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Liveability of Kuala Lumpur City Centre: An Evaluation of the Happiness Level of the Streets' Activities

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***Abstract*—**Liveable city is referred to as the quality of life in an area that contributes towards a safe, healthy and enjoyable place. This paper discusses the role of the streets' activities in making Kuala Lumpur a liveable city and the happiness level of the residents towards the city's street activities. The study was conducted using the residents of Kuala Lumpur. A mixed method technique is used with the quantitative data as a main data and supported by the qualitative data. Data were collected using questionnaires, observation and also an interview session with a sample of residents of Kuala Lumpur. The sampling technique is based on multistage cluster data sampling. The findings revealed that, there is still no significant relationship between the length of stay of the resident in Kuala Lumpur with the happiness level towards the street activities that occurred in the city.

***Keywords*—**Liveable city, activities, urban design quality, quality of life, happiness level.

I. Introduction

CITIES are functioning as hubs for economic activities and the employment opportunities. However, the city needs to provide other attractions such as residential areas for living and also entertainment to increase the attraction and boost the economy. Reference [1] describes that a liveable city is where the economic opportunity is growing, it is a vibrant and congetional, healthy safe and free from the siege of mentality syndrome, where the physical environment is always fresh and free from pollution. Reference [2] also adds that the scale of growth in cities presents new social, economic and environmental challenges for those who live, work and engage in businesses within the city.

According to [3], *liveable* refers to as 'place' and 'life' where livability is referred as to 'the quality of being movable; capable of being moved or rearrange. This is also supported by Oxford Dictionary which states that liveable is an environment or climate that is fit to live in. Liveability is defined as 'quality of life' as experienced by the residents within a city or region [4]. Reference [5] defines liveability as one of the aspects that could contribute to a high quality of living. This is because a high quality of living will affect resident's lifestyle, health condition and stability of the built environment.

Livability is concerned with the quality of spaces and built environment. It is about how easy a place is to use and how safe it feels. It is about developing and maintaining a sense of place by creating an environment that is both inviting and enjoyable [6]. New Zealand's Ministry of Environment also quoted livability as a unique combination of amenity values (such as open space, design features, urban vegetation); historic and cultural heritage; location: and intangible values such as character, landscape and sense of place.

Reference [7] mentioned that the city has focused to become a more global city although they are at the top of the list of the most liveable city in the world. In order to achieve the mission, the city has offered to provide a comfortable place to work and transact business. The performance of the city has contributed by these two characteristics that are closely integrated as the service industries and businesses are dependent on skilled and educated business owners and workers who seek a high quality lifestyle and environment.

Malaysia's descriptions of a livable city are cities that are vibrant and attractive places to live in [8]. The report added that the attractiveness of a city is strongly related to the liveability.

In Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur city centre has the largest number of population in any Malaysian city, which is nearly 2 million people. Reference [9] stated that most of the economic activities are taking place in the city centre. The importance of the city activities had been mentioned by [10] stated that the factors influencing the character of a town are its geographical setting, subsequent fortunes and also from the urban activities. In this research, activities that happened in or at the surrounding buildings will determine the residents' involvement and affection towards the city's image.

In the 1960s, [11] stated that a city has an influence towards economic engine and generates growth. Reference [12] added that the city plays a role as a communication network. He explained on how the cities operate like a magnetic or gravitational field of force with human particle and the movement of goods, services and people by transportation is attracted to them.

Reference [13] explained that in order for a place to be successful, the place needs to be accessible to all the senses by

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engaging the perception of its occupants where it is this perception that allows for a direct sense of continuing association with the community's involvement with the city and the region. This shows how important the community's involvement with the city in order to create a sense of place within the area. This means that a space needs to accommodate for a wide range of individuals in order to ensure their ability to experience a connection with the space.

Earlier, according to [14], "*sense is the interaction between person and place and depends on spatial form and quality, culture, temperament, status, experience and current purpose of the observer*".

In this paper, the residents are considered as the people who will create their own sense of place through different aspects they bring to the physical setting and how they use the space. In the city, the activities are among the factors that make it alive and functional. People's reactions, identifications or perceptions of a place will depend on the type of exposure they have to various kinds of settings throughout their lives.

According to [15], a good city is for walking, staying, meeting, self expression, play and exercise. The starting point for planning a city is creating a universal human activity where the city must provide a good condition for people to walk, stand, sit, listen and talk.

Activities as defined by [16] are 'the specific behavioral manifestation of man-environment relations constituting a form of purposeful transformation of matters of information. Reference [16] suggested that activity can be analyzed and divided into four components:

i. The activity proper which consists of eating, shopping, drinking and walking.
ii. The specific way of doing it such as shopping in a bazaar, and other similar places.
iii. The additional, adjacent or associated activities which become part of an activity system such as exchanging gossips while shopping
iv. The symbolic aspect of the activity, for example, shopping as a conspicuous consumption

Thus, it is apparent that human activities bring a sense of life in a city and that is why they are noticed by people. These activities become more prominent when the physical form and elements actually enhance the manifestation of these activities as mentioned by [16].

Reference [15] mentioned that there are two types of activities taking place in the city which is moving activities and stationary activities. Like moving activities, stationary activities also cover a wide spectrum. The extent and character of the activities depend greatly on the surrounding culture and economic level. In many developing countries, the majority of the activities have taken place in the public space. The situation is differing with the developing country where by the stationary activities are more influenced by optional activities.

Tenth Malaysian Plan stated that in order to create a vibrant and liveable city, some aspects need to be considered including the approach of the urban activities and culture. The city of Kuala Lumpur is forced to be positioned as a city for people to seek quality and diverse lifestyles, close proximity to nature, cultural richness as well as being a modern metropolis with excellent infrastructure.

Arts and culture however act as a catalyst to increase knowledge-based innovation. The Malaysian Government is also planning to encourage hosting international arts and culture event in the cities and perhaps this will create unexciting environment for the people and also attract foreigners to experience themselves the Malaysian culture and making the citizens work in a day, play in the evening and the weekend. These attractions may help Malaysia to be seen as a liveable city where its rich cultural elements shown in any parts of the city.

II. Research Methodology

A. Questionnaire Survey

A sample survey was conducted with the residents of Kuala Lumpur. This research assumes that the duration of living in the city has affected the happiness level towards the urban activities such as street activities, their opinion on how the street activities make the city memorable to them, safety level at the location of the street's activities, comfort level at the street, opinion on how the activities contribute towards a special image to Kuala Lumpur and also their true feelings towards walking in the streets.

This research employs a questionnaire survey of 330 residents of Kuala Lumpur by multi-stage cluster sampling. Each questionnaire is divided into two parts which is Part one – Respondent's Profile; and Part two – the city's sense of place, sense of belonging and appreciation towards heritage and culture. This is supported by secondary data from [17], National Urbanization Plan and Government Transformation Program document, and some interviews with the related government agencies.

B. Interview and Observation Survey

An interview was held with several residents of Kuala Lumpur regarding their perception of the city. The observation technique was used to study the relationship between respondents' feedback and the actual situation in the study area. Reference [16] stated that direct observations can be made more efficient if we have determined the particular behavior or activity that is of our interest. The observation will include 'the type of activities in the city such as street activities, location and also its conditions using photographic recording and mapping. Table I shows the framework of observation and techniques of recording information for the observation survey;

TABLE I
Framework of Observation and Techniques of Recording Information

Framework of observation and techniques of recording information	Periodic Observation, Photographic and field notes	i.Street activities ii.Uses and activities iii.The type of activities and its location

C. The Study Area

Kuala Lumpur is the capital city of Malaysia with a total area of 242.2 square feet and estimated population of 1.7

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million in 2009. Kuala Lumpur is the Malaysia's premier location for business and trade.

According to the current Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020, the city is divided into six strategic zones. This study focuses on the main core of the area where the major activities are taking place such as (i) the major nodes for commercial area in Kuala Lumpur, (ii) located within the diverse economic activity area, (iii) main streets of Kuala Lumpur with a high concentration of pedestrian users, shoppers and tourist. These characteristics are mainly observed in the area called The Golden Triangle area.

The Golden Triangle does not have its own boundaries but usually is defined as a major node and also a central place where the major shopping centres, entertainment districts and offices are located. Reference [18] identified the Golden Triangle region as covering the area of Jalan Pudu, South of Jalan Ampang and west of Jalan Imbi, and Jalan Tun Razak. The Golden Triangle also embraces the shopping area of Bukit Bintang, the office towers along Jalan Raja Chulan, entertainment area along Jalan P. Ramlee and the whole Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), which is well known by all residents in Kuala Lumpur. They are also the most happening places with a diverse type of activities during the day and night as well as filled with landscape and skyscrapers.



Fig. 1 Kuala Lumpur City Centre map

D. Data Analysis

The questionnaires were processed using SPSS program and were analysed using several statistical analysis techniques such as frequencies and chi square. Frequencies data were used to show the average rates from all respondents. Chi Square analysis was used to observe the relationship between two variables whether it is a weak or strong relationship or no relationship at all.

III. Findings

Based on the survey, the analysis and findings are to assess the happiness level of the residents towards the street activities in the city. Based on this aspect, there are two different parts that were surveyed. The first part is the respondent's profile which is determined by the significance of the resident's background, i.e. their length of stay in Kuala Lumpur. The second part focused more on their happiness level towards the urban activities.

A. Respondent Profile

Stratified multistage data sampling requires an equal number of races and ages to be sampled. A cross tabulation, Table II below shows that the research had obtained an appropriate amount of respondents. A total of 339 respondents took part in this research where 51% are male and 49% were female. The ratio of male and female almost accurately matches the gender ratio of the town population which is estimated to be 50.89% male and 49.11% female [19].

TABLE II
Respondent Profile According To Age And Race

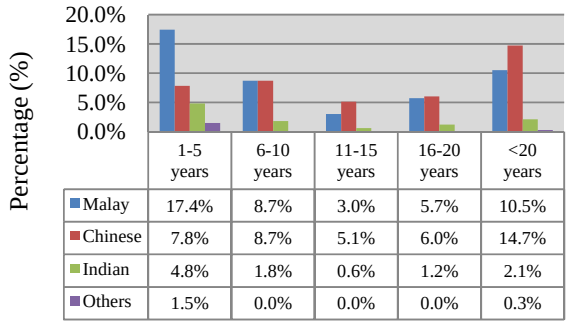
Age	Race				Total
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	
1-19 years old	39	34	8	0	81
	11.5%	10.0%	2.4%	-	23.9%
20-55 years old	93	88	23	3	208
	27.4%	26.0%	6.8%	0.9%	61.4%
>55 years old	21	21	5	2	49
	6.2%	6.2%	1.5%	0.6%	14.5%
Total	153	144	36	5	339
	45.1%	42.5%	10.6%	1.5%	100.0%

Reference [19] categorized the population according to the age structure of 0-4,5-19, 20-55, and above 55 years old group. The categorization was justified based on economic productivity whereas the first group is under the working-age population, the second group is the population that is active in the economy and the third group is considered as inactive economy. The sample respondent that was selected through the sampling technique is representing the whole population group.

Fig. 2 shows that Malay respondents have a longer length of stay in the city of Kuala Lumpur. This is probably because of the origin of Kuala Lumpur as an economic centre that attracts people from other states to live in the city.

TABLE III
Cross Tabulation Table of Age and Ethnic Distribution

Races	Gender				Total obtained (n) (%)
	Man (n)		Woman(n)		
	Total Real (%)	Total Obtained (%)	Total Real (%)	Total Obtained (%)	
Malay	75	75	72	79	153
	22.7%	21.8%	21.9%	23.3%	45.1%
Chinese	73	73	70	71	144
	22%	21.5%	21.3%	20.9%	42.5%
Indian	17	18	17	18	36
	5.2%	5.3%	5.0%	5.3%	10.6%
Others	3	1	3	4	5
	0.9%	0.3%	0.9%	1.2%	1.5%
Total (Percentage)	168 50.9%	166 49.0%	162 49.1%	173 51.0%	339 100.0%



	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	<20 years
Malay	17.4%	8.7%	3.0%	5.7%	10.5%
Chinese	7.8%	8.7%	5.1%	6.0%	14.7%
Indian	4.8%	1.8%	0.6%	1.2%	2.1%
Others	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%

Fig. 2 Age of each ethnicity in Kuala Lumpur

B. The Happiness Level towards the City Activities

1. Street Activities

Fig. 3 shows that 57% of the residents are unhappy with the street activities in Kuala Lumpur area. This raises concern probably with the location of where the street activities have taken place which probably disturbs their daily life routine. The visual survey illustrates that the majority of the urban street activities taking place has contributed to environmental problems, uncomfortable smell and also was engaged by the foreigners. Apart from that, the street vendors were doing businesses in the pedestrianized area (walkway), which at the end limit access for the pedestrians. This is probably one of the reasons why the residents are not happy with the situation of the street's activities in Kuala Lumpur.

Table IV shows the chi square test of the length of stay in Kuala Lumpur by the respondents and also the street activities taking place in the city. The result shows that there is no relationship between the length of stay and the city activities as the p value is higher than .050 (P=.075). Despite what has been explained by visual survey, this result proves that their happiness level towards street activities has no significant relationship with the resident's length of stay in KL and probably this is caused by other factors.

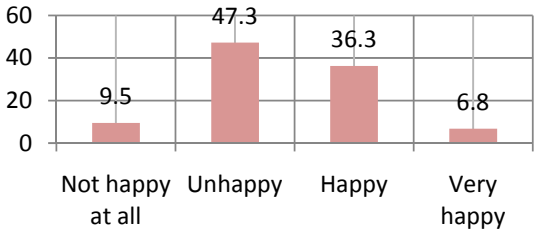


Fig. 3 Happiness level towards street activities

TABLE IV
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS HAPPINESS LEVEL TOWARDS STREETS ACTIVITIES AND THEIR LENGTHOF STAY IN THE CITY

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.582[a]	12	.075
Likelihood Ratio	23.224	12	.026
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.553	1	.213
N of Valid Cases	330		

a. 5 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.95.

2. How the Street Activities Make the City Memorable to the Respondents.

Based on the survey, the result shows that 50.3% of the residents agreed that the street activities in Kuala Lumpur do make the city memorable to them. This is supported by an interview with the two residents of Kuala Lumpur, who mentioned that, 'the smell of the streets, even though it is not comfortable, the dirtiness and the communication between the vendors and customers are totally different from the other cities that I have visited'. Even though it creates an uncomfortable situation, residents found that there is something that they can remember about the city of Kuala Lumpur.

The Table V shows the chi square test of the length of stay in Kuala Lumpur by the respondents and also their opinion towards the street activities whether they have made the city memorable to them. The result shows that there is a relationship between the length of stay and the urban activities as the p value is lower than .050 (P=.002). Despite what has been explained by an interview session with the residents, this result suggests that their opinion on how the street activities give memorable experience has a significant relationship with the resident's length of staying in KL.

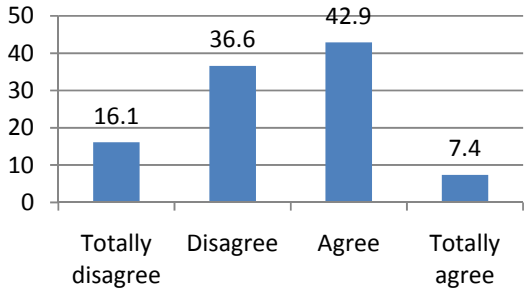


Fig.4 Happiness level towards Streets Activities

TABLE V
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS OPINION OF THE STREET ACTIVITIES AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN THE CITY

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.756[a]	12	.002
Likelihood Ratio	32.141	12	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.194	1	.660
N of Valid Cases	330		

a. 4 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.12.

3. Safety Level at the Location of the Street Activities

Based on the survey, the result shows that 53.3% of the residents was not happy with the safety of the street activities in Kuala Lumpur (Fig. 5). Furthermore, according to the Malaysian Quality of Live Index from 1990-2004, public safety had surprisingly a negative percentage of change which is -21.5% showing that safety has become an issue in previous years. This is not a shocking result whereby the residents themselves felt not happy about safety in Kuala Lumpur.

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However the chi square result that Table VI shows that there is no relationship between the length of stay and the city activities as the p value is higher than .050 (P= .107). An interview held with the residents supports the 'non-significant relationship' when the residents mention that 'crime can happen everywhere in any parts of the world and to anybody because the victim can be anyone on the streets'.

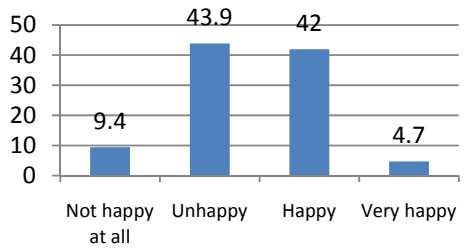


Fig.5 Happiness level towards the safety level of the street activities

TABLE VI
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS SAFETY LEVEL AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN THE CITY

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.289[a]	12	.107
Likelihood Ratio	19.070	12	.087
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.390	1	.238
N of Valid Cases	313		

a. 7 cells (35.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.29.

4. Comfort Level at the Place where the Activities Take Place.

Fig.6 shows the resident's happiness level towards the comfort level at the activities taking place. The result shows that 52.4% of the residents are not comfortable walking in the streets where the street activities in Kuala Lumpur taking place. This is due to the way in which the vendors are managing the place in order to conduct their activities. Based on the visual survey, limited space for movement may also be the reason why it is not comfortable to walk in that place. The chi square result shows that there is no relationship between the length of stay and the urban activities as the p value is higher than .050 (P= .672) (Table VII). This means that, no matter how long they have lived in Kuala Lumpur, it still does not determine their comfort level at the place.

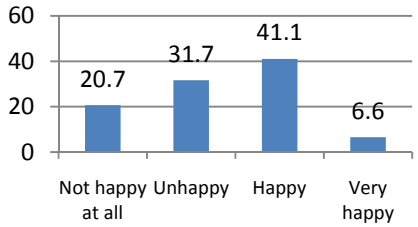


Fig. 6 Happiness level towards the comfort level of the street activities

TABLE VII
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS COMFORT LEVEL AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN THE CITY

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.364[a]	12	.672
Likelihood Ratio	12.041	12	.442
Linear-by-Linear Association	.714	1	.398
N of Valid Cases	313		

a. 3 cells (15.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.81.

5. Opinion on How the Activities Influence the Image Kuala Lumpur

Fig. 7 shows that 81% of the respondents agreed that the street activities exude a special image to the city. The residents named Bukit Bintang Street, Tunku Abdul Rahman Street and Petaling Street as the places that are most unique and special in the city. Based on the visual survey, these places reflect true retail activities of the local Malay culture where bargaining is still being practiced. Furthermore, the goods reflecting the multicultural background of the residents can be found here. However, the chi square test shows in Table VIII show that there is no relationship between the length of stay and their opinion towards whether the streets has given a special image to the city as the p value is higher than .050 (P= .175). This is probably because the residents are already immune to these types of event happening and found that nothing is special about it. However during the interview the residents, who have lived for less than five years in KL, said that 'there are a lot of activities happening in KL and it is rare compared to other cities in Malaysia. At night, Kuala Lumpur does not sleep and I found that this is unique and special'.

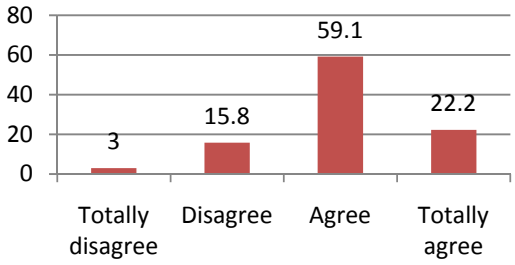


Fig.7 Happiness level towards the image of the city activities

TABLE VIII
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY IMAGE AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN THE CITY

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.375[a]	12	.175
Likelihood Ratio	18.631	12	.098
Linear-by-Linear Association	.359	1	.549
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .51.

6. Feelings Walking along the Streets.

Fig.8 shows that the respondents are happy walking in the area where the activities took place in the city of Kuala Lumpur as shown in the high percentage (71.4%) of the

response. The chi square test shows that there is a relationship between the length of stay and their opinion towards whether the streets have given a special image to the place as the p value is lower than.050 (P= .037). This situation is probably because the residents do enjoy walking in the city that has lots of activities and views that can be experienced and enjoyed.

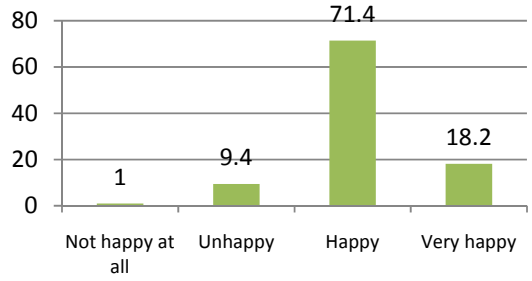


Fig.8 Happiness level towards the feelings walking along the streets where the activities take place

TABLE IX
CHI SQUARE TEST FOR THE RESIDENTS FEELING WALKING TO THE STREET AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN THE CITY

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.033[a]	12	.037
Likelihood Ratio	22.987	12	.028
Linear-by-Linear Association	.189	1	.664
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

IV. Conclusion and Discussion

Kuala Lumpur is ranked at number 78th in the World's most liveable city where one of the indicators to score is "Culture and Environment". To be listed among the most liveable city is a big influence towards the economic situation of the country. Apart from attracting the visitors, it is also important for the government to make sure that Kuala Lumpur is not just a place to visit, but as a city to be remembered and perhaps mentioned when they go back to their city.

The result in Table X shows that the resident's length of stay in the city is only significant with their opinion on how the city's street activities give them a memorable experience and also their feelings when walking along the streets. Their length of stay in the city did determine their awareness towards the streets' activities, and function, therefore making them agreed that these activities make Kuala Lumpur a well known place. Apart from that, the activities have shown that the city is rich with cultural values therefore making it interesting to attract visitors to the place. That is why the street activities have no significance with the length of stay of the residents as the activities may be changing according to the needs and demands from time to time. As mentioned earlier, safety is an issue everywhere, and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration in creating a better environment as well as increasing the comfort level of being in the city centre.

TABLE X
OVERALL SIGNIFICANT RESULT

Happiness level towards the city activities	Significant with the residents' length of stay?
Streets activities	X
Their opinion on how the street activities make the city memorable to them	✓
Safety level at the location of the street activities	X
Comfort level of the street	X
Opinion on how the activities give special image to the Kuala Lumpur	X
Feeling walking in the streets.	✓

Furthermore, a change in attitude of the residents can perhaps change the design of the city centre's environment itself. It is suggested that further research is needed to assess the level of happiness towards the city hall's efforts in creating Kuala Lumpur a safer and liveable city.

V. Acknowledgement

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