

## A Model for Instilling Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Values in Early Childhood

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini berangkat dari kegelisahan atas praktik pendidikan agama Islam pada anak usia dini yang masih terjebak dalam pendekatan normatif dan simbolik, sehingga gagal menumbuhkan kesadaran inklusif di tengah realitas masyarakat yang majemuk. Studi ini bertujuan merumuskan model penanaman nilai pendidikan agama Islam berbasis multikultural yang tidak hanya konseptual, tetapi juga operasional dan kontekstual. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan berbagai temuan mutakhir terkait pendidikan Islam, multikulturalisme, dan karakteristik perkembangan anak usia dini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas penanaman nilai terletak pada pergeseran paradigma dari transmisi pengetahuan menuju pengalaman hidup yang bermakna. Model yang dihasilkan menempatkan anak sebagai subjek aktif melalui pendekatan konstruktivisme, experiential learning, dan pembelajaran sosial. Nilai-nilai seperti toleransi, keadilan, dan empati tidak diajarkan secara verbal, melainkan diinternalisasikan melalui pembiasaan, keteladanan, interaksi sosial, dan refleksi. Integrasi dimensi kognitif, afektif, dan sosial menjadi fondasi utama dalam membangun kesadaran multikultural sejak dini.

**Kata kunci:** Pendidikan Agama Islam, Multikultural, Anak Usia Dini, Model Penanaman Nilai

### Abstract

*This research stems from concerns about the practice of Islamic religious education for early childhood, which remains trapped in normative and symbolic approaches, thus failing to foster inclusive awareness amidst the reality of a pluralistic society. This study aims to formulate a model for instilling values in Islamic religious education based on multiculturalism that is not only conceptual, but also operational and contextual. Using a qualitative approach based on literature studies, this research integrates various recent findings related to Islamic education, multiculturalism, and the characteristics of early childhood development. The results indicate that the effectiveness of value instillation lies in a paradigm shift from the transmission of knowledge to meaningful life experiences. The resulting model positions children as active subjects through constructivist, experiential learning, and social learning approaches. Values such as tolerance, justice, and empathy are not taught verbally but are internalized through habituation, role modeling, social interaction, and reflection. The integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions is the main foundation for building multicultural awareness from an early age.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education, Multiculturalism, Early Childhood, Value Instillation Models

## Introduction

Indonesia is a social space shaped by the intertwining diversity of religions, ethnicities, languages, and cultures in everyday life. This diversity not only defines identity but also shapes complex patterns of social interaction. In practice, differences do not always lead to harmony; they also harbor the potential for friction rooted in differing perspectives. This situation demonstrates that society is in a dynamic between integration and fragmentation. In this context, education cannot be positioned as a neutral entity; it is always involved in the reproduction and transformation of social values. Therefore, education is a strategic space for fostering awareness of diversity.

In the educational space, Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' value orientations (Dewi, 2025). However, current practices still exhibit normative and doctrinal tendencies. This approach often positions religion as a closed system. As a result, Islamic values lose their dialogical dimension (Mustafida, 2020). This weakens the formation of inclusive attitudes. The tension between universal teachings and educational practices is becoming increasingly apparent. If left unchecked, education has the potential to foster exclusivism. This calls for a new, more contextual approach.

This issue becomes even more significant when applied to early childhood education. This phase is the initial stage of character formation and social awareness (Suradi et al., 2021). Children begin to recognize their identity and their social environment. At this stage, perspectives on differences begin to form (Hafni & Sa'adah, 2024). Education that is not sensitive to diversity has the potential to foster exclusive mindsets (Putri et al., 2024). Conversely, the right approach can foster empathy and tolerance. These values must be present in real-life experiences, as early childhood education is the primary foundation. However, the reality on the ground shows that Islamic religious education in early childhood education (PAUD) has not fully integrated multicultural values (Mirza & Fitriani, 2025). Learning is still oriented towards cognitive aspects. The value of diversity is often conveyed only symbolically. The process of internalizing values has not been optimal (Wahidah & Maristyawati, 2023). This creates a gap between knowledge and behavior. Limited teacher competency is also a constraint (Hidayah, 2024). This situation shows that the approach used is not yet effective.

Previous research has demonstrated the importance of multicultural education, demonstrating that integrating multicultural values can foster tolerance (Yurii & Lita, 2024). Diversity-based education also improves children's social skills (Kasmianti, 2022). However, most research remains descriptive, comprehensive learning models are limited, and value integration has not been implemented sustainably. This indicates a research gap, which serves as an important basis for this study. This situation demands a paradigm shift, where Islamic religious education needs to move from an indoctrinative approach to a transformative one (Parker & Hoon, 2014). Education is not merely about transferring knowledge but also about fostering critical awareness (Habibulloh, 2024). Islamic values need to be understood as an ethical foundation. A multicultural approach is crucial in this transformation, addressing both conceptual and practical aspects, as without change, education will lose relevance.

Furthermore, learning practices tend to be ceremonial, with diversity values conveyed symbolically. Children lack direct experience, even though early childhood learning is experience-based (Suradi et al., 2021). When values are not contextualized, they are difficult to understand, demonstrating weaknesses in learning design. Teachers need clear guidance; without it, value integration is suboptimal. Global dynamics are intensifying the urgency, and identity polarization is increasing. Intolerance is beginning to enter the world of education

(Abidin & Murtadlo, 2020). Religious education must respond to this situation, as education not only transmits values but also builds social awareness.

Entering a more specific realm, the main problem lies not only in the weak integration of values, but also in the absence of an operational conceptual framework (Alfiya et al., 2025). Many multicultural education practices in early childhood education (PAUD) take place without a clear model foundation. Teachers tend to rely on unstructured pedagogical intuition. This leads to inconsistent value implementation. In many cases, diversity is only a temporary theme. In fact, these values should be the spirit of learning (Mukarom et al., 2024). This irregularity indicates a lack of pedagogical design. The absence of a systematic model impacts the weak internalization of values. Children do not receive continuous learning experiences. The values taught do not shape behavioral patterns. This shows that learning is still oriented towards knowledge transfer. Meanwhile, the affective and social dimensions have not been optimally developed; this imbalance weakens the goals of education. Education loses its function as a character builder, therefore a more integrative approach is needed (Setiawan et al., 2024).

This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of integration between the curriculum and learning practices (Wahidah & Maristyawati, 2023). Curricula often incorporate diversity values. However, their implementation is ineffective. Teachers struggle to translate concepts into practice (Hidayah, 2024). This indicates a gap between curriculum design and classroom reality. This gap impacts the low quality of learning. In this context, learning models are an urgent need. Models serve as a bridge between concepts and practice. Furthermore, the developed model must have a strong theoretical foundation; theory serves as the foundation for designing learning. Without a theoretical foundation, the model will lose its direction. In this context, constructivism theory becomes relevant. Children construct knowledge through experience (Suradi et al., 2021). Values are understood through social interaction. Another aspect that needs to be considered is the role of teachers as the primary actors in the model's implementation. Teacher competence determines the success of learning (Hidayah, 2024). Teachers must have an understanding of diversity. Furthermore, teachers must be able to manage multicultural classes (Hafni & Sa'adah, 2024). Without these competencies, the model will not be effective. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity is crucial.

In this context, the research's novelty lies in its attempt to integrate Islamic and multicultural values within a single framework. This approach differs from previous research, which tended to separate the two concepts. In this study, both are integrated, providing a new perspective on Islamic education. The developed model also positions children as active subjects; they are no longer mere objects of learning. Instead, they are involved in the learning process. Experiential learning is the primary focus, where children learn through interaction. Furthermore, this research is relevant to national education policy, where religious moderation is a key agenda. Therefore, the developed model can be a solution.

## **Research Methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research (library research). This approach was chosen because the research focused on a conceptual study of the model for instilling multicultural Islamic religious education values in early childhood. Library research enabled researchers to critically examine various relevant scientific sources, including books, journal articles, and academic documents related to Islamic education, multicultural education, and early childhood education (Mahdayani et al., 2023). In this context, research is not oriented towards collecting field data, but rather towards exploring and synthesizing ideas that have developed in the scientific literature.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from reputable scientific journal articles that directly discuss Islamic religious education, multicultural education, and learning models for early childhood. Meanwhile, secondary data include books, previous research results, proceedings, and relevant education policy documents. Sources were selected selectively, considering aspects of credibility, relevance, and recency (at least within the last five years), ensuring that the data used has accountable academic validity (Desmila & Suryana, 2023). Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation studies by searching various scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Sinta journals, and other academic sources. This process involved identifying, classifying, and organizing literature based on key themes, such as Islamic educational values, the concept of multiculturalism, early childhood characteristics, and experiential learning models. The collected data was then selected to ensure its alignment with the research focus (Sanah et al., 2024). Thus, the data collection process is not only an inventory, but also involves a critical assessment of the quality of the sources.

Data analysis in this study uses content analysis techniques (content analysis) and conceptual analysis. Content analysis is conducted by identifying patterns, themes, and trends in the various literature reviewed. Meanwhile, conceptual analysis is used to formulate an integrative value instillation model. The analysis process is carried out through several stages: data reduction, categorization, synthesis, and drawing conclusions. At this stage, researchers attempt to connect various findings from previous research to produce a complete conceptual framework (Alfiya et al., 2025). To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, comparing multiple references on similar topics. Furthermore, a critical evaluation of each source was conducted to avoid bias and ensure consistency of argumentation. Data validity is assessed not only by the number of sources but also by the depth of analysis and the interconnectedness of the concepts developed (Mahdayani et al., 2023). With this approach, the research results are expected to have strong theoretical validity. Through this library approach, the research aims to formulate a conceptual and applicable model for instilling multicultural Islamic religious education values. The resulting model is not only based on theory but also a synthesis of various educational practices studied in the literature. Thus, this method allows the research to contribute to scientific development while offering solutions to the pedagogical problems identified in the research background.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Characteristics of the Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education Values Instillation Model for Early Childhood**

A review of various literature findings reveals a significant trend: the model for instilling multicultural Islamic religious values in early childhood operates through the intersection of Islamic norms and the social realities experienced by children. Religious education no longer operates in a space sterile from experience, but rather exists as a practice that develops within everyday social relations. Dewi (2025) emphasizes that tolerance is not simply introduced as knowledge but needs to be presented as a lived experience for children. Similarly, Alfiya et al. (2025) demonstrate that the effectiveness of multicultural Islamic education lies in its ability to integrate into daily activities, rather than as a verbal transmission separate from children's lives. This direction, of course, has consequences for the choice of an approach that places concrete experience as the primary medium for internalizing values. Early childhood is not yet at the cognitive stage that allows them to fully grasp abstract concepts. Therefore, values such as tolerance or justice find their expression in actions that can be felt and repeated. Harini et al.

(2025) demonstrate how an experiential learning approach opens up space for children to understand diversity through direct involvement. In this landscape, simple practices of playing together without barriers, sharing, and working in groups transform into pedagogical arenas where values are produced and negotiated.

If experience serves as the gateway, then the process of instilling values in this model occurs implicitly. Values are not taught as standalone entities, but rather are embedded within the flow of learning activities. A contextual approach allows children to absorb values without feeling like they are being lectured to. Social relationships in the learning space become a living medium, where children experience values as part of their daily lives. This pattern emphasizes that internalization at an early age relies more on the repetition of meaningful experiences than on abstract conceptual explanations.

This trend is intertwined with efforts to integrate Islamic values and multicultural principles within a single, inseparable framework. Values such as brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and 'adl (*adl*) do not remain normative discourse but instead become principles of communal living. Wahyuni and Azwar (2022) demonstrate that when these values are linked to children's social realities, Islamic education gains transformative power. At this point, religious education appears not as a dividing boundary, but rather as a space that brings together differences within a shared ethical horizon. This model's focus doesn't stop at achievements, but rather focuses on the continuity of the process. Instilling values is understood as pedagogical work that demands consistency, not momentary intervention. The formation of a tolerant character is born from continuous habituation. Daily routines of greeting, queuing, and sharing play a key role in shaping the structure of children's experiences. In this repetitive rhythm, values are not simply recognized but become part of an ingrained habitus.

On the other hand, this model demonstrates sensitivity to the social context in which children find themselves. It does not operate within a rigid framework, but rather adapts to cultural and environmental dynamics. Fadlilah (2024) shows that the practice of tolerance education is heavily influenced by the social context of the school. Therefore, relevance is key: the values taught need to resonate with children's life experiences. The model's flexibility lies in its ability to read the context and adapt strategies without losing its normative direction. These findings demonstrate that the instilling of multicultural Islamic religious values in early childhood occurs across a complex spectrum. The cognitive, affective, and social dimensions do not stand alone but are intertwined within the learning experience. The success of this model is not measured by the amount of material presented, but by the extent to which the values are present and active in children's daily lives. Here, religious education finds its momentum as a contextual, living, and relevant practice within a diverse societal landscape.

### **Construction of a Cognitive, Affective, and Social Integration Model in Value Instillation**

The model for instilling multicultural Islamic religious values in early childhood cannot be understood within a fragmented logic. Value formation, on the other hand, occurs through the integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions within a unified flow of experience. Learning practices still tend to place cognition at the center, with children introduced to normative categories such as good and bad or right and wrong without reinforcement in the realm of attitudes and social relations. In this situation, values cease to be knowledge that does not transform into practical awareness. Recent studies confirm that multicultural Islamic education demands the integration of values into real social experiences, not merely conceptual transmission (Tamwifi et al., 2023). Here, the integrative model works as a correction to the cognitive dominance that has persisted for too long in learning practices.

Cognition still plays a key role as a gateway, but it is no longer positioned as the sole center. It is directed toward connecting with children's concrete experiences through narratives, dialogues, and contextual situations. The introduction of values such as sharing, empathy, and respect for differences becomes meaningful when placed within experiences accessible to children. Recent research shows that play-based learning in Islamic education can develop the cognitive dimension while opening up space for more natural value development (Jannah et al., 2026). Thus, cognition serves as a starting point that must be immediately linked to lived experiences. This experience finds its depth in the affective dimension. Values are no longer simply known but experienced as having personal meaning. Children experience joy when sharing, while simultaneously feeling tension when social relationships are disrupted. This emotional engagement forms a stronger layer of internalization than a purely cognitive approach. Studies of teacher-child interactions in religio-cultural contexts show that warm emotional relationships are the primary medium for instilling values (Uctuvia et al., 2025). Without affective engagement, values lose their resonance and easily slip from children's awareness.

This affective dimension then moves into the social sphere as an arena for the actualization of values. Interaction between children becomes the primary medium through which values are not only understood and felt, but also practiced. Children learn to appreciate differences through direct experience interacting with diverse peers. Recent research shows that inclusive education in the context of Islamic Early Childhood Education (PAUD) encourages children to develop an understanding of diversity through collaborative and adaptive interactions (Malik & Prabowo, 2024). Here, the social dimension emerges as a practical space where values take concrete form. These three dimensions do not operate separately, but rather intertwine within a unified learning experience. Simple activities like group play incorporate all of these dimensions simultaneously: children understand rules (cognitive), feel empathy and togetherness (affective), and practice cooperation (social). A mindful, joyful, and meaningful learning approach in early childhood education demonstrates that integrating these experiences can strengthen character formation more deeply (Jannah et al., 2026). Learning no longer operates as a transmission, but as an experience that shapes awareness.

The implications point to the importance of values-conscious learning design. Every classroom activity is positioned as a meaningful space, not simply a pedagogical routine. Teachers act as experience designers, intentionally creating learning situations that enable values to emerge through interaction. In the context of a multicultural society, the success of Islamic education is largely determined by the ability of institutions and teachers to integrate values with social reality through targeted strategies (Rahmalia et al., 2023). The structure of this model addresses not only the content of learning but also how those experiences are consciously constructed. This integrative structure demonstrates that character formation does not occur linearly. It develops within a dynamic process that links knowledge, emotions, and social interactions in a continuous process. Islamic religious education moves from a transmission orientation to the formation of a conscious awareness that manifests in action. Islamic values do not cease to be normative discourse but are present in how children understand, feel, and respond to their social world.

### **Inculcating Values From Habituation Towards Internalization of Multicultural Values**

As mentioned previously, the mechanism for instilling multicultural Islamic religious values in early childhood does not occur in an instantaneous manner, but rather through a gradual, interconnected pathway, including habituation, role modeling, and internalization

through social experiences. Habituation forms the initial foundation because children learn through structured repetition in daily routines. Simple practices such as greeting, sharing, waiting their turn, and cooperating in games form the initial landscape for introducing Islamic social values. Consistent habituation builds basic behavioral patterns that later become the embryo of character (Nurjamilah, 2024). At this stage, values begin to emerge as repeated practices, although not yet fully realized.

Such repetition, if not supported by meaning, risks creating mechanical behavior. This is where role models play a crucial role. Early childhood learns not only from what is taught, but also from what is demonstrated. Teachers' attitudes toward diversity, treating children fairly, and building inclusive relationships convey a far more powerful message than verbal instruction. Role models bridge the gap between values as concepts and values as lived practices. Research shows that non-discriminatory and empathetic teacher behavior directly contributes to the development of inclusive attitudes in children (Hidayah, 2024). In this context, teachers serve as living representations of values for children.

From role models, the process moves into a more dynamic realm of experience through social interaction. Children begin to confront the reality of differences in concrete situations different desires, interests, and preferences in play. The small tensions that arise in these interactions open up learning spaces that cannot be replaced by an instructive approach. Social conflict is no longer positioned as a distraction, but as a productive medium for learning values. Children learn to negotiate, understand others' perspectives, and seek fair solutions. Pedagogically managing conflict has been shown to strengthen social skills and sensitivity to diversity (Setiawan et al., 2024). The teacher's role shifts to that of a facilitator, ensuring these experiences remain within the learning framework.

This process does not occur in a rigid, linear fashion, but rather in a cyclical and repetitive manner. Established habits acquire new meaning when reinforced by role models and social experiences, then become more conscious practices. Repetition in different contexts deepens the imprint of values within children. Children who become accustomed to sharing in one situation will carry that disposition into other, more complex situations. Reinforcement through contextual repetition has been shown to accelerate the process of internalizing values (Wahidah & Maristyawati, 2023). Values do not stop at one experiential space, but expand and transform across various situations in children's lives. The layer that adds depth to this process lies in emotional experiences. Children learn not only from actions, but also from what they feel in each social experience. Feelings of acceptance, appreciation, or, conversely, exclusion shape a sharper understanding of the meaning of social relationships. Emotional engagement strengthens the attachment of values within children's consciousness and builds empathy, the foundation of multicultural living. Recent research shows that learning that involves the emotional dimension significantly increases social sensitivity and the ability to understand others (Anggraini et al., 2025). Here, values are no longer external but begin to reside in children's inner experiences.

This entire process requires reflective pedagogical intervention. Teachers don't let experiences flow aimlessly, but actively articulate the meaning of each event a child experiences. Simple reflections, such as inviting children to discuss their feelings after a conflict or asking for the reasons behind an action, help children connect the experience to the values they are learning. This reflective practice strengthens children's awareness that every action has social and moral consequences. A reflective approach has proven effective in transforming experiences into meaningful learning (Solikah & Wardini, 2025). This mechanism demonstrates

that instilling values is not a single, stand-alone process, but rather a mutually reinforcing series of practices, role models, social interaction, and reflection. Islamic religious education moves from an instructive approach to a participatory and reflective approach, where children not only receive values but also participate in the process of their formation. Multicultural values emerge as experiences lived, felt, and practiced in children's daily lives, shaping an awareness that continually evolves along with the dynamics of their social interactions.

### **A Multicultural-Based Model for Instilling Islamic Religious Education Values in Early Childhood**

The model for instilling multicultural Islamic religious values in early childhood is rooted in constructivism, which positions children as active subjects constructing knowledge through experience. This research finding demonstrates that values cannot be transferred unidirectionally through language but are instead formed through a lively interaction between children and their social and cultural environment. Children understand values when they encounter situations that demand meaning, not simply by accepting normative definitions. This perspective aligns with the finding that early childhood learning occurs through active engagement in concrete environments that shape children's understanding (Suradi et al., 2021). Within this framework, Islamic values are presented as lived experiences, not as memorized concepts.

From constructivism, this model moves to an experiential learning approach that places experience as the center of learning. Values are not taught as discourse, but rather presented as situations to be experienced. Children not only learn the concept of tolerance but are also confronted with situations that demand tolerance in everyday interactions. Experiential learning has been shown to have a stronger influence in shaping social attitudes than one-way instructional approaches (Anggraini et al., 2025). Practices in early childhood education (PAUD) demonstrate that group play activities, social simulations, and daily interactions provide spaces where values are practiced and interpreted. Experience, in this case, acts as a medium that bridges knowledge and awareness.

The experiences we build are never separate from the social dimensions that frame them. At this point, social learning theory affirms that children learn through observation and imitation of their surroundings. What they see becomes the primary reference point in shaping behavior. Teachers emerge as central figures who not only teach but also present values in concrete forms. Teachers' attitudes in responding to differences, treating children equally, and building inclusive relationships are the most powerful learning resources. Research shows that teacher behavior that reflects inclusive values has a direct influence on the formation of children's attitudes (Hidayah, 2024). In this context, the social environment is not merely a backdrop but an active agent in the value learning process.

This framework is then enriched by a multicultural education perspective that positions diversity as a reality to be faced, not avoided. Education is no longer understood as a homogeneous space devoid of difference, but as an arena for encounters brimming with diverse identities, cultures, and social backgrounds. Children are invited to interact directly with differences, allowing values such as justice, brotherhood, and respect for humanity to gain practical context. Multicultural education for early childhood requires the design of social experiences that enable children to develop an inclusive awareness through real-life interactions (Lestari, 2024). Islamic values in this model do not stand as abstract norms, but serve as an ethical foundation for building harmonious social relations.

Another dimension that strengthens this model lies in the character education approach, which emphasizes the importance of habituation and environmental consistency. Values are not simply introduced or experienced briefly; they need to be repeated and reinforced in various daily situations. Character formation occurs through a multi-layered process, involving experience, reflection, and continuous reinforcement. A consistent environment that presents values is a determining factor in the success of this process (Dahlan, 2024). Daily routines in early childhood education, such as group activities and social interactions, serve as a strategic medium to ensure that values are ingrained in children's lives. The interconnectedness of these perspectives demonstrates that this model does not rely on a single approach, but rather represents a synthesis that brings together various pedagogical frameworks into a coherent whole. Constructivism explains how children construct knowledge, experiential learning presents experience-based methods, social learning theory emphasizes the role of the environment, and multicultural education provides an orientation toward the values to be achieved. This integration demonstrates that the model's effectiveness lies in its ability to connect theoretical foundations with direct learning practices (Solikah & Wardini, 2025). Here, theory does not simply serve as a conceptual framework but operates within pedagogical reality. The pedagogical basis of this model demonstrates that the instillation of multicultural Islamic religious values has a solid scientific foundation and is relevant to the dynamics of a pluralistic society. This model integrates theory and practice within a mutually reinforcing framework. Islamic values are positioned not as taught doctrines, but as experiences that shape how children understand, feel, and navigate their social lives.

## Conclusion

This research confirms that the main problem with Islamic religious education for early childhood lies not in the absence of values, but rather in the failure to present values as lived experiences. An overly cognitive and symbolic approach has proven incapable of bridging the gap between knowledge and behavior. Therefore, a fundamental transformation is needed, moving towards an integrative, contextual learning model that is oriented toward children's real-life experiences in dealing with diversity. The model formulated in this study demonstrates that effective instillation of multicultural values can only occur through the integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions within a unified learning experience. Habituation, teacher role models, social interaction, and reflection are the primary mechanisms that mutually reinforce the internalization of values. In this context, teachers are no longer merely transmitters of material, but rather architects of experiences who consciously design learning spaces as arenas for character formation. Ultimately, multicultural Islamic religious education must be understood as a project of awareness-building, not simply a transmission of teachings. Islamic values find their relevance when present in living social practices, shaping how children understand, perceive, and respond to differences. This is where education acquires its most fundamental meaning: not only to educate, but also to humanize.

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