answer while the other 30 said “Yes”. The sample size was therefore, calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.43 \times 0.57}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.84 \times 0.43 \times 0.57}{0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{6.941184}{0.0025}$$

$$= 376.47 \approx \mathbf{377}$$

It means that a sample size of **377** was calculated and used for the study. This sample was considered apt based on the advice of (Comrey, 1992) that in a multivariate study like the current one, “a sample size of 50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good and 1000 = excellent”. It means that the calculated sample size is between good and very good as to be used in this study.

The quota-sampling technique (Okoro, 2002), was adopted to ensure that clusters (Moemeka, 2000) where students reside were allocated sample, based on the observed number of students in the area. Five clusters were selected as hostels, at one in each study unit. The purposive sampling technique made it possible to allocate equal number of sample to each cluster in the minimum as follows:

| | | | | |
|---------|-------------|-----|-----|--|
| | Ifitte | --- | 76 | |
| | Odogwu Awka | --- | 74 | |
| | Iyiagu | --- | 76 | |
| Amaobia | --- | 75 | | |
| Okpuno | --- | 75 | | |
| Total | = | | 377 | |

The questionnaire was used as the measuring instrument in the study. A five-item questionnaire was designed for data collection. The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability, using the pilot-study approach. It was a certification that the questionnaire was able to measure what it was designed to measure that prompted its use for the study. The pilot study was conducted at the hostel in Iyiagu. The simple percentage method was used to determine values related to research questions while the Likert scale was used as the inferential statistical method for testing the only hypothesis in this study. The decision point value was obtained from the following formular:

$$DP = \frac{SA + A + UD + D + SD}{NR}$$

Where DP = decision point

SA = strongly agree

A = agree

UD = undecided

D = disagree

SD = strongly disagree

NR = total number of responses.

A value in descending order was allocated to each code, since asked questions, as comments, were made in the positive form. The import was that the following values were allocated: SA = 5; A = 4; UD = 3; D= 2; SD= 1. The decision point as mean value, was therefore, determined as follows:

$$X = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \underline{3}$$

It means that values below the decision point of 3 accepted the null hypothesis, H_0 , and rejected its alternative, H_1 . Any calculated value above that of the decision point accepted the alternative and rejected the null hypothesis. The details are expressed mathematically as follows:

$\bar{X} = X_{cal} > DP =$ accept H_1 and reject H_0 , while

$\bar{X} = X_{cal} < DP =$ accept H_0 and reject H_1

The frequency table was used to show how obtained values were classified and categorized into mutually exclusive cells (Nwodu, 2005).

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you aware that sexual harassment exist in tertiary institutions?
2. Do you know if female students harass male lecturers sexually?
3. Male lecturers are sexually harassed by female students in tertiary institutions.
 - (a) Strongly agree []
 - (b) Agree []
 - (c) Can't say []
 - (d) Disagree []
 - (e) Strongly disagree []
4. Male lecturer harassment by female students is a common practice in tertiary institutions.
 - (a) Strongly agree []
 - (b) Agree []
 - (c) Undecided []
 - (d) Disagree []
 - (e) Strongly disagree []
5. Exposure to public information programmes can eliminate the incidents.
 - (a) Strongly agree []
 - (b) Agree []
 - (c) Undecided []
 - (d) Disagree []
 - (e) Strongly disagree []

Data Presentation and Analysis

Three hundred and seventy-seven (377) copies of the questionnaire were produced and distributed, using the convenience method in the selected student hostels. It was found that 17 copies or 4.50% were invalid for the study since 12 were not returned and the other 5 had mutilated responses. It meant that a total of 360

copies of the questionnaire were returned as valid for use in the study. The researcher inquired from any potential respondent if he or she was a student in any tertiary institution, particularly, those in Awka and its environs. Those who did not belong to the required group were not eligible to participate in the study. The details of collected and analyzed data were as follows:

Table 1: Distribution by gender of respondents.

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Female students | 193 | 54.72 |
| Male students | 163 | 45.28 |
| Total | 360 | 100.00 |

Source: field survey, 2017.

The result from table 1 shows that more females were in the used sample than males by a difference of 9.54%. It means that majority of the respondents were female students.

Table 2: Awareness to sexual harassment as social problem in tertiary institutions.

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Yes | 202 | 56.11 |
| No | 74 | 20.56 |
| Not sure | 84 | 23.33 |
| Total | 360 | 100.00 |

Source: field survey, 2017.

Result from above table shows that majority of the respondents or 56.11% were aware of sexual harassment as an issue in tertiary institution. This view is supported by the fact that even where those who were not aware was added to those without any specific response, those who claimed to be aware would still be more by a difference of more than one-tenth of the respondents or 12.22%.

Item 3 in the questionnaire which wanted to know if female students harass male lecturers was used in the study. The findings were as follows:

Table 3: Sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students

| Item 3 | Response | | | | | | Total | Mean value |
|---|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|------------------|
| | SA=5 | A=4 | UD=3 | D=2 | SD=1 | 15 | | |
| Male lecturers are sexually harassed by female students in tertiary institutions. | Code value | 35 | 116 | 109 | 71 | 29 | 360 | 11.3 |
| | Frequency | 175 | 464 | 327 | 142 | 29 | 1137 | 360 |
| | Code value result | 9.72 | 32.22 | 30.28 | 19.72 | 8.06 | 100.00 | 3.158 |
| | Percentage | | | | | | | $\bar{X} = 3.16$ |

Source: field survey, 2017.

The result above shows that 41.94% of the respondents agreed that female students harass male lecturers sexually while 27.78% disagreed. It shows that whereas more than two-fifths of the respondents responded positively, more than one-quarter disagreed. It means that more students believed that male lecturers were sexually harassed by female students by a difference of 14.16% or more than one-tenth of the respondents. Again, where the decision point has been calculated as 3.0, the obtained result above shows that the calculated mean value of 3.16 was higher than that of the decision point value,

($X = 3.16 > 3.00$), by a significant difference of 0.16. It means that the above result has proved that female students harass male lecturers sexually, hence rejecting the null hypothesis, H_0 , and accepting the alternative hypothesis, H_1 , in this study.

Research Question Two

Is sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students a common practice in tertiary institutions?

Item 4 in the questionnaire was used to answer the above question. Data obtained were analyzed as follows:

Table 4: Extent of sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students.

| Item 4 | Response | | | | | | Total | Mean value \bar{X} |
|--|-------------------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------|
| Harassment of male lecturers by female students is a common practice in tertiary institutions. | Code value | SA=5 | A=4 | UD=3 | D=2 | SD=1 | 15 | $\frac{1031}{360}$ = 2.86 |
| | Frequency | 22 | 98 | 91 | 107 | 42 | 360 | |
| | Code value result | 110 | 392 | 273 | 214 | 42 | 1031 | $\bar{X} = 2.86$ |
| | Percentage | 6.11 | 27.22 | 2.53 | 29.72 | 11.67 | 100 | |

Source: field survey, 2017.

Result from the table above shows that more persons disagrees that sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students is a common practice in tertiary institutions because whereas one-third or 33.33% agreed, more than two-fifths or 41.39% disagreed. This result was also confirmed by the calculated mean value of 2.86 which was less than the decision point value of 3.0 by -0.14 . It shows that $X = 2.86 < 3.0$. It means that the extent of sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students is not a common practice in tertiary institution.

Research Question Three

Can public information eliminate female students' participation in the social activity?

Item 5 in the questionnaire was used to answer the above question. Data obtained was analyzed as follows:

Table 5: Public information influence on the social activity.

| Item 5 | Response | | | | | | Total | Mean value \bar{X} |
|---|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|
| Public information through radio and TV will eliminate sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students in tertiary institutions. | Code value | SA=5 | A=4 | UD=3 | D=2 | SD=1 | 15 | $\frac{1027}{360}$ = 2.836 |
| | Frequency | 23 | 104 | 70 | 117 | 46 | 360 | |
| | Code value result | 115 | 416 | 210 | 234 | 46 | 1027 | $\bar{X} = 2.84$ |
| | Percentage | 6.39 | 28.89 | 19.44 | 32.50 | 12.78 | 100 | |

Source: field survey, 2017.

Result from the above table shows that whereas slightly more than one-third of the respondent or 35.28% believed that public information can influence female students not to participate in the sexual harassment of male lecturers, more than two-fifths or 45.28% did not agree to that view. It means that those who did not agree were more by 10% or one-tenth of the respondents. This result was also confirmed through the obtained mean value from processed data. It was seen that the mean value of **2.84** was lower than the decision point value of **3.0**. It shows a significant difference of -0.16 . Hence $X = 2.84 < 3.0$.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students in tertiary institutions exist. This view is supported by human needs and satisfaction as stipulated by Maslow (1979). Sex is one of the basic needs of humans, whether as male lecturers or female students. It is even lower in the hierarchy of needs which shows its desirability like food and water (Cutlip and Centre, 1979). One, therefore, understands why the respondents in the study believed that sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students exist in tertiary institutions.

The study found that the extent of social issue is not wide-spread in tertiary institutions. This view is supported by Schema and attribution theories (Miller, 2002). It is the intention of the female student that determines how she approaches the issue of sexual harassment of male lecturers. According to Heider (1958), it is “the person’s ability, intention and exertion” that explain why female students harass male lecturers sexually. Oskamp (1977) evaluates “ability in relation to the difficulty of the task and exertion as the observed apparent effort of the person” (female student). Heider concludes that “only when we perceive the person as intending the action’s consequences do we infer personal causality and make internal attribution about the person’s dispositions or traits”. It becomes necessary to find in another study, what the personal intention of the female student is that drives her to harass male lecturers sexually.

Finally, the social learning theory suggests that action may be related to obtained information, like from observation and mass media content. It means that public information provided through radio and television programmes are expected to provide knowledge which the consumer, both the female student and the male lecturers should obtain through their exposure to the source. Public information is a mass oriented knowledge provider. It is what the individual does with obtained information that determines its efficacy.

However, in the case of the current issue under study, sexual harassment is a personal activity by female students. Individual differences (Schramm, 1977) and need gratification (McQuail, 2005) are the major determinants of how the students participate in the sexual harassment of male lecturers. This view was substantiated by this study which found that public information may not be able to eliminate sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students, as shown at table 5.

The major finding in this study is that although female students can harass male lecturers, the incident is not extensive in tertiary institution. It is the individual female student’s intention that determines her participation in the sexual harassment of male lecturers in their respective institutions.

VI. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Exposure to information sources creates awareness which persons require to understand an environment. It is through observation and public information that sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students is brought to the fore.
- ❖ Sexual harassment of male lecturers by female students exist in tertiary institutions but it is not expansive at the time of this study. A replicative study is required after a while, say five or ten years, to determine if the social issue has exacerbated or reduced.
- ❖ Action based on obtained information is a personal activity. It requires a personal communication approach to deal with the social issue. Public information format may have been found not to be effective. Personal counselling is suggested.
- ❖ A further research is advocated to ascertain why female students engage in the sexual harassment of their male lecturers. The determination of the why would lead to finding a solution to how the problem can be solved.

Contribution to Research and Society

The study has provided an empirical evidence through research, to show that female students harass their male lecturers. It means that the issue of sexual harassment is not only male-oriented. Again, the endemic corruption in the society is a social issue. Sexual harassment is one of such vices. Any legislation on the issue should be all encompassing so as to capture culprits, whether as males or females. The study shows that females are also guilty of the offence, like in tertiary institutions. Any effective legislation should take the provided view into cognisance so as not to encourage discrimination.

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