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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-demographic variables and crime reporting attitude in Nigeria

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Abstract: The complexity involved in combating crime in different regions of the world makes information sharing fundamental in crime management. Unfortunately, crime victims, who should be in the frontline of providing this information to law enforcement agents are often lethargic and lackadaisical in doing so, owing to no fault of theirs. Thus, this paper explored the convergence between socio-demographic variables and crime reporting in Nigeria. Empirically, the study examined the relationship between the attitude of law enforcement agents, location of the crime, nature of the crime, and attitude to crime reporting. Mixed methods, including a cross-sectional survey and in-depth interview, was used to collect data from 1112 respondents through a multi-stage sampling technique. The quantitative data were analysed using simple linear regression; while, the qualitative data collected were analysed in themes as a complement to the quantitative data. Findings revealed that attitudes of law enforcement agents, crime location and nature of crime significantly affect attitude to crime reporting in the study area. The study concludes that there is a connection between selected socio-demographic variables such as attitudes of law enforcement agents, crime location, nature of crime and attitude to crime reporting. It was, therefore, recommended that law enforcement officers who fail to abide by the ethics of their profession and the standard procedure governing their interaction with both complainants and suspects should be severely sanctioned. Besides, law enforcement officers should be trained and re-trained in such areas as public relations and professional ethics guiding their operations.

Keywords: Attitude of law enforcement agents, Crime location, Attitude to Crime reporting, Nature of the crime, Sociodemographic

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, like other nations of the world, is at present faced with a plethora of criminal happenings in the form of violent and non-violent crimes that threaten national and global trade as well as political stability. Among such crimes are kidnapping and hostage-taking, arson, banditry, armed robbery, cultism, assassination, insurgency, human trafficking, corruption, drug trafficking, and gun running. These crimes have ravaged the polity and spread a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety. Reports that Nigeria has been in the world crime map since independent is quite disturbing, but more worrisome is the lethargic and lackadaisical attitude of crime victims towards crime reporting (Hart & Rennison, 2003; Ukwaiyi, Okpa, Adewoyin, Angioha, & Udom, 2017). This attitude is against



the backdrop that, intelligent sharing by victims of crime are the most reliable source of data for law enforcement agents on crime locations, flashpoints, and where more efforts are needed to combat crime (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; Hindelang & Gottfredson, 1976). Highlighting the imperative of crime reporting, Van Kesteren, Mayhew and Nieuwebeerta (2000) noted that criminal occurrences and their report must go together to establish the rate of recurrence and spatial coverage of crime, update crime statistics, properly compensate victims and punish offenders. However, Diyoke (2013) observed that certain criminal acts are not registered in the official crime statistics, for the failure of not being disclosed to law enforcement agents. Underreporting criminal cases creates a false image about the existence of a particular crime, deform and debilitates the veracity of data law enforcement agents rely on to improve in their service delivery in combating crime at all levels. Despite enormous benefits linked to crime reporting, the incident of victimisation in most cases makes it harder and rare for victims to report to the appropriate authorities (Hart & Rennison 2003; Rennison & Rand 2003; Rennison 2001; Ojong, Agba, Njirinze, & Angioha, 2021).

The number of unregistered crime, emanating from the indisposition of victims and witnesses to inform state actors of their victimisations has several overt negative implications. Some of these limits constrain the criminal justice system from adequately protecting the citizens, thereby exposing crime victims to severe victimisation, poor distribution of security resources, as well as affecting their insurance packages, with a whole lot of them resorting to self-help without recourse to the justice system (Skogan, 1984; Rand & Catalano, 2008). When crimes are not disclosed to law enforcement agents, there is a likelihood that: (i) Victims are denied access to necessary compensatory services that would have helped them recover quickly from the incidence. (ii) Offenders are not sanctioned in line with the dictates of the law, and (iii) Security resources are not judiciously allocated to areas with crime problems. Similarly, Powers (2008) averred when victimisation is undisclosed to law enforcement agents, the possibility of sanctioning offenders will be eroded, criminals enjoy unrestrained freedom to attack and inflict pains on innocent citizens. Furthermore, places where reports on victimisation are low, critical resources needed to guarantee public safety effectively are often missing. According to Alemika, Igbo, & Nnorom (2006), the reason Nigerians under-report crime victimisation are similar to those also emphasised in other climes. While some fail to report victimisation because they blame themselves for the incident, others are scared of retaliation from suspected criminals who maybe their neighbour. Others do not report the crime because of the trauma, pains and shock that accompanies criminal attacks. On the other hand, some victimisations are considered less severe and not having enough reason to be reported to law enforcement agents. The attitude of law enforcement agents is another crucial factor that determines crime reporting. Crime victims will be more encouraged to share intelligently with law enforcement agents when they have a positive attitude about their operations. Crime statistics arrayed over the years revealed a significant number of unreported victimisation as compared to the daily occurring cases. This occasion can be attributed to victims' lack of trust and confidence in the operational capacity of the existing law enforcement agents.

With an overarching atmosphere of incredible public concern about the safety of lives and properties and the perceived limitations of law enforcement agents to respond to increasing crime waves, most people treat the subject of crime reporting with a proportion of incredulity. These make victims inclination to disclose victimisation an important item that helps in shaping crime statistics and further reveal a better understanding of how crime influences various people, groups, communities and neighbourhoods (Tarling & Morris, 2010). Previous studies aimed at expanding the views on issues revolving around crime and victimisation surveys abound ("Acierno et al., 2001; Baumer, 2002; Boateng, 2015; Boateng & Lee, 2014; Burcar, 2013; Goff, Epstein, & Reddy, 2013; Heath, Lynch, Fritch, & Wong, 2013; Skogan, 1984; Baumer & Lauritson, 2010; Tarling & Morris, 2010; Ukwaiyi, & Okpa, 2018; Ukwaiyi, Agba, Inyang, & Eraye, 2011; Ukwaiyi, Akintola & Angioha, 2019). However, their emphasis has been on the etiologies of crime, crime prevention, and criminal punishment. With these studies, very little has been achieved when it comes to crime

victimisation, victims decisions to report as well as factors affecting crime reporting. However, the present study complements previous efforts by examining the relationship between socio-demographic variables and crime reporting in Nigeria. The investigation aims to fill the gap in knowledge on this discourse and make relevant policy recommendations aim at encouraging crime reporting and strengthening the exactitude of data used by law enforcement agents in managing crime. Three research questions were raised and translated into the objectives of the study and research hypotheses. (i) What is the relationship between the attitude of law enforcement agents and crime reporting? (ii) To what extent do the location of crime affect crime reporting? (iii) what is the relationship between the nature of crime and crime reporting.

2. Research Method and Materials

This study is naturally exploratory cross-sectional. The design was opted for because it allows for random sampling and purposive selection of respondents, and the use of questionnaires as an instrument for data collection (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim, & Ekuri, 2006; Uyiwohoma, Okon, & Unim, 2021; Ikoh, Agba, & Nwosu, 2010; Achu, Owan, Uyang., & Francis, 2013; Angioha, Enuokoha, Agba, & Ikhizamah, 2020; Attah, & Angioha, 2019;). In this study, data were gathered from respondents through quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the impact of socio-demographic variables such as the attitude of law enforcement officers, location of the crime, nature of the crime, on crime reporting. The study took place in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The area lies between longitude 7.00 to 858E and Latitude 5.000 to 5.29N. It is bounded in the north by Ogoja, Obudu, and Obanliku Local Government areas. On the south by Biase and Akamkpa Local Government areas, and the east by the Republic of Cameroon, and Ebonyi State on the West. For administrative convenience, the study area has six local government areas, namely: Abi, Yakurr, Ikom, Etung, Boki, and Obubra. It has a projected population of 775,250 and is occupying an area of 2005 square Kilometres. Distributing the population across the six local government areas shows that Yakuur LGA has a population of (140, 000) people, followed by Abi LGA – (144,317), Obubra LGA (200, 000), Ikom - (162, 383), Etung – (80, 196) and Boki- (300,000) persons (NPC, 2016). The study drew its sample from traditional rulers, civil servants, farmers, anglers, and entrepreneurs in the six local government areas. One thousand one hundred and twelve (1112) participants were selected for the study. Taro Yamane (1967) was used to arrive at the sample size.

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique. The multi-stage design is preferred because the study population is substantial and made up of several clusters like towns, villages, households, and respondents. In the first stage, the study area is segmented into six local government areas, namely: Yakurr, Abi, Obubra, Ikom, Etung, and Boki. From these six clusters, the balloting method of simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) local government from the six local government areas. From the three (3) selected local government areas, two political wards were randomly selected. This selection brings the total number of selected wards to six (6). From each of the six (6) clusters, two (2) communities were selected. These bring the total number of selected communities to twelve (12) communities. These communities were selected using the balloting methods of the simple random sampling technique. The two (2) communities per cluster were selected from the list of communities provided by the council headquarters. The first two communities in the list of communities per ward were selected. A total of twelve (12) communities were selected from the six (6) clusters.

Selecting respondents based on their residents was achieved using the systematic random sampling procedure. All living houses in each sampled community were enumerated into even and odd numbers. Only even-numbered houses were systematically sampled in each enumerated cluster and only adult from 20 years and above found in those selected houses were given the questionnaire to complete. This technique was applied throughout the twelve (12) selected communities. From each of the selected communities, forty (93) respondents were selected. This implies that 93 respondents were selected from the twelve selected

communities in the study area. This brings the total sample size to 1112 respondents. All ethical principles governing scientific investigation in Social Sciences were considered. Respondents to the study were properly informed that participation is voluntary, and information supplied will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used only for academic purposes. Respondents were also allowed to withdraw when they are not convenient to continue in the study. A negligible number of respondents refused to take part in the study for reasons best known to them. Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The researchers provided consent form to all respondents which was completed and returned to the researchers before the actual data collection commence.

The instruments of data collection are structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of closed and opened-ended questions, which was divided into two parts. Section 'A' of the questionnaire contains structured closed-ended questions on substantive issues raised in the research questions and hypotheses. The instrument was designed using a four-point Likert scale to measure both the independent and dependent variables. Quantitative data collected from respondents were properly analysed in line with the objectives of the study and with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The qualitative data were translated and analysed using thematic content analysis in line with each objective of the investigation. Simple linear regression statistics were applied in the testing of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic data of Respondents

The demographic data of respondents revealed that; 446 respondents representing 40.70% are males, while 650 representing 59.30% are females. As for age distribution of respondents, 116 (10.58) are below 25 years, 220 (20.07) are between 26 – 34 years, 296 (27.00) are between 35 – 44 years, 304 (27.73) fall between 45–54 years old, while 160 (14.60) are 55 years and above. On marital status; 375 (34.21) are single, 642 (58.57) are married, 79 (7.20) are divorced/separated/widows. For respondents' educational qualification; 72 (6.56) have primary school education (FSLC), 121(11.04) have secondary school education (SSCE), 228 (20.80) have OND/NCE, 510 (46.53) have HND/BSC, while 165 (15.05) have M.Ed/PhD. As for religious affiliation; 175 (15.96) practice Islamic religion, 855 (78.01) practice Christian religion and 66 (6.02) practice African Traditional Religion. On respondents' occupation, 388 (35.40) farming, 214 (19.52) are into trading, 418(38.13) are civil servants, 44 (4.01) are Artisans, while 32 respondents' are engaged in other occupations not mentioned. For the place of residents; 365 (33.30) reside in an urban centre, 247(22.53) reside in the semi-urban centre, while majority 484 (44.16) respondents reside in rural areas.

4.2. Data Analysis

4.2.1. Attitude of Law Enforcement Agents and Crime Reporting

There is no significant relationship between the attitude of law enforcement agents and crime reporting. Both variables were measured continuously, and inferential statistics involving simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, and the result is presented in table 1. The result of the analysis, as presented in table 1, revealed R-value of 0.234a. The relationship coefficient is a normalised measure of an observed degree of relationship between variables, it is a commonly used measure of the size of an effect, and that values of ± 0.1 represent a small effect, ± 0.3 is a medium effect, and ± 0.5 is a large effect. Also, the R^2 –the value of .055 imply that 55% of the total variance is accounted for by predictor variable (attitudes of law enforcement agents). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that the $F(1, 1094) = 63.217$; $p < .000$, is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a linear association (contribution) of the predictor variable (attitudes of law enforcement agents) on crime reporting. The adjusted R^2 (.054) shows some shrinkage of the unadjusted value (.055) indicating that the model could

be generalised on the population. Based on the result, it was concluded that attitudes of law enforcement agents significantly affect crime reporting in the study area.

Table 1. Summary simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between the attitude of law enforcement agents and crime reporting.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
The attitude of law enforcement agents	11.8219	4.18999
Crime reporting	27.8950	14.99814

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig
Regression	13455.101	1	13455.101	63.217	0.234 ^a	0.055	0.054	0.000 ^a
Residual	232633.821	1094	212.840					
Total	246088.922	1095						

4.2.2. Crime location occurrence and crime reporting

Crime location occurrence has no significant effect on crime reporting. Both variables were measured continuously, and inferential statistics involving simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, and the result is presented in table 2. The result of the analysis, as presented in table 2, revealed the R-value of 0.143a. The relationship coefficient is a normalised measure of an observed degree of relationship between variables, it is a commonly used measure of the size of an effect, and that values of ± 1 represent a small effect, ± 3 is a medium effect, and ± 5 is a large effect. Also, the R²-value of .020 imply that 22% of the total variance is accounted for by the predictor variable (crime location). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that the $F(1, 1094) = 22.727$; $p < .000$, is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that there is a linear association (contribution) of the predictor variable (crime location) on crime reporting. The adjusted R² (.019) shows some shrinkage of the unadjusted value (.020) indicating that the model could be generalised on the population. Based on the result, it was concluded that crime location could significantly affect crime reporting in the study area.

Table 2. Summary simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between crime location and crime reporting

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Crime location	12.2119	4.42496
Crime reporting	27.8950	14.99814

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig
Regression	5012.809	1	5012.809	22.727	0.143 ^a	.020	0.019	0.000 ^a
Residual	241076.113	1094	220.564					
Total	246088.922	1095						

4.2.3. Nature of crime and crime reporting

Nature of crime does not significantly affect crime reporting. Both variables were measured continuously, and inferential statistics involving simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, and the result is presented in table 3. The result of the analysis, as presented in table 3, revealed the R-value of 0.181a. The relationship coefficient is a normalised measure of an observed degree of relationship between variables, it is a commonly used measure of the size of an effect, and that values of ± 1 represent a small effect, ± 3 is a medium effect, and ± 5 is a large effect. Also, the R²-value (.033) imply that 33% of total variance is accounted for by the predictor variable (nature of the crime). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that the $F(1, 1094) = 37.066$; $p < .000$, is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a linear association (contribution) of the predictor variable (nature of the crime) on crime reporting. The adjusted R² (.032) shows some shrinkage of the unadjusted value (.033) indicating that the model could be generalised on the population. Based on the result, it was concluded that the nature of crime could significantly affect crime reporting in the study area.

Table 3. Summary simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between the nature of crime and crime reporting

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nature of crime	12.9900	5.38694
Crime reporting	27.8950	14.99814

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig
Regression	8071.691	1	8071.691	37.066	0.181 ^a	0.033	0.032	0.000 ^a
Residual	238017.231	1094	217.765					
Total	246088.922	1095						

4.3. Discussion of Findings

Findings from the first hypothesis show that there is a significant relationship between the attitude of law enforcement agents and crime reporting. The outcome of this hypothesis agrees with Ayodele and Aderinto (2014) and John (2017) in a similar survey. The results revealed that the attitude of law enforcement agents is critical in victims' readiness to disclose victimisation to law enforcement personnel. This suggests that negligence on the part of security personnel has the potentials to undermine the zeal of citizens to furnish security agents with necessary intelligence that would aid the apprehension of offenders. The survey further shows that the attitude of extortion demonstrated by a law enforcement officer is a strong factor discouraging complainants from reporting the crime to the police. Other unfriendly attitudes of police that discourage crime victims from reporting their victimisation to law enforcement officers as discovered by this study include the blame game, I-don't-care attitude, and delay in commencing of investigation. Findings from this study agree with previous studies, which posited that citizens will be willing and always motivated to report crime when they have trust on the activities of law enforcement personnel (Ayodele & Aderinto, 2014). The finding of this study corroborated with the previous survey of John (2017) on public perception of police activities. The result shows that police officers engage in certain activities, which constitute an embodiment of integrity problem and discourages the public from reporting the crime to them. In line with similar findings by Boateng (2016), his survey revealed that the quality of service delivery, which helps in building public confidence on the activities of law enforcement agents is a crucial determinant of crime reporting. Findings from the study were consistent with rational choice theory, which argues that victims who find the benefit of reporting victimisation to be greater than the associated cost will be willing to engage law enforcement agents with intelligence (Bowles et al., 2009; Tarling & Morris, 2010). On the contrary, victimisation, when considered by the victim to be costlier than beneficial will withheld the information from law enforcement agents (Kaukinen, 2002). The perception of crime victims about the attitude of law enforcement agents varies from that of non-crime victims. A crime victim during the key informant interview at Ugep community has this to about attitude of law enforcement agents towards complainants:

In her opinion, crime victims do not report victimisation because law enforcement personnel makes you feel like; it's all your fault. They use unpleasant language and ask ignoring questions and expect an answer from the complainants. After engaging you in a marathon interrogation, the complainant will then be asked to provide money for fuel before they can visit the crime scene. This is peculiar with the Nigeria Police Force. (IDI/female crime victim/Ugep)

An excerpt from the view of a participant on how the attitude of law enforcement personnel affects crime reporting. This participant responded thus:

Most citizens are not satisfied with the operational performance of some law enforcement personnel; this agrees with the way certain officers display nasty behaviour in the course of discharge of their duties that scare crime victims from reporting victimisation. Some crime victim will prefer to share their experience with family members than inform law enforcement personnel about it. When you look at the police, for instance, many Nigerians do not like their personnel because of issues relating to bribery, human right abuses and the unprofessional manner they handle cases. These issues are some of the reason why an average Nigerian who is a victim of

crime will prefer to die in silence than report the victimisation to law enforcement personnel. (IDI/ community leader/ IKOM)

Another participant that was interviewed noted this thus:

The attitude of law enforcement agents, particularly the police, is affecting the rate at which people report a crime in Nigeria. It looks like there is a training school besides police college where police officers learn their unruly behaviour. This is because police officers anywhere in Nigeria behave the same, except for a few good ones. They collect money from complainants before their reports are documented, they ask for fuel before they visit the crime scene and still ask the complainants to appreciate them for doing their jobs. (IDI/ Youth leader/ Abi)

The analysis of this hypothesis shows that crime location has a significant impact on crime reporting. The study revealed that victimisation that occurs in highways, shopping mall, bus stops, amusement parks, and night clubs are hardly reported to law enforcement agents. Location of crime as a factor in predicting crime reporting has been empirically supported by studies from Gyong, (2010); Ranapurwala, Berg, and Casteel, (2016). The probability that victims of crime will report the incident can be dependent on the location of the crime scene. It was observed in the study that, the likelihood of police notification by victims of crime is affected by the context of the location the crime took place. The findings are consistent with prevailing views in the literature that urban dwellers report crime victimisation to the police more than rural dwellers.

A police officer serving in Obubra Divisional Police Station also supported the above claims during an IDI session, by revealing how crime location affect crime reporting: His views were presented thus:

When the station is far from where the crime incident occurs, depending on the gravity of the crime, most crime victims do not border reporting such victimisation to the police especially when the offence is minor in nature. That does not suggest that we have not received a report from victims of crime from the place that is far from the police station. Most times, the victimisations are not reported by the victims but passer-byes and good Samaritans. It is a fact that the more distant police stations are to the people, the less they report crime victimisation. (IDI/ Police Inspector/ Obubra)

A community leader in Ekori who has suffered a series of attacks from criminals reported that:

The challenge crime victims go through to report victimisation is made more difficult when the station where these reports should be made are far from the people. Crime victims may be willing to report victimisation, but the distance to the police station acts as a hindrance most times for them to report victimisations. (IDI/ Community leader/ Ekori)

The findings of hypothesis three revealed that the nature of crime significantly affects crime reporting. Ayodele and Aderinto, (2014) noted that crime victims are quick in reporting attacks that have grave consequences on their families, businesses, career and social life than attacks with lesser effects. The submission is in tandem with the findings of this study, which reported that those murder cases are frequently reported than to law enforcement agents than other crimes with minor effects. The study observed that the cruelty of a crime, that is, crimes with grave consequences are more likely to be reported than less severe violations. This is supported by Tanton and Jones's (2003), who observed the various propensity to crime reporting and asserts that crime victims with a severe degree of threats have a higher tendency to report crimes to the police than victims of less serious crimes. For instance, victims who have experienced injuries during an assault were associated with higher reporting of the event to the police (Tanton & Jones, 2003; Gartner & Macmillan, 1995). Moreover, the nature of crime incident characteristics is highly related to the likelihood that the police are contacted. The seriousness of violence is one of the most generally accepted predictors of whether the

police were contacted: the more extreme the violence, the almost certain the police will be called (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1988; Baumer, 2002; 1984).

Responding to why crime victims do not report victimisation, a vigilante officer in Boki submits that:

People report the more serious crime to the security agents than they do with crime they consider less serious. When an individual commits murder, the family of deceased report such crime to law enforcement agents immediately, but when an individual lost his yam or cassava to criminal such cases are hardly reported to the police. What this means is that the severity and seriousness of the crime are what determines whether victimisation will be reported or not. (IDI/ Vigilante/ Boki)

In one of the interview sessions, a woman leader was asked whether the nature of crime affect crime reporting: She responded thus:

Crime reporting is optional but very necessary and beneficial. Decisions to report criminal attacks is anchored on several factors, one of which is the nature of the crime. It is natural to see people react violently when something serious happens to them but in respond liberally when something less serious happens to them. Families that suffer such attacks as rape, kidnapping, and arsons do not hesitate to involve security professional while families with less criminal attacks like stealing of goats and other domestic animals would likely not report such assault to the police. (IDI/ woman leader/ Ugep)

5. Conclusion

This study has shown the convergence between the attitude of law enforcement agents, crime location, nature of crime and crime reporting. The research has established that the capacity of government to provide security for all citizens will be undermined when a crime is not reported to law enforcement agents. Beyond the distortions of the real picture of crime and undermining the accuracy of data rely on by law enforcement agents in their operation, not reporting crime also destroys the possibility that lawbreakers will be penalised, allowing them to remain free to victimise other law-abiding citizens. Since it generally agreed that crime is a naked evil that possesses a danger to economic, political and national security and a fundamental factor linked with underdevelopment, and damaged human and social capital. It is instructive to expose crime, whether as victims, sympathisers or caregivers to law enforcement agents. The benefits associated with crime reporting are vast but not limited to protection from the state, getting necessary compensations that will aid the victims' recovery, and protecting the society from further danger from the activities of criminals. The study recommended that law enforcement officers who fail to abide by the ethics of their profession and the standard procedure governing their interaction with both complainants and suspects should be severely sanctioned. Besides, law enforcement officers should be trained and re-trained in such areas as public relations and professional ethics guiding their operations.

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