

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS A PREDICTOR OF LEARNING BEHAVIOURS
AMONG SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN OJO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Perceived effects of substance abuse and substance abuse represents an important behavioural factor associated with students' engagement in learning activities. This study examined the pattern of substance abuse among school adolescents, assessed their level of learning behaviours, and determined the perceived effects of substance abuse on their learning behaviours. A cross-sectional correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised school adolescents enrolled in public secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area, while a sample of 300 adolescents was selected through a multistage sampling procedure involving purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using the Substance Abuse and Learning Behaviour Questionnaire (SALBQ). Descriptive statistics comprising frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and simple linear regression were employed to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed the presence of substance abuse among the respondents, with peer-related substance use, alcohol use, non-medical use of prescription drugs and cough mixtures featuring among reported patterns. Learning behaviours were moderate, while substance abuse was associated with concentration difficulties, distraction, poor study habits and reduced academic interest. The hypothesis showed a statistically significant negative relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour. The study concluded that substance abuse represents an important behavioural factor associated with learning behaviour among school adolescents. The study recommended strengthened school-based substance-abuse prevention, counselling, peer education, parental involvement and early identification and referral of adolescents requiring professional support.

Keywords: Learning behaviour, Substance abuse, School Adolescents

Introduction

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), reported from the national drug-use survey conducted in 2016–2017 that psychoactive substance use was widespread among Nigerians aged 15–64 years, with cannabis, non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids, particularly tramadol, codeine and morphine, and cough syrups containing codeine or dextromethorphan identified among substances of concern (NBS & UNODC, 2019; UNODC, 2025). Substance abuse refers to the harmful, hazardous or non-medical use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, pharmaceutical drugs used without appropriate medical direction and other psychoactive substances (Agwogie & Kliewer, 2024). Learning behaviour refers to the observable and self-regulatory patterns through which students engage in educational activities. Such behaviours include regular school attendance, punctuality, attentiveness during lessons, classroom participation, assignment completion, note-taking, reading, revision, examination preparation, interaction with teachers and persistence when academic tasks become difficult (Bugbee *et al.*, 2019). The educational significance of substance use is supported by empirical evidence linking adolescent substance use with adverse school-related outcomes. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis involving 63 studies and 438,329 participants found moderate-certainty evidence of associations between cannabis use during adolescence or young adulthood and lower school grades, increased school absenteeism and dropout, and reduced likelihood of high-school completion, university enrolment and post-secondary degree attainment (Bulfone *et al.*, 2024). The same review reported stronger associations among frequent users and among individuals who initiated cannabis use at an earlier age. Evidence concerning school attendance also indicates a consistent relationship between youth substance use and absenteeism, although the direction and causal mechanisms of this relationship require careful interpretation because much of the existing literature is observational (Gakh *et al.*, 2019). These findings suggest that substance use should be considered

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alongside educational behaviours rather than examined solely as a health or disciplinary problem.

Soremekun *et al.* (2020), in a study involving 1,048 junior and senior secondary school students in two Local Government Areas of Lagos State, reported a lifetime prevalence of alcohol use of 29.1%, while pharmaceutical opioid use was reported at 9%. The study also found significant differences in substance-use prevalence according to gender, educational level, school management and geographical socioeconomic characteristics. These findings establish the presence of psychoactive substance use among secondary school students in Lagos State, although the study focused primarily on prevalence rather than learning behaviour. Adewuya and Wright (2026), in an epidemiological study of adolescent substance use disorders in Lagos, examined demographic, family and academic factors associated with substance use disorders. Similarly, Ayanyinka *et al.* (2026), in a study involving students and teachers in Southwest Nigeria, identified concentration difficulties, absenteeism, loss of learning time, poor study habits, behavioural disruption and academic decline among perceived academic consequences associated with substance abuse. Agwogie and Kliever (2024), for example, studied 1,607 public school students in the greater Lagos area and reported lifetime polysubstance use among 5.2% of participants. Their structural model showed significant associations involving positive parenting, perceived harm from substance use, religiosity, positive school experiences and polysubstance use, with positive school experiences associated with a lower likelihood of polysubstance use.

Watts *et al.* (2024), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 27 longitudinal studies comprising 99 effect sizes, found a significant peer-influence effect on adolescent substance-use behaviour. The analysis indicated that adolescents tended to change their substance-use behaviour in accordance with perceived or actual substance use among peers. Otten and Ha (2022), using observations of 497 adolescent friendship dyads, further examined drug-use conversations within adolescent friendships and their relationship with later substance-use disorder

diagnoses. Hahlbeck and Vito (2022), using national survey data, similarly reported associations between substance-using peers and adolescent marijuana dependence, while stronger parental bonds and negative definitions of substance use were associated with lower likelihood of dependence. Soremekun *et al.* (2020) established substantial lifetime exposure to alcohol and pharmaceutical opioids among secondary school students in Lagos State, while Agwogie and Kliewer (2024) demonstrated the relevance of parenting and school relationships to polysubstance use among public school students in the greater Lagos area. Ayanyinka *et al.* (2026) provided further evidence concerning perceived academic difficulties associated with substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Southwest Nigeria. Bugbee *et al.* (2019) also demonstrated associations between substance use and several educational indicators, including school attendance, grades, academic self-efficacy and emotional academic engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura and Walters (1977) emphasised observational learning, modelling and reinforcement as important processes through which individuals acquire and maintain behaviour. Contemporary applications of social-learning perspectives to substance use have incorporated additional constructs, including differential association, substance-use expectations and reinforcement processes, to explain how behaviour develops within social environments. Kruis *et al.* (2020), in a meta-analytic examination of social learning constructs and substance use, reported medium-sized overall associations, with differential association among the constructs producing some of the stronger effect estimates. Social Learning Theory proposes that adolescents learn behavioural patterns partly through observing significant others, including parents, siblings, peers, teachers and other influential members of their social environment. Through observational learning, adolescents acquire information about behaviours and their anticipated consequences, while reinforcement processes contribute to the continuation or discontinuation of learned behaviours. Where substance use is observed among influential peers or other social models and is

associated with perceived social acceptance or other reinforcing outcomes, the behaviour might become incorporated into an adolescent's behavioural repertoire. Contemporary applications of social-learning perspectives similarly emphasise the interaction between individual characteristics, social environments and behavioural consequences in explaining substance-related behaviour (Smith, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse among school adolescents presents a concern for education because adolescence coincides with the development of cognitive, social and behavioural capacities required for successful schooling. Existing studies in Lagos have predominantly examined prevalence, predictors, perceptions or academic performance rather than the broader behavioural processes involved in learning. The problem addressed by this study is therefore the insufficient local empirical evidence concerning whether substance abuse is associated with the learning behaviours of school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area. The absence of adequate local evidence has implications for school counselling, preventive education, classroom management and adolescent support services. Teachers and school counsellors require evidence regarding whether substance abuse is associated with observable learning behaviours before designing targeted intervention programmes. Without such evidence, educational responses risk focusing exclusively on examination performance while overlooking attendance, concentration, participation, study habits and task completion. Consequently, there is a need for a focused empirical investigation of the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo. Such a study would contribute local evidence for school-based prevention, counselling and educational policy. It would also extend existing Nigerian research from the measurement of substance-use prevalence towards examination of its educational implications.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. examine the prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State;
2. assess the level of learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State; and
3. determine the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Research Questions

1. What are the prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?
2. What is the level of learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?
3. What is the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Hypothesis

H₀: Substance abuse does not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of learning behaviour among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design, which was considered appropriate because data on substance abuse and learning behaviours were collected from school adolescents within their natural school settings at a single period without manipulation or experimental intervention. The design was suitable for determining the direction and strength of the association between substance abuse and learning behaviours and for examining the predictive contribution of substance abuse to learning behaviour. The population of the study comprised school adolescents enrolled in public secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. The population included male and female students within the adolescent age range who were registered in the selected public secondary schools during the period of data collection. A sample of 300 school adolescents was selected for the <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

study. A multistage sampling procedure was employed to obtain participants from the target population. At the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select public secondary schools within Ojo Local Government Area based on accessibility, student enrolment, availability of the target population and suitability for the objectives of the study. The purposive selection of schools was adopted to ensure that the selected schools met the predetermined inclusion criteria and provided an appropriate setting for the administration of the research instruments. At the second stage, stratified sampling was used to classify eligible students according to relevant characteristics, particularly class level and sex, to promote representation across the identified student categories. At the third stage, simple random sampling was employed to select individual students from the respective strata, with each eligible student within a stratum having an opportunity for selection. The study used the Substance Abuse and Learning Behaviour Questionnaire (SALBQ) as the principal instrument for data collection. The questionnaire comprised sections measuring substance abuse and learning behaviours, with responses scored according to the predetermined scoring procedure for each section. The instrument was subjected to expert review to assess the relevance, clarity and adequacy of the items in relation to the study variables and objectives. The reliability of the instrument was established through an appropriate reliability procedure, with the overall instrument yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90, indicating high internal consistency. Where the instrument contained separate substantive sections or subscales, reliability coefficients were also examined for the respective sections to establish the internal consistency of the measures used to assess substance abuse and learning behaviour. Data collected from the participants were coded and analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise relevant demographic characteristics and categorical responses, while means and standard deviations were used to describe learning behaviour and other continuous study variables. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour,

while simple linear regression was employed to determine the predictive contribution of substance abuse to learning behaviour. Statistical decisions were made at the 0.05 level of significance. The interpretation of the findings was restricted to relationships and predictive associations because the cross-sectional correlational design did not permit causal conclusions regarding the effect of substance abuse on learning behaviour.

Results

Research Question One: What are the prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 1: Substance Abuse among School Adolescents

SN	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Some students in my school have used alcohol.	2.91	0.96	High
2	Some students in my school smoke cigarettes or tobacco products.	2.63	1.01	High
3	Some students in my school use cannabis or marijuana.	2.57	1.04	High
4	Some students use prescription drugs without medical advice.	2.74	0.98	High
5	Some students use cough syrups or other pharmaceutical substances for non-medical purposes.	2.69	1.00	High
6	Some students use more than one type of psychoactive substance.	2.54	1.05	High
7	Peer influence contributes to students' involvement in substance use.	3.08	0.91	High
8	Some students use substances during or around school activities.	2.48	1.07	Low
9	Students sometimes use substances to cope with stress or academic pressure.	2.61	1.03	High
10	Substance use is common among some adolescent peer groups.	2.86	0.94	High
Grand Mean		2.71	1.00	High

Table 1 shows a grand mean of 2.71, indicating a relatively high perceived presence of substance-use patterns among students, with peer influence recording the highest mean (3.08) and substance use around school activities the lowest (2.48).

Research Question Two: What is the level of learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 2: Learning Behaviours among School Adolescents

SN	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	I pay attention during classroom lessons.	2.63	0.93	High
2	I attend school regularly.	2.81	0.88	High
3	I complete my assignments on time.	2.69	0.91	High
4	I devote adequate time to private study.	2.48	0.97	Low
5	I revise my class notes regularly.	2.42	0.95	Low
6	I participate actively during classroom activities.	2.57	0.94	High
7	I remain focused when studying at home.	2.39	1.01	Low
8	I avoid activities that interfere with my study time.	2.36	1.04	Low
9	I complete academic tasks even when they are difficult.	2.51	0.92	High
10	I prepare adequately for tests and examinations.	2.55	0.94	High
11	I ask teachers for clarification when I do not understand a lesson.	2.61	0.90	High
12	I maintain regular reading and study routines.	2.43	0.98	Low
Grand Mean		2.53	0.95	High

Table 2 indicates moderate learning behaviour overall (grand mean = 2.53), with stronger performance in school attendance and assignment completion, but weaker engagement in regular study routines, sustained home study, and avoidance of study-related distractions.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 3: Substance abuse and Learning Behaviours

SN	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Substance abuse reduces students' concentration during lessons.	3.02	0.91	High
2	Substance abuse contributes to irregular school attendance.	2.87	0.98	High
3	Substance abuse reduces students' interest in academic activities.	2.94	0.93	High

SN	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
4	Substance abuse interferes with students' ability to complete assignments.	2.79	0.99	High
5	Substance abuse reduces students' willingness to study regularly.	2.91	0.94	High
6	Substance abuse affects students' participation in classroom activities.	2.76	1.01	High
7	Substance abuse contributes to poor study habits.	2.96	0.92	High
8	Substance abuse makes students easily distracted while studying.	3.01	0.89	High
9	Substance abuse contributes to lateness to school.	2.68	1.03	High
10	Substance abuse interferes with preparation for tests and examinations.	2.83	0.96	High
11	Substance abuse reduces students' persistence when academic tasks are difficult.	2.74	1.00	High
12	Substance abuse contributes to declining academic engagement.	2.89	0.95	High
Grand Mean		2.87	0.96	High

Table 3 indicates a generally high perceived negative association between substance abuse and learning behaviour (grand mean = 2.87), particularly in concentration, study distraction, study habits, and academic interest.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: Substance abuse does not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of learning behaviour among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Substance Abuse and Learning Behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Substance abuse	300	2.71	0.63	-0.620	< .001	Significant
Learning behaviour	300	2.53	0.58			

Table 4 The result indicates a statistically significant negative relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour. Thus, higher substance-abuse scores were associated with lower learning-behaviour scores among the respondents.

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Substance Abuse as a Predictor of Learning Behaviour

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate	F	p-value
Substance abuse → Learning behaviour	.620	.384	.382	0.456	185.67	< .001

Table 5 The regression analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour ($R = .620$, $R^2 = .384$, $F = 185.67$, $p < .001$), with substance abuse accounting for 38.4% of the variance in learning behaviour.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Substance Abuse Predicting Learning Behaviour

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p-value	Decision
Constant	3.918	0.103	—	38.04	< .001	Significant
Substance abuse	-0.512	0.038	-0.620	-13.63	< .001	Significant

Table 6 indicates that substance abuse significantly and negatively predicted learning behaviour ($\beta = -0.620$, $p < .001$), with higher substance-abuse scores associated with lower learning-behaviour scores among the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

What are the prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

The findings corroborated with the Soremekun *et al.* (2020), who reported substance use among secondary school students in Lagos State and identified drug use as a concern within the adolescent school population. The finding also corresponds with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019) report, which documented the existence of substance use across different segments of the Nigerian population. The presence of alcohol and other psychoactive substances among school adolescents therefore reflects a broader substance-use concern within the Nigerian context.

The prominence of peer-related substance use in the present finding also receives support from Watts, *et al.* (2024), whose meta-analysis demonstrated an association between peer influence and adolescent substance use. Adolescents often develop behavioural patterns within friendship groups, where attitudes towards substance use, opportunities for access and perceived social approval influence individual behaviour. Otten & Ha (2022) similarly examined drug-use talk within adolescent friendship interactions and demonstrated the relevance of peer communication in the development and maintenance of substance-related behaviours. The present finding therefore supports a social explanation of adolescent substance use in which interpersonal relationships constitute an important context for behavioural learning. Agwogie and Kliever (2024) also identified family and protective factors as relevant to polysubstance use among public school students in Lagos, suggesting that adolescent substance use should be understood through interacting social and environmental influences rather than as an isolated individual behaviour.

The finding further agrees with Emeri (2019), who examined predictors of drug and alcohol abuse among secondary school adolescents in Lagos State. The convergence between the present finding and earlier Lagos-based evidence suggests persistence of substance-use concerns among secondary school adolescents. Such consistency is important because the present study focuses specifically on adolescents within Ojo Local Government Area, whereas earlier evidence considered wider populations. The finding reinforces the need for school-based preventive interventions involving counselling, parent engagement, peer education and appropriate monitoring of substance-related behaviours. UNODC (2025) continues to identify adolescent substance use as an important public health and social concern globally, further supporting the relevance of addressing substance-related behaviour during the school years. The pattern observed in the present study therefore reflects both the local Nigerian evidence and the wider adolescent substance-use literature.

What is the level of learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

The findings showed a moderate level of positive learning behaviours among the respondents. Attendance, assignment completion and classroom attention recorded relatively stronger responses, whereas regular study routines, concentration during home study and avoidance of activities interfering with academic work recorded comparatively lower responses. The pattern suggests that learning behaviour among school adolescents extends beyond school attendance and assignment completion to include sustained concentration, study discipline, engagement and independent learning routines. The findings therefore portray learning behaviour as a multidimensional construct involving both observable school-related activities and individual learning habits. Such a pattern is relevant to the present study because substance use might interfere with several components of learning behaviour rather than producing a single educational outcome.

The findings correspond with Bugbee *et al.* (2019), who examined substance use alongside educational indicators among secondary school students. Their work demonstrated the relevance of substance-related behaviours to educational functioning and provides empirical support for examining learning-related outcomes alongside substance use. Although the present finding is descriptive and does not by itself establish a causal relationship, the relatively weaker responses observed for sustained study and concentration provide an important context for understanding the subsequent finding concerning the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour. Learning behaviour among adolescents is influenced by several factors, including school environment, peer relationships, family circumstances and individual behavioural patterns. Agwogie and Kliwer (2024) provide related evidence by demonstrating the importance of social and protective factors in adolescent behavioural outcomes.

The present finding also provides a useful basis for interpreting the findings of Ayanyinka *et al.* (2026), who investigated perceived effects of substance abuse on <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

academic performance among in-school adolescents in Southwest Nigeria. Their findings indicate continuing concern about the educational implications associated with substance abuse among adolescents. The present study extends this area by focusing specifically on learning behaviour, rather than restricting the outcome to academic performance. This distinction is important because academic performance represents an achievement outcome, whereas learning behaviour concerns the processes through which students engage with learning. The findings therefore suggest the importance of examining students' concentration, participation, study habits, attendance and assignment completion when assessing the educational implications of adolescent substance use.

What is the relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviours among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State?

The findings indicated that respondents perceived substance abuse as being associated with adverse learning-related behaviours. The strongest responses were recorded for difficulties relating to concentration, distraction, poor study habits and reduced interest in academic activities. These findings suggest that substance abuse is perceived within the study population as having implications for the cognitive and behavioural processes involved in learning. The finding corresponds with Bugbee *et al.* (2019), who reported associations between substance use and educational indicators among secondary school students. The present result also agrees with Ayanyinka *et al.* (2026), whose study of in-school adolescents in Southwest Nigeria identified perceived academic consequences associated with substance abuse. The consistency across these studies strengthens the relevance of examining substance use within the educational context.

The finding is also consistent with Soremekun *et al.* (2020), who documented substance use among secondary school students in Lagos State. When the existence of substance use is considered alongside the learning difficulties identified in the present study, the educational environment becomes an important setting for prevention and early intervention. Nevertheless, the descriptive findings should not

be interpreted as establishing direct causation. Learning difficulties among adolescents might also reflect family circumstances, peer relationships, school conditions, emotional difficulties, economic pressures and other behavioural factors. Agwogie and Klierer (2024) support such a multifactorial interpretation through their examination of parenting and protective factors in relation to adolescent polysubstance use.

Substance abuse does not make a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of learning behaviour among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State.

However, the finding corroborates Bugbee *et al.* (2019), who reported relationships between substance use and educational indicators among secondary school students. The present result also agrees with Ayanyinka *et al.* (2026), who investigated perceived effects of substance abuse on academic performance among in-school adolescents in Southwest Nigeria. Both studies provide contextual support for the proposition that adolescent substance use is associated with adverse educational outcomes. The present study contributes to this body of evidence by examining learning behaviour rather than academic performance alone. Such a distinction strengthens the educational interpretation because learning behaviour captures students' engagement with learning activities before achievement outcomes are considered. The finding also accords with the Lagos State evidence reported by Soremekun *et al.* (2020), where substance use among secondary school students was identified as an important behavioural concern.

Conclusion

The study concludes that substance abuse was significantly and negatively associated with learning behaviour among school adolescents in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State ($r = -.620, p < .001$), with substance abuse accounting for 38.4% of the variance in learning behaviour. The finding indicates that higher substance-abuse scores were associated with lower positive learning-behaviour scores among the respondents. Given the cross-sectional correlational design, the finding

does not establish a causal effect of substance abuse on learning behaviour, but demonstrates a significant statistical association and predictive contribution within the study sample. The findings underscore the relevance of coordinated preventive and supportive measures involving school counsellors, teachers, parents, school administrators and relevant health and social-service professionals. Such measures should address peer influence, substance-use knowledge, decision-making, refusal skills, healthy coping strategies and positive study behaviours. Early identification and appropriate counselling support for students experiencing substance-related difficulties should also form part of school-based prevention and support efforts. Strengthening protective factors within families, schools and peer groups provides a relevant approach to promoting healthier adolescent development and positive learning behaviours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators and counsellors should strengthen school-based substance-abuse prevention programmes focusing on alcohol, prescription drugs, cough mixtures, peer influence and other substances reported among school adolescents.
2. School counsellors and teachers should promote structured study routines, regular attendance, classroom participation, concentration and assignment completion through continuous academic guidance and behavioural support.
3. Schools should provide targeted counselling and psychoeducational programmes to address substance-related distraction, poor concentration, reduced academic interest and unhealthy study habits among adolescents.
4. School counsellors, parents and teachers should collaborate in early identification and intervention for substance-abuse behaviours, given the significant negative relationship between substance abuse and learning behaviour identified in the study.

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