

MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS ON INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AND RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract

Research productivity among academic staff in Nigerian polytechnics is crucial for institutional development, while information literacy skills (ILS) are recognized as essential for effective research, the influence of contextual factors on this relationship is under-explored. This study examined the moderating role of socioeconomic factors on the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff in public polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted, with a sample of 565 academic staff selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Pearson's correlation and hierarchical multiple regression. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity ($r = .182$, $p < .05$). Socio-economic factors collectively contributed significantly to the model, explaining 20.8% of the variance in research productivity. Educational qualification ($\beta = 0.250$), work experience ($\beta = 0.114$), academic status ($\beta = 0.147$), and monthly salary ($\beta = 0.106$) emerged as significant direct predictors. Furthermore, gender ($\beta = 0.680$), work experience ($\beta = 1.085$), and academic status ($\beta = 0.888$) significantly moderated the ILS–research productivity relationship. The study concludes that work experience, and academic ranks impacted the translating of information literacy skills into tangible research output. Recommendations: It is recommended that polytechnic management and policymakers implement targeted interventions, including continuous professional development programs that are sensitive to staff career stages and gender, and improved remuneration structures to foster a more productive research culture.

Keywords: Information literacy skills, research productivity, socio-economic factors, moderation

Introduction

Research productivity is a crucial indicator in higher institutions of learning for measuring the productivity of academic staff. It is a metric that ensures fairness and justice and is designed for assessing the productivity of lecturers to evaluate their productivity with a specified period usually three years in case of academic promotions and also for selecting individual for positions of leadership in an academic environment.

Academic staff research productivity assessment depends largely on the number of articles published, conference presentations made, grants obtained over a specific period of time, and peer-reviewed articles published (Okafor, 2019). Research productivity of academic staff is a major determinant for promoting staff in higher institutions of learning across the globe, including polytechnics. One of the major indicators employed by employers to determine the efficiency of academic staff and the standard of higher institutions of learning is research publications. Polytechnics and other academic institutions have constantly derived their overall development and rating through scientific research (Alhija & Majdob, 2018). Research output inspires hard work, addresses the shortfall of previous research, and creates avenues for further investigations (Babalola, 2014).

In order to achieve optimal research productivity, information literacy skills possessed by academic staff plays key role, as they enable the efficient use of information resources Henry et al. (2020). These skills aid users in sourcing appropriate information, selecting suitable search tools, using appropriate search strategies, and obtaining desired results (Santharooban, 2016). In this regard, academic staff become aware of approaches to access, utilise, coordinate, and synthesized information in an ethical way and obtain the knowledge they need to solve identified problems in an effective and efficient manner (Phuong et al. 2022). Inadequate information literacy skills could be a major challenge to academic staff and subsequently prevent such staff from harnessing and using information resources effectively, thereby reducing their research productivity (Okiki & Mabawonku, 2013).

As a critical component of academic excellence, driving innovation and contributing to the socio-economic development of a nation, research productivity is

central to societal growth Akpojotor, L., & Ekuerhare, O. (2024). Polytechnics, as institutions of higher learning, play a vital role in advancing knowledge and solving real-world problems through research. However, despite its importance, research productivity among academic staff in public polytechnics in Nigeria has been observed to be very low, and this area has received little attention from scholars.

Reviewed literature shows that several factors are militating against achieving optimal research productivity in tertiary institutions, particularly in Nigerian polytechnics (Ladipo et al.2022, Ejike et al. 2025). In an attempt to unravel the reasons behind this undesirable scenario, this study aims to assess the moderating relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff in polytechnics by identifying the factors that influence it and exploring the challenges and opportunities that exist. By investigating research productivity in this context, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform policy decisions, improve research output, and enhance the overall quality of education in polytechnics.

Review of Literature

Socio-economic factors and Information literacy skills

Chengbo and Yangi (2021), in their study conducted to examine the impact the socio-economic factors have on the health information literacy skills among urban older adults in western China. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, and the sample of the study consists of 812 urban participants 'aged 60 years and above. The study showed that socio-economic factors such as marital status, educational attainment, and financial capability are significantly and tightly associated with health information literacy skills, but in contrast, the study found that age negatively impacts information literacy skills because older adults, according to the study, have fewer channels through which they could obtain health information.

A similar study by Urbancikova et al. (2017) was carried out to investigate the impact of socio-economic and demographic factors on digital literacy skills as a basis for digital prosperity. The survey was conducted on the representative sample of 1000 inhabitants among the population of Slovakia older than 14 years. The survey was conducted biannually for 10 years (2005-2015). The quota sampling took into account

the parameters of gender, age, education, nationality, and settlement size. The results were published in the form of tables and charts, comparing a set of digital literacy indicators and values of the composite. The results revealed that gender, age, education, income, and household type are the major significant factors of digital literacy skills that influence digital prosperity.

Mahmood et al. (2021) assessed the relationship between demographic factors and the digital information literacy skills of women in Pakistan. The sample of the study comprised 291 women living in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The study revealed that certain socio-economic factors (age, marital status, and urban/rural location) had no significant impact on the digital information literacy competence. The study, however, identified factors such as occupation and education as having a positive effect on the digital information literacy skills of women. Adekanbi (2016) investigated the factors that predicted undergraduates' information literacy proficiency in Nigerian universities. The sample of the study consisted of 235 respondents. Data collected was analysed using frequencies and logistic regression. The study revealed that cognitive abilities predicted information operation and strategic retrieval skills. The findings also showed that gender is a significant predictor of both informational and operational retrieval skills. This is contrary to Ejike et al. (2025) and Appah et al. (2020) who reported a negative relationship between age and research productivity.

Socio-economic factors and research productivity

A study by Uluocha and Mabawonku (2013) was carried out to examine the demographic variables and their impact on the research productivity of academic staff in faculties of law in Nigerian universities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate 414 respondents in the faculties of law of surveyed universities. Data collected was analysed using multiple regression. The study indicated that there was no significant interaction between work experience and publication of lecturers in the faculties of law in Nigerian universities

Jalal (2020), in his study, found that research productivity is significantly positively correlated with work experience. Uwizeye et al. (2022) presented a paper at the annual conference of the International Studies Association (ISA) on women and academic publications. The paper established that people who are married and divorced are more productive than those who have never been married. The paper indicated that

married men produced 5.1 article equivalents compared to 4.8 for divorced or separated men and 3.8 for never-married men. In the same vein, the paper found that married women produced 3.7 article equivalents, the same as divorced or separated women, while unmarried women produced 2.3 article equivalents. This established that there is a correlation between marital status and research productivity.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research approach utilizing a correlational research design. This design was appropriate as the study aimed to determine the nature and strength of the relationships between multiple variables: information literacy skills (independent variable), research productivity (dependent variable), and nine socioeconomic factors (moderating variables). The design allows for the testing of hypotheses and the examination of both direct and interaction effects, as facilitated by the hierarchical regression analysis. The target population for this study comprised all academic staff from the federal and state polytechnics located in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample. In the first stage, a stratified random sampling technique was used to categorize the polytechnics into federal and state institutions. From these strata, a specific number of public polytechnics were randomly selected for the study. In the final stage, academic staff were randomly sampled from various schools/departments within the selected institutions, ensuring representation across different academic ranks, qualifications, and experience levels. Based on the population of academic staff in the selected institutions, a sample size of 600 was determined, and questionnaires were administered. A total of 565 valid responses were retrieved and used for the final data analysis, as reflected in the results.

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was divided into sections to capture the relevant data for the study variables. The researchers administered the questionnaires to the sampled academic staff in their respective institutions. This approach was adopted to ensure a high response rate and to clarify any ambiguities respondents might have had regarding the items. Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was conducted in stages corresponding to the research objectives and hypotheses.

The study used descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations to summarize the responses of key variables. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC): PPMC was employed to test hypothesis one, examining the bi-variate relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity. PPMC can be expressed as:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum X_i Y_i) - (\sum X_i)(\sum Y_i)}{\sqrt{[n \sum X_i^2 - (\sum X_i)^2]} \sqrt{[n \sum Y_i^2 - (\sum Y_i)^2]}} \quad (1)$$

Where;

r = Correlation coefficient, X_i = Information literacy skills, Y_i = Research productivity, n = sample size.

Zero-Order Correlation: This analysis was conducted to examine the inter-correlations among all the study variables, including the relationship between each socioeconomic factor and research productivity (see Table 2).

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis: This was the primary statistical technique used to test the moderating hypotheses. The analysis was performed in three steps (see Table 3):

Step 1: The independent variable (information literacy skills) was entered to assess its direct effect on research productivity.

Step 2: The nine socioeconomic factors were entered as predictors to assess their direct effects and to see how much additional variance in research productivity they explained beyond ILS.

Step 3: The interaction terms (ILS multiplied by each socioeconomic factor) were entered. A significant change in R^2 (ΔR^2) at this step, along with significant beta weights for the interaction terms, would indicate a moderating effect. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Selected Nigerian Polytechnic Staff

Age range:	Freq.	%
20-30	84	14.9
31-40	171	30.3
41-50	166	29.4
>=51	144	25.5

Gender:

Male	376	66.5
Female	189	33.5

Educational qualification:

HND/B.Sc.	236	41.8
PGD	81	14.3
M.Sc./M.Phil	235	44.5
PhD	13	2.3

Marital status:

Single	149	26.4
Married	400	70.8
Divorced	5	0.9
Widow/widower	11	1.9

Work experience:

05-Oct	301	53.3
Nov-16	133	23.5
17-22	86	15.2
>= 23	45	8

Family size:

01-May	466	82.5
06-Oct	94	16.6
16-20	3	0.5
21 and above	2	0.4

Academic status:

Tech Instructor	123	21.8
Assistant Lecturer	110	19.5
Lecturer III	47	8.3
Lecturer II	62	11
Lecturer I	71	12.6
Senior Lecturer	55	9.7
Principal Lecturer	37	6.5
Chief Lecturer	15	2.7
Librarian	45	8

Monthly salary:

Less than ₦100,000	230	40.7
₦100,000-149,000	220	38.9
₦150,000-199,000	37	6.5
₦200,000-299,000	33	5.8
>= ₦300,000	45	8

Employment status:

Full time	415	73.5
Part time/Adjunct	150	26.5

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 showed distribution of academic staff in selected public polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria by their socio-economic characteristics. The results revealed that 14.9% of the respondents were between the age of 20-30 years, 30.3% were within the age-bracket of 31–40 years, 29.4% lie between 41 and 50 years, while 25.5% were 51 years and above. This age structure showed a relatively balanced workforce in terms of age diversity, with a strong presence of mid-career academics. In term of their gender, the table showed a considerable gender gap, as 66.5% of the respondents were male, while only 33.5% were female.

Further inspection of the results revealed that distribution of educational qualifications exhibits reduction in the number of staff that hold highest degrees. The table showed that 44.5% had M.Sc./M.Phil., 41.8% hold HND/B.Sc. PGD had a share of 14.3%, while 2.3% of the respondents had a PhD. This distribution reveals that Polytechnic institutions are dominated by majority of staff holding B.Sc./M.Sc. (86.3%). The data also revealed that 70.8% of respondents are married, making it the dominant marital status, with only 26.4% being single and a minimal percentage being divorced (0.9%) or widowed (1.9%). In terms of work experience, 53.3% of the academic staff have been employed for 5–10 years, reflecting a workforce with moderate professional experience.

Examining the family size, the majority (82.5%) of the academic staff have between 1 and 5 family members, which is consistent with typical family sizes in Nigeria. The academic status of the respondents showed that most of them are at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy, with 21.8% working as technical instructors and 19.5% as assistant lecturers. Senior positions like chief lecturer accounted for only 2.7% of the staff. Regarding income, most staff (79.6%) earned less than ₦150,000 monthly, a proportion of the respondents (12.7%) earn between ₦150,000 and ₦299,000 per month, while few (8%) of the sampled staff earned 300,000 and above. Employment status is predominantly full-time (73.5%), indicating that majority of the staff have job security in their various institutions.

Test of hypothesis

In line with conceptual framework in chapter two and operationalization of the variables in chapter three, the hypotheses were tested at 0.05% level of significance.

Research hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff in selected public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria

Table 1 showed the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis investigating the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff in selected public polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria. The table showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity ($r(565) = .182, p < .05$). Hence, there is significant relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff in the study. The hypothesis is rejected

Table 1. Correlation analysis of the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	p-value	Remarks
Research productivity	37.1664	28.83821	565	.182*	.001	Sig.
Information literacy skills	93.9292	13.16515				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2. Zero-order correlations among ILS, research productivity, and socioeconomic factors

1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	.249*	1								
3	-.039	-.213*	1							
4	.394*	.308*	-.087*	1						
5	.131*	.205*	-0.008	.131*	1					
6	.275*	.444*	-.116*	.326*	.233*	1				
7	0.047	.178*	-0.009	.162*	0.02	.261*	1			
8	.353*	.333*	-0.042	.412*	.151*	.330*	0.105	1		
9	.179*	0.044	0.016	.121*	0.05	0.074	.177*	0.074	1	
10	0.015	-0.056	-.099*	.100*	0.064	0.064	-.098*	-.098*	0.039	1
mean	37.17	2.65	1.33	2.96	1.78	1.78	1.2	3.9	1.94	1.14
Std. dev.	28.84	1.02	0.47	1.27	0.55	0.98	0.48	2.52	1.11	0.35

* Significant at 0.05 level

Source: Field survey, 2025

Key: 1= Research productivity; 2 = Age; 3 = Gender; 4 = Educational qualification; 5 = Marital status; 6 = Work experience; 7 = Family size; 8 = Academic status; 9 = Monthly salary; 10 = Employment status

Table 2 showed the zero-order correlation between socio-economic factors and research productivity of academic staff in selected public polytechnics. Research productivity correlates positively with several socio-economic factors. Age has a positive correlation with research productivity ($r = 0.249$, $p (.001) < .05$), indicating that older academic staff may have higher productivity levels, possibly due to accumulated experience and expertise. Similarly, educational qualification ($r = 0.394$, $p (.001) < .05$), and academic status ($r = 0.353$, $p (.001) < .05$) also show significant positive relationships with research productivity. These correlations imply that higher qualifications and academic ranks, often associated with more research opportunities and resources, positively influence productivity. Work experience is also positively correlated with research productivity ($r = 0.275$, $p (.001) < .05$), further revealing the role of accumulated expertise and familiarity with the research process.

Monthly salary has a positive correlation with research productivity ($r = 0.179$, $p (.001) < .05$), implying that higher remuneration incentive or enable more research engagement. Marital status also correlates positively, albeit weakly, with research productivity ($r = 0.131$, $p (.002) < .05$), indicating that personal stability influences academic work positively.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression of socioeconomic factors moderating ILSand research productivity

Steps	Variables	β	t	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	F	Sig.
Model 1	ILS	0.182	4.400*	0.032	0.033	19.363	0.001
Model 2	Age	0.075	1.698	0.208	0.208	17.622	0.001
	Gender	0.011	0.289				
	Educational qualification	0.25	5.863*				
	Marital status	0.031	0.807				
	Work experience	0.114	2.553*				
	Family size	-0.038	-0.971				
	Academic status	0.147	3.330*				
	Monthly salary	0.106	2.810*				

	Employment status	-0.03	-0.777				
Model 3	ILS × Age	-0.533	-1.46	0.253	0.037	11.068	0.001
	ILS × Gender	0.68	1.989*				
	ILS × Educational qualification	-0.093	-0.271				
	ILS × Marital status	0.003	0.009				
	ILS × Work experience	1.085	2.970*				
	ILS × Family size	0.143	1.005				
	ILS × Academic status	0.888	2.129*				
	ILS × Monthly salary	-0.376	-1.092				
	ILS × Employment status	0.19	0.554				

Significant at 0.05 level

Source: Field survey, 2025

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Socioeconomic Moderation

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of information literacyskills (ILS) on research productivity of academic staff and to determine whether socioeconomic factors moderate this relationship. In the first step, ILS was entered as the sole predictor, and the results revealed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.182, t = 4.400, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted $R^2 = 0.032$. This indicates that academic staff with higher information literacy skills tend to have greater research productivity, although ILS alone explained only about 3.2% of the variance.

In the second step, nine socioeconomic factors—age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, work experience, family size, academic status, monthly salary, and employment status, were added to the model. The inclusion of these variables significantly increased the explained variance to 20.8% (Adj. $R^2 = 0.208, \Delta R^2 = 0.208, F = 17.622, p < 0.001$). Among these, educational qualification ($\beta = 0.250, t = 5.863, p < 0.05$), work experience ($\beta = 0.114, t = 2.553, p < 0.05$), academic status ($\beta = 0.147, t = 3.330, p < 0.05$), and monthllysalary ($\beta = 0.106, t = 2.810, p < 0.05$) were significant predictors. These findings suggest that socioeconomic factors not only contribute directly to research productivity but also enhance the ability of academic staff to leverage ILS for productive outcomes.

In the third step, interaction terms between ILS and each socioeconomic factor were added to test for moderation. The results indicated that gender, work experience, and academic statussignificantly moderated the relationship between ILS and research productivity (ILS × Gender: $\beta = 0.680, t = 1.989, p < 0.05$; ILS × Work Experience: $\beta =$

1.085, $t = 2.970$, $p < 0.05$; ILS $\times$ Academic Status: $\beta = 0.888$, $t = 2.129$, $p < 0.05$). The adjusted R^2 for model 3 further increased to 0.253 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.037$, $F = 11.068$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the addition of moderators explained an additional 3.7% of the variance in research productivity. This suggests that the effect of ILS on research productivity varies depending on gender, work experience, and academic rank, with male staff, more experienced staff, and those in higher academic ranks being better able to translate ILS into research output. To sum up the findings, the analysis demonstrates that information literacy skills are a key determinant of research productivity, through socioeconomic factors.

Discussion

The study revealed that highest qualification, academic status, work experience and monthly salary significantly have moderating impact in the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of the respondents. This signified that the moderating variables would strengthen and reinforce the existing association between ILS and research output of the respondents. It was discovered that the association between ILS and research productivity was moderated by the monthly income of academic staff. This suggests that an increase in monthly pay enhances the association between the information literacy skills and the research productivity, which in turn improves academic staff research output. The finding of Nafiu et al. (2014) and Phuong et al. (2020) supported that poor wages or irregular payment of salaries of academic staff could negatively impact the research productivity of lecturers in tertiary institutions, as they would not have enough financial capabilities to carry out research activities. In contrast, Natividad-Franco and Dela (2023), reported that an improvement in research productivity could not be attributed to enhanced salary of the respondents, as wages do not serve as a motivator to research productivity.

It was also established that educational qualifications significantly moderate the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff. This interaction gives improvement to the research productivity of respondents. As the level of educational qualification is increasing, it strengthens the existing relationship between ILS and research productivity of academic staff of the surveyed institutions, this would boost the level of research output of the respondents. The finding agrees with Chengbo and Yangi (2021), who submitted that academic

qualification, among other factors, impacts information literacy skills; this could reinforce the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity.

In the same vein, the work experience of respondents served as intervening variables in reinforcing the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of academic staff of public polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria. Work experience of academic staff refers to jobs academic staff have done in the past. The experience possessed by respondents during their career life interacts with the ILS to strengthen the relationship it has with the research productivity; this will bring the desired increase in research output of the respondents. The finding of Ladipo et al. (2022) and Henry et al. (2020) are associated with the finding of this study which affirmed that academic qualification and years of experience were the determinants of numbers of publications by academic staff. In support of this finding, Appah and Tunde-Francis (2020); Akpojotor Ekuerhare (2024) reported in their study that years of experience is a strong predictor of research productivity.

Academic status is one of the intervening variables that mediate the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of the respondents. This portends that considerable development in the academic rank of respondents would boost the existing interaction between the independent variable (ILS) and dependent variable (research productivity). As respondents grow in status, their experience would make them more productive in carrying out research works than academic staff with lower academic status, as they would be more experienced and skillful in research writing. This would likely foster a professional network for research collaboration to draw relevant resources to support research activities, as observed by Simisaye and Popoola (2019). The study's findings suggest that the association between ILS and research productivity does not guarantee rise in respondents' research productivity; rather, the link must be supported by an increase in academic standing in order to result in an improvement in research publication. The finding is, however, contradicted Shin et al. (2014); Tien and Blackurn (2016), whose studies revealed that junior academic staff had more publications than their senior counterparts because they are under pressure to be productive for the purpose of job opportunities elsewhere, and their zeal for research declines as they advance in age.

Recommendations

Polytechnic management should therefore prioritize continuous professional development programmes aimed at strengthening the information literacy competencies of academic staff. Such programmes should focus on enhancing skills in information searching, evaluation of scholarly sources, research data management, and ethical use of information.

Mentoring programmes should be introduced to support early-career academics who may possess basic information literacy skills but lack the experience required to convert these skills into productive research outcomes.

Furthermore, institutional policies should encourage academic staff to pursue higher academic qualifications by providing opportunities such as study leave, research grants, and scholarship support. Improving the remuneration and welfare packages of academic staff is also essential, as better financial incentives can motivate greater engagement in research activities.

Efforts should be made to create inclusive and supportive academic environments that provide equal opportunities for both male and female staff to access research resources, training, and collaborative networks.

By addressing both skill development and socio-economic constraints, polytechnics can strengthen research culture and significantly improve the research productivity of their academic staff.

Conclusion

This study examined the moderating role of socioeconomic factors on the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity among academic staff in selected public polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. The findings revealed that information literacy skills have a significant positive relationship with research productivity, suggesting that academic staff who possess stronger abilities to identify, access, evaluate, and utilize information resources are more likely to produce higher research outputs. However, the magnitude of this relationship indicates that information literacy skills alone do not fully explain variations in research productivity among academic staff.

The study further established that several socio-economic factors play important roles in influencing research productivity. Educational qualification, work experience,

academic status, and monthly salary were found to be significant predictors of research productivity. These results imply that academic staff with higher qualifications, longer years of professional experience, higher academic ranks, and better remuneration tend to demonstrate higher levels of research productivity. In addition, the study found that gender, work experience, and academic status significantly moderate the relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity. This suggests that the ability of academic staff to effectively translate their information literacy skills into tangible research outputs varies depending on their demographic and professional characteristics. In particular, staff with greater experience and those occupying higher academic ranks appear to be better positioned to utilize their information literacy competencies to enhance their research output.

Based on these findings, it becomes evident that improving research productivity in polytechnics requires not only the development of information literacy skills but also supportive institutional and socioeconomic conditions.

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