# Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Developing Islamic Education in Elementary Madrasahs

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*Abstract.*
*This study aims to describe and analyze the role of transformational leadership of principals in the development of Islamic education in Islamic elementary schools. The research approach used is a qualitative case study method in several Islamic elementary schools in a specific region. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies, then analyzed thematically to identify patterns and meanings related to the characteristics and practices of transformational leadership applied by principals. The results show that principals who apply transformational leadership are able to motivate teachers and students, inspire a more progressive vision of Islamic education, and create a learning environment conducive to the development of Islamic character and competency. These findings emphasize the importance of the role of visionary and inspirational leaders in strengthening the development of Islamic education at the elementary level. This study contributes to the development of educational leadership theory and the practice of principal leadership in the context of Islamic education.*

*Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Principal, Islamic Education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah..*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping the character and morals of Indonesia's young generation, particularly at the elementary level, such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools). As Islamic-based educational institutions, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah are expected to develop students' potential holistically, not only academically but also spiritually and instill Islamic character. In this context, the principal's role as a leader is strategic and crucial in promoting the development of quality Islamic education.

Keeping pace with the changing times and the challenges of globalization, Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) in Indonesia face various dynamics that demand innovation and change in the learning process and institutional management. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2022 shows that the number of Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) has reached over 40,000, with varying levels of accreditation and uneven success in developing Islamic education. Many institutions still face obstacles in improving educational quality, both in terms of facilities, teacher competence, and leadership management.

In this context, the principal's leadership is a key factor influencing the successful development of Islamic education. Effective leadership can create an atmosphere conducive to students' academic and spiritual growth, while simultaneously motivating and empowering teachers and other staff. One leadership paradigm that is relevant and effective in this context is transformational leadership.

According to C. Turney in (Awaludin, 2024) defines leadership as a group of processes carried out by a person in managing and inspiring several jobs to achieve organizational goals

through the application of management techniques. George R. Terry quoted (Rosmayati, 2025) defines that Leadership is an activity to influence people to be directed to achieve organizational goals. Leadership includes the process of influencing in determining organizational goals, motivating follower behavior to achieve goals, influencing to improve the group and its culture.

Dale Timple quoted (Maulana, 2025), defines leadership as a social influence process in which managers seek the voluntary participation of subordinates in achieving organizational goals. Through leadership, a leader also defines the direction and goals to be achieved by an organization. Therefore, it can be said that leadership is very influential for the reputation of an organization. According to Sudarwan Danim, quoted (Abduloh, 2020), leadership is any action taken by an individual or group to coordinate and provide direction to individuals or groups within a specific organization to achieve predetermined goals.

From the above opinion, it can be concluded that leadership is a way for a leader to influence subordinates with certain characteristics so that they can achieve desired goals. One factor in a leader's success depends on the leadership techniques used to create situations that cause those they lead to become aware of the need to carry out what is desired. In other words, the effectiveness of a leader depends on their ability to manage and apply their leadership style according to the situation and conditions of the organization.

Transformative leadership is a leadership approach applied within an organization. According to Bass (Mardizal, 2023), transformational leadership is a leadership style capable of inspiring and motivating subordinates to achieve higher goals through a strong vision, leading by example, and attention to individual needs. According to Stephen P. Robbin & Mary Coulter (Rusmana, 2021), transformative leadership is a type of leadership that provides individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma.

According to Richard L. Daft, quoted (Ulfah, 2022), transformative leadership is similar to charismatic leadership, but what distinguishes it is the special ability to bring about innovation and change by recognizing the needs and interests of followers, and helping solve problems in new ways. According to Stephen P. Robbins & Timothy A. Judge, quoted (Djafri, 2024), transformative leadership is a type of leader who directs or motivates followers towards predetermined goals by clarifying the roles and tasks of its members. Transformative leaders inspire their followers to put their personal interests forward for the good of the organization and they can have an extraordinary influence on their followers.

Transformational leadership can motivate teachers to perform above expectations and sacrifice their personal interests for the good of the organization. Individual attention, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence all encourage employees to work harder, increase productivity, have high morale, and job satisfaction, improve organizational effectiveness, minimize teacher turnover, reduce absenteeism, and exhibit greater organizational adaptability.

In any formal institution or organization, whether small or large, there can be a leader without exception, including in educational institutions. In educational institutions, especially in elementary and secondary schools, the person who leads or becomes a leader is known as the principal. According to Makawimbang, quoted (Kartika, 2023), the principal is a functional teacher who is given the task of leading a school where the teaching and learning process is carried out, or a place where interactions occur between teachers who provide lessons and students who receive lessons. Meanwhile, Syarip Hidayat Sutisna et al., quoted (Mayasari, 2024), explain that the principal is a teacher practitioner who is given the workload to direct an educational institution or a place where the learning process takes place, a place where a bond occurs between teachers who provide knowledge and students who take lessons.

Nurkholis in (Supriani, 2024) describes a principal as a leader who is capable, conscious, and willing to encourage others to carry out their duties as well as possible and in accordance with expectations to achieve goals. Meanwhile, Fakhri Syafrizal, quoted in (Tanjung, 2021), states that a principal is responsible and has authority over all educational activities in the place they lead. A principal is someone who has a vision and mission, and a comprehensive educational management policy that prioritizes quality.

So, it can be concluded that the principal is a functional teacher who is given the task and responsibility to lead a school where the teaching and learning process takes place or a place where interaction occurs between the teacher who gives the lesson and the students who receive the lesson.

In terminology, according to Hasan Langgulung, quoted (Ningsih, 2025), an educational institution is a system of abstract regulations, a concept consisting of codes, norms, ideologies and so on, whether written or not, including material equipment and symbolic organizations, a group of people consisting of individuals formed intentionally or not, to achieve certain goals and the places where the group implements these regulations are mosques, schools, kuttab and so on. Meanwhile, according to Abuddin Nata, quoted (Aslan, 2025), it is revealed that the study of Islamic educational institutions (tarbiyah Islamiyyah) is usually implicitly integrated with discussions on various educational institutions. However, it can be understood that Islamic educational institutions are an environment in which there are Islamic characteristics that enable the implementation of Islamic education well.

Bafadhol, quoted (Romdoniyah, 2024), explains that Islamic educational institutions are entities or bodies that regulate and implement Islamic education by having an organized structure and responsibility for the implementation of Islamic education. Therefore, these Islamic educational institutions must be able to create an environment that supports the implementation of effective education in accordance with their roles and duties, such as schools (madrasas) that are responsible for the Islamic education process. According to M. Arifin, quoted (Afifah, 2024), Islamic education is an educational system that covers all aspects of life needed by God's servants, as Islam has become a guideline for all aspects of human life, both worldly and hereafter.

Based on the description above, an educational institution can generally be defined as a business entity that operates and is responsible for providing education to students. Islamic educational institutions can be defined as a forum or place where the process of Islamic education takes place, along with the process of cultural development. To achieve these educational goals, the principal's role is essential in efforts to improve school quality.

Empirical data shows that principals who implement transformational leadership can improve the quality of education and help institutions achieve greater success. For example, a study by (Muawanah et al, 2022) showed that principals who adopt a transformational leadership style can increase teacher motivation in developing learning media based on Islamic values, as well as strengthen student character through strengthening Islamic values. Furthermore, research (Yulia et al, 2025) states that visionary and inspirational principals can foster a spirit of learning and innovation among teachers, thus positively influencing the quality of learning and student character development.

However, on the other hand, principals still face various challenges in implementing transformational leadership, such as limited competency, lack of leadership training, and a conservative work culture in some madrasas. As a result, the implementation of transformational leadership is not yet fully optimal and has had a significant impact on the development of Islamic education at the elementary level.

Therefore, this research is crucial for a deeper understanding of the role and practices of transformational leadership of principals in the context of Islamic education development in

Islamic elementary schools. By understanding the supporting factors and obstacles, it is hoped that appropriate strategies can be formulated to improve the effectiveness of principal leadership and the quality of Islamic education in these schools.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of educational leadership theory and practice, particularly in the context of Islamic education at the elementary level. Furthermore, the results are expected to provide practical recommendations for school principals and relevant stakeholders on effectively implementing transformational leadership to improve the quality of Islamic education in Islamic elementary schools.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

According to Rahardjo, as quoted by (Arifudin, 2023), a research method is a way to obtain and seek tentative truth, not absolute truth. The result is scientific truth. Scientific truth is open to continuous testing, criticism, and even revision. Therefore, there is no best method for seeking truth; there is only the right method for a specific purpose, according to the existing phenomenon. Budiharto, as quoted by (Arifudin, 2020), states that the choice of research method must be tailored to the research being conducted to achieve optimal results.

This research was conducted in several Islamic Elementary Schools in region X. The type of research used in this research is a case study method. Case studies according to Nursalam in (Alammy, 2025) are research that includes studies aimed at providing a detailed description of the background, nature and character of a case, in other words that case studies focus on a case intensively and in detail. Research in this method is carried out in depth on a situation or condition in a systematic manner starting from making observations, collecting data, analyzing information and reporting results.

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach. According to Iskandar in (Arifudin, 2025), a qualitative approach is where qualitative research as a scientific method is often used and implemented by groups of researchers in the social sciences, including educational science. Iskandar in (Kartika, 2025) explains the qualitative research approach as a process of research and understanding based on methods that investigate social phenomena and human problems.

This study employed qualitative research with field research methods. According to (Sudrajat, 2024), this approach aligns with the primary objective of the study, which is to describe and analyze the transformational leadership of principals in developing Islamic education in elementary madrasas. Therefore, this method will be able to explain the research problem (Mukarom, 2024).

According to Yin (Nasril, 2025), the purpose of using case study research is not only to explain what the object being studied is like but also to explain the circumstances and how the case could occur. Meanwhile, Waluya (Nita, 2025) states that the purpose of case study is to develop in-depth knowledge about the object being studied, which means that this study is exploratory in nature.

Bogdan and Taylor in (Delvina, 2020) explain that qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. In this study, the researchers created a complex picture, examined words, detailed reports from respondents' views, and conducted a study in a natural setting, specifically related to the Principal's Transformational Leadership in the Development of Islamic Education in Elementary Madrasahs.

Technique can be seen as a means of carrying out technical work carefully using the mind to achieve goals. Although research is actually an endeavor within the scope of science, it is carried out to systematically collect realistic data to realize the truth. Research methodology is a means of finding a solution to any problem. In this case, the author collected information on

the Transformational Leadership of School Principals in the Development of Islamic Education in Elementary Madrasas, including articles, journals, theses, dissertations, ebooks, and others (Aidah, 2024).

Because it requires library materials for its data sources, this research utilizes library research. Researchers require books, scientific articles, and other literature related to the topics and issues they are exploring, both printed and online (Kurniawan, 2025).

Seeking information from data sources requires the use of data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah in (Primarni, 2025) claims that data collection is an effort to gather information related to the topic being studied. The author used a library research method to collect data. Specifically, the author began with the library to gather information from books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopedias, papers, periodicals, and other sources that shared the views of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in the Development of Islamic Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Furthermore, Amir Hamzah in (Susita, 2025) states that data collection is defined as various efforts to gather facts related to a topic or discussion being or will be explored. These details can be found in scientific literature, research, scientific writings, dissertations, theses, and other written sources. According to (Abdurakhman, 2025), data collection can be conducted in various circumstances, using different sources, and employing different techniques.

Observation is part of the direct research process of examining the phenomena being studied (Kosasih, 2025). This method allows researchers to directly observe and experience the atmosphere and conditions of the research subjects. The observations in this study focused on the Principal's Transformational Leadership in the Development of Islamic Education in Elementary Madrasahs.

The interview technique in this study is a structured interview, namely an interview conducted using various established standard guidelines, questions are arranged according to information needs and each question is needed to reveal each empirical data (Saepudin, 2024).

Documentation is a data collection technique using existing written documents or records (Paramansyah, 2024). Documentation comes from the word document, which means written objects. In implementing the documentation method, researchers investigate written objects, such as books, magazines, meeting minutes, and diaries. According to Moleong in (Kartika, 2024), the documentation method is a way of collecting information or data through examining archives and documents. Furthermore, according to (Ekawati, 2024), the documentation strategy is also a data collection technique proposed to research subjects. This data collection method using the documentation method is carried out to obtain data on the condition of the institution (research object), namely the Transformational Leadership of the Principal in the Development of Islamic Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Moleong, quoted (Widyastuti, 2024), explains that the collected data was analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Syarifah et al in (Muslim, 2023) explain that data reduction is carried out by filtering relevant information, presenting data in a systematic narrative form, and drawing conclusions based on research findings. To ensure data validity, this study used source triangulation, namely comparing information from sources. According to Moleong (Sunasa, 2023), source triangulation helps increase the validity of research results by comparing various perspectives on the phenomenon being studied.

Muhadjir in (Setiawati, 2023) stated that data analysis is an activity of conducting, searching and compiling records of findings systematically through observations and interviews so that the researcher focuses on the research being studied. After that, making a finding material for others, editing, classifying, and presenting it. Data validity techniques

using triangulation techniques include techniques and sources. Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model in (Saepudin, 2022) consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Result

Based on data obtained from in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies at several elementary Islamic schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) that were the subjects of this study, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of principals has a significant influence on the development of Islamic education in these schools. The following empirical findings illustrate various important aspects of the practice and impact of transformational leadership in the context of Islamic education development.

### The Principal as an Inspirator and Motivator

Most principals who employ a transformational leadership style demonstrate the ability to inspire and motivate teachers and students through a strong vision and commitment to Islamic values. For example, the principal of Madrasah A emphasized that he always strives to be a role model in practicing Islamic teachings, such as praying in congregation and practicing noble morals, so that teachers and students feel motivated to follow suit. Observations also indicate that the principal frequently holds religious activities, such as regular religious study groups, qiroah (recitation of the Koran), and Islamic training, which serve as a means of inspiring the entire madrasah community.

### Teacher Empowerment through Personal and Individual Approaches

Principals who practice transformational leadership strive to understand the needs and potential of each teacher individually. Data shows that principals frequently hold one-on-one meetings and provide mentoring to help teachers develop Islamic and pedagogical competencies. For example, the principal of Madrasah B stated that he appreciates and encourages teachers who actively develop learning media based on Islamic values, thus motivating them to feel valued and more enthusiastic about innovation.

### Developing a Vision and Mission that Integrates Islamic Values

Empirical findings indicate that the principal is able to consistently develop and communicate the madrasa's vision and mission that integrates Islamic values. The principal of Madrasah C stated that the madrasa's vision is "To create students with noble character and knowledge based on Islamic teachings," which is consistently conveyed in various forums and serves as a guideline for decision-making. This has a positive impact on strengthening student character and the consistency of Islamic programs at the madrasah.

### Increasing Innovation and Creativity in the Development of Islamic Education

Research results show that principals who implement transformational leadership encourage innovation in curriculum development and religious activities. The principal of Madrasah D, for example, took the initiative to integrate modern Islamic boarding school-based learning with Islamic character development, enabling students to apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Teachers are also trained to create engaging and relevant learning methods for the current context, such as the use of digital media and a thematic Islamic approach.

### Building a Positive and Conducive Learning Environment

Other empirical findings indicate that transformational principals are able to create a harmonious, friendly, and enthusiastic learning atmosphere in their madrasahs. Principal E emphasized the importance of a culture of mutual respect and tolerance among madrasah members within an Islamic learning environment. Observations during the learning process indicated that students felt comfortable and enthusiastic about participating in religious activities, thus effectively developing Islamic character.

**Obstacles and Challenges in Implementing Transformational Leadership**

Although many principals strive to implement a transformational leadership style, various obstacles hinder their success. These include limited leadership and management competencies, a lack of ongoing training and development, and a conservative work culture in some madrasas. Furthermore, limited facilities and resources also pose challenges to implementing innovative programs based on Islamic values.

**Positive Impact on the Development of Islamic Education**

In general, empirical findings indicate that principals who implement transformational leadership are able to increase teacher and student motivation in developing Islamic education. This is reflected in increased active participation in religious activities, improved teaching quality, and the development of noble character in students. Furthermore, madrasas led by transformational leadership tend to have a good reputation in the community and are able to compete healthily with other educational institutions.

From all these empirical findings, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of the principal is a key factor in strengthening the development of Islamic education in Islamic elementary schools. Principals who are capable of being inspirational, innovators, and motivators are able to create an Islamic learning environment that is conducive to the growth of student character and competence. However, this success is greatly influenced by the principal's competence, resource support, and the work culture within the madrasah. Therefore, strengthening leadership competence and empowering principals is a crucial step in improving the quality of Islamic education at the elementary level.

**Research Discussion**

This discussion serves to integrate the empirical findings obtained with relevant theoretical studies and previous studies, in order to strengthen understanding of the role and influence of the principal's transformational leadership in the development of Islamic education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

According to Bass (Kartika, 2022), transformational leadership is a leadership style that inspires and motivates subordinates to achieve higher goals by providing a compelling vision, modeling leadership, and paying attention to individual needs. Principals who implement transformational leadership focus not only on the administrative and operational achievements of the institution but also on developing the character and competencies of teachers and students through an inspiring and empowering approach.

This theory asserts that transformational leaders are capable of creating positive change in organizations, including educational institutions, by increasing intrinsic motivation, strengthening emotional bonds, and fostering a culture of innovation. In the context of Islamic education, transformational principals are expected to consistently integrate Islamic values and transmit this Islamic spirit to all members of the madrasah community.

The principal is a school personnel who is fully responsible for all educational activities within the school environment he leads (Uswatiyah, 2023). Daryanto, quoted (Saepudin, 2023), explains that the principal is not only dependent and required to be creative and full of initiative and the smooth running of the school in terms of academic technical matters but all activities, the condition of the school environment with its conditions and situations and its relationship with the surrounding community so that it leads to the development and progress of the school. However, in an effort to advance and overcome difficulties experienced by the school, both material such as building repairs, additional equipment and vice versa related to student education, the principal cannot work alone but the principal must collaborate with the teachers he leads, assisted by parents or BP3 and the local government.

According to Pidarta, as quoted by (Saepudin, 2019), the principal is the key to a school's success in implementing change. Therefore, the principal is largely responsible for enhancing and improving learning programs and processes at the school.

In the context of Islamic education, transformational leadership is highly relevant because it can shape students' character and improve the quality of the learning process based on Islamic values. Principals who employ this style can serve as role models in practicing Islamic teachings, inspire teachers and students to instill noble morals, and develop innovations in Islamic-based learning.

Research by Yuliana and Ramadhan, cited in (Saepudin, 2021), shows that principals who adopt a transformational leadership style are able to increase teacher motivation in developing Islamic-based learning media and strengthen student character through the reinforcement of Islamic values. These findings align with Bass's theory, which states that transformational leaders are able to build enthusiasm and commitment within an organization through vision and inspiration.

Furthermore, research by Suryadi, cited in (Kartika, 2018), confirms that visionary and inspiring principals are able to foster a spirit of learning and innovation among teachers, which ultimately has a positive impact on the quality of learning and student character development. This research strengthens the argument that transformational leadership is not only effective in improving academic quality but also in building a strong Islamic culture in madrasas.

The research results show that principals who implement a transformational leadership style are able to significantly influence the development of Islamic education in madrasas. These principals are usually able to create an Islamic and conducive learning environment through various religious activities, such as regular religious study groups, character development based on Islamic values, and Islamic training for teachers and students.

NurkholisAs quoted by (Saepudin, 2020), the principal's role is very significant in mobilizing school resources, such as teaching staff, staff, and students. The principal holds essential control in achieving educational goals. The principal is responsible not only for the curriculum but also for school programs and student success, as well as producing quality graduates. Therefore, the principal needs to have greater capacity to be a good and successful leader.

Furthermore, an inspiring and innovative principal can encourage teachers to develop learning media based on Islamic values and integrate the Islamic curriculum creatively and relevantly. For example, the principal at Madrasah D emphasized that innovations in modern Islamic boarding school-based learning have increased students' interest and enthusiasm for Islamic values and their academic competencies.

In addition to the direct influence of the principal, empirical findings also indicate that the success of Islamic education development depends heavily on the active role of teachers and students. Teachers who receive support and motivation from their principals tend to be more creative and innovative in implementing Islamic values-based learning. Similarly, students who feel valued and inspired by their principals and teachers demonstrate improved character, discipline, and enthusiasm for learning.

Despite its significant potential, the implementation of transformational leadership in madrasas does not always run smoothly. Findings indicate that some principals face obstacles such as limited competency in leadership and management, a lack of ongoing training and development, and a conservative work culture that is resistant to innovation. Limited resources, including facilities and funding, are also major obstacles to realizing an innovative and comprehensive Islamic vision.

Based on theoretical studies, previous and empirical findings, it can be concluded that developing transformational leadership competencies in principals is crucial for improving the

quality of Islamic education in Islamic elementary schools. Principals need ongoing training and self-development to become inspiring and innovative role models and build a positive work culture based on Islamic values.

Muthohar in (Arifudin, 2024) explained that improving school quality is essentially a step to improve the quality of education by empowering school principals with the authority and responsibility for decision-making, which adds personal participation to both school personnel and community members.

Quality improvement is an effort that must be achieved through the support of all those who are part of the educational institution. According to Townsend and Butterworth in (Arifudin, 2022), the factors that determine the realization of a quality educational process include: a) the effectiveness of the principal's leadership; b) the active involvement and responsibility of teachers and staff; c) the effective teaching and learning process; d) the relevance of the curriculum; e) having an aligned vision and mission; f) a supportive school environment; and g) the essential participation of parents and the community.

According to Hari Sudrajat in (Kartika, 2021) that quality education is education that is able to produce alumni who have skills and abilities, both professional academic, which are based on personal and social skills, as well as high moral values, overall this education aims to form life skills and create a complete person or a person with an integrated personality, namely a person who can combine faith, knowledge, and charity.

Overall, transformational leadership plays a strategic role in the development of Islamic education in madrasas. Principals who are able to implement this leadership style are not only able to increase teacher and student motivation and innovation but also are able to create an Islamic and conducive learning environment. The integration of theory and previous findings reinforces the empirical finding that the success of Islamic education development is highly dependent on the quality and leadership style of the principal, as well as other supporting factors such as competence, culture, and resources.

Therefore, strengthening transformational leadership competencies through training, seminars, and ongoing professional development is a strategic step that must be taken by relevant parties to ensure that madrasas are able to optimally and sustainably implement their Islamic vision and mission. This way, the development of Islamic education in elementary madrasas can be effective and produce a generation of students with Islamic character, knowledge, and the ability to contribute positively to society.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of the principal plays a very important role in the development of Islamic education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Principals who implement this leadership style can inspire and motivate all members of the madrasah, including teachers and students, through a strong vision, good role models, and a personal and empowering approach. The success of the principal in integrating Islamic values consistently and innovatively is a key factor in creating an Islamic, conducive learning atmosphere, and can build the character and competence of students. Furthermore, the findings show that the transformational principle can encourage innovation in learning based on Islamic values, strengthen religious culture, and increase the active participation of the madrasah community in various Islamic activities. This success is inseparable from the role of teachers who are supported and encouraged by the principal, as well as the conducive madrasah environment oriented towards the development of Islamic character. However, challenges remain, particularly related to the limited competence of the principal, limited resources, and the still conservative work culture in some madrasahs. Therefore, strengthening transformational leadership competencies through continuous

training and professional development is very necessary to increase leadership effectiveness and the success of Islamic education development.

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