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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Mediating Analysis of Academic Performance in the Relationship between Life Circumstances and Job Opportunities among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

For young adults, achieving academic success is not just about meeting educational expectations; it also directly impacts their future job opportunities. Academic success not only reflects students' achievement of educational goals, but also directly affects their prospects in the job market. However, recent declines in academic performance among young adults have sparked concerns. These declines may be related to various life circumstances, including general health, personal finances, family status, and romantic relationships. However, the broader impact of these factors on both academic performance and subsequent job opportunities remains understudied. Using a large dataset from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), a nationwide longitudinal study of adolescent to adult health in the US (>70,000 sample size), this research looks into the role that academic performance plays as a mediating factor in the relationship between different life circumstances and employment opportunities. SPSS is utilized to process the dataset, which includes merging, cleansing, and transforming on the four selected raw datasets from ICPSR. Through Pearson's correlation and mediation analysis, the result reveals significant correlations between these factors and job opportunities, with academic performance serving as a mediator. These findings offer insight for policymakers and educators, suggesting avenues to improve job prospects by improving academic performance while addressing the underlying life circumstances.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, education and job opportunities are important to young adults in shaping their futures. However, disparities in access to education and employment opportunities have persisted, especially among those from disadvantaged backgrounds. A research by Lewis and Kuhfeld that examined test results from 6.7 million public school students in the United States in grades three through eight found that students are still improving more slowly (Lewis & Kuhfeld, 2023). The most recent scores on the long-term trend of the National Assessment of Educational Progress saw declines for 13 year olds between the 2019-20 school year and the 2022-23 school year (Schwartz, 2023). Additionally, one in three college students encounter mental health problems while continuing their education, including serious depression and anxiety disorders, according to Bruffaerts et al. (Bruffaerts et al., 2018). General health, personal finances, family status, and romantic relationships have always

influenced the academic performance of young adults. Existing literature available on the relationship between general health and academic performance (Egan et al., 2022), personal finances and general health (Hu et al., 2020), family status and academic performance (Chauke & Obadire, 2019), and romantic relationships and academic performance (Thwala et al., 2021). Next, according to Dvyik, the employment-to-population ratio worldwide was estimated to be approximately 58%, indicating that almost 60% percent of the global population over 15 years old was employed (Dyvik, 2024). There are also existing studies on the relationship between general health and job opportunities (Cancelliere et al., 2018), personal finances and job opportunities (Gunawan & Safira, 2022), family status and job opportunities (Lee & Seon, 2019), and romantic relationships and job opportunities (Kornblum et al., 2021). Furthermore, literature on the relationship between academic performance and job opportunities is available (Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). Lastly, there are existing studies on the relationship between general health and job opportunities in the mediating effect of academic performance (Egan et al., 2022), personal finances and job opportunities in the mediating effect of academic performance (Krueger, 2018), family status and job opportunities in the mediating effect of academic performance (Chauke & Obadire, 2019), and romantic relationships and job opportunities in the mediating effect of academic performance (Beard et al., 2018). However, there is incomplete knowledge of how different factors affect the academic performance and job opportunities of young adults. In addition, there is still much to learn about the potential mediating role that academic performance could play in this situation. The objective of this study is to study the relationship between different factors such as general health, personal finances, family status, and romantic relationships, and academic performance and job opportunities among young adults in the United States. The objective of this study is also to study how academic performance mediates the relationship between different factors and access to job opportunities among young adults.

1.1 Problem statement

The decline in academic performance among young adults, coupled with persistent disparities in access to education and job opportunities, poses a significant social challenge. Despite existing literature on individual relationships between various life circumstances and academic performance or job opportunities, there remains a gap in understanding the broader interplay among these factors and their collective impact on young adults' prospects. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how general health, personal finances, family status, and romantic relationships influence both academic performance and subsequent job opportunities among young adults in the US. Additionally, the study seeks to elucidate the mediating role of academic performance in these relationships, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educators to enhance job prospects and address underlying disparities.

1.2 Research objectives

RO1: To discover the relationship between general health and academic performance.

RO2: To discover the relationship between personal finances and academic performance.

RO3: To discover the relationship between family status and academic performance.

RO4: To discover the relationship between romantic relationships and academic performance.

RO5: To discover the relationship between general health and employment opportunities.

RO6: To discover the relationship between personal finances and job opportunities.

RO7: To discover the relationship between family status and job opportunities.

RO8: To discover the relationship between romantic relationships and job opportunities.

RO9: To discover the relationship between academic performance and job opportunities.

RO10: To discover the mediating effect of academic performance on the relationship between general health and job opportunities.

RO11: To discover the mediating effect of academic performance on the relationship between personal finances and job opportunities.

RO12: To discover the mediating effect of academic performance on the relationship between family status and job opportunities.

RO13: To discover the mediating effect of academic performance on the relationship between romantic relationships and job opportunities.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Romantic relationships and academic performance

Romantic relationships, characterized by attraction and emotional bonds, play a pivotal role in human life, fostering personal growth and self-discovery, especially during young adulthood. Despite this significance, research on their direct impact on academic performance remains limited (Appel, 2019). The studies present conflicting findings: Ting et al. (2022) report a positive association between romantic relationships and academic success, with lowered failure rates and higher CGPA, while Jin et al. (2021) find that romantically involved students perform worse on tests compared to their single peers. Interviews reveal consensus among respondents on the drawbacks of romantic relationships in higher education, particularly unplanned pregnancy, cited by female respondents as a significant challenge (Thwala et al., 2021). This may result in missed academic commitments due to the demands of pregnancy. Male respondents also identify romantic relationships as a distraction from studies. Beard (2018) underscores the negative correlation between marital status and academic performance, highlighting the challenges faced by married individuals, including household responsibilities, which may detract from academic pursuits.

2.2 Romantic relationships and job opportunities

Research on the impact of romantic relationships on young adults' job opportunities is scarce. However, a study conducted by Kornblum et al. (2021) emphasizes the significant role of romantic partnerships in career pursuits, noting that aligning career aspirations with those of one's partner is essential for career advancement. Domene and Johnson (2021) suggest that partner involvement in career decision-making reduces difficulties in career choices, enabling individuals to make informed decisions about job opportunities that align with their goals. On the contrary, Utoft et al. (2024) reveal through interviews that single individuals may face assumptions of greater availability for work, potentially influencing job opportunities of those who are dating. Beckmeyer and Cromwell (2019) suggest that some individuals experience challenges in balancing their desire for romance with their professional aspirations, while Overall and Hammond (2018) propose that the adherence to romantic relationships involving benevolent sexism may cause women to prioritize their partner's career and men to focus more on providing, potentially affecting a woman’s own career advancement by not seeking job opportunities.

2.3 Academic performance and job opportunities

The relationship between academic achievement and job opportunities is multifaceted and has been extensively studied. Tentama and Abdillah (2019) found a positive correlation between academic achievement and employability, indicating that effectively using expertise enhances confidence in job attainment. Similarly, Ergün and eşen (2021) noted a strong positive association between academic performance and perceived employability, emphasizing that a high GPA fosters self-confidence. Manjunath (2021) observed higher academic achievements positively influencing selection likelihood during campus recruitment drives where university students attended job interviews held by various companies’ HR teams. Byrne's (2020) survey experiment revealed that having a second-class degree decreases perceived employability by approximately 14.9%, while transitioning from a Bachelor of Arts to a Master of Arts led to a 35% increase in candidate preferability. Furthermore, it is highlighted that students with higher GPAs exhibit qualities such as goal-driven behavior and resilience (Lam and Zhou, 2022 cited in Li et al., 2022), indicating a solid grasp of relevant knowledge and skills, ultimately enhancing job opportunities (Li et al., 2022).

2.4 General health and academic performance

General health encompasses physical, mental and social dimensions, crucial for healthier results and overall quality of life. An example of general health is mental health, which refers to cognitive, emotional, and psychological well-being. Higher education are more likely to experience mental

health problems (Dekker, 2020). One in three university students experiences mental health issues during their study (Bruffaerts et al., 2018), primarily depression and anxiety disorders (Auerbach et al., 2018). Academic underperformance and 'study stress' are partially responsible for these issues, which affect academic performance (Cant, 2018). Poor performance predicts feelings of worry, sadness, and low self-esteem (van Eerde and Klingsieck, 2018). Mental health challenges often lead to thoughts of leaving university, affecting academic progression. (Egan et al., 2022). Emerging adulthood, spanning ages 18 to 29, adds complexity as students transition from late adolescence, facing changes in competence and autonomy. This may explain high dropout rates, particularly in the first year of college. (Bruffaerts et al., 2018).

2.5 General health and job opportunities

Recently, there has been a growing focus on the correlation between general health and job opportunities. A person's health can have a large impact on their ability to find and keep a job, general productivity, and job satisfaction. There was no current research that looked at the connection between job opportunities and general health. However, studies have indicated a direct correlation between physical health and job opportunities. Physical health issues such as impairments or chronic conditions can lead to discrimination, limited job options, and decreased work efficiency (Cancelliere et al., 2018). In addition, conditions such as obesity, chronic pain, and limited mobility contribute to presenteeism and absenteeism, affecting job performance (Finkelstein et al., 2019). Mental health is also crucial. Stigma, discrimination, and cognitive issues hinder job prospects for those with conditions such as depression or anxiety (Harvey et al., 2018). Untreated mental health problems increase absenteeism rates, which presents challenges to employers and employees (Wang et al., 2018).

2.6 Personal finances and academic performance

According to studies (Hu et al., 2020), the academic performance is reported to be decreasing for teenagers from low-income families but not for those from high-income families. Their inability to pay for textbooks, tuition fees, or other basic necessities is one of the contributing causes (Fricke, 2018). Financial pressure can make it difficult for young people to concentrate, increase their stress levels, and cause them to leave school or give up on their academic goals. Some young people are forced to take on part-time jobs to support their families to pay for their regular expenses. This means that they often do not have enough time to rest or revision, which affects their academic performance (Kapur, 2018). Furthermore, the relationship between economic status and academic achievement has been demonstrated by research (Munir et al., 2023), with low-income students having more difficulty gaining access to educational resources and support services. The financial hardship not only affects their academic performance, but also reduces their chances of rising up in society.

2.7 Personal finances and job opportunities

A significant aspect that has been thoroughly studied in research publications is the influence of financial stability on the behaviors and success of job seekers. Teens who wish to start their own businesses must be proficient in personal financial management in order to spot business opportunities and utilize them to create new job opportunities (Kartika et al., 2024). Research by (Gunawan & Safira, 2022) demonstrates the relationship between increased employability and higher levels of financial literacy. Strong financial literacy helps job seekers make informed decisions on job selection and salary negotiation. On the contrary, poor financial knowledge can lead to financial instability, hindering employment prospects (Nickson & Rigoli, 2018). In addition, social disparities and differences in personal finances frequently interact, making it harder for those with limited resources to find work. The disproportionate influence of socioeconomic status on employment outcomes is highlighted by studies by (Maero, 2018). Lower-income individuals face hiring discrimination and limited resources for networking and education, reducing their employment opportunities compared to those with more resources (Krueger, 2018).

2.8 Family status and job opportunities

Family status significantly impacts job opportunities. Affluent families provide better educational opportunities, improve competitiveness in the job market, while economically disadvantaged backgrounds can limit access to education and resources, hindering employment prospects (Lee & Seon, 2019). Maternal poverty can affect young adults' self-esteem and employment status, contributing to higher unemployment rates (Lee & Seon, 2019). Financial constraints within families exacerbate these challenges, particularly by forcing men to seek high-paying jobs (Suhi et al., 2021). Economic status also influences job acceptance rates, with higher social-economic status families emphasizing career development and creating pressure to accept job offers (DeOrtentiis et al., 2022). Family preferences and expectations moderately influence career choices, potentially limiting job opportunities as individuals align with familial expectations (Siddiky & Akter, 2021). For example, Asian Americans may face pressure to pursue specific careers, potentially limiting their options (Polenova et al., 2018).

2.9 Family status and academic performance

Family status significantly influences academic performance through various factors, such as divorce, economic stability, and parental involvement. Adolescents from divorced families often exhibit poorer academic performance and lower college attendance rates (7% lower). Reduced class participation can hinder engagement and lead to lower grades. Relocating due to divorce adds to the challenge, potentially involving school changes and language barriers, further impacting academic performance (Brand et al., 2019). Additionally, the financial instability resulting from divorce hampers their ability to access essential learning resources (Chauke & Obadire, 2019). Research shows that parental support is crucial to student academic achievement. For example, students require encouragement, guidance, and active involvement from parents to excel academically (Werang et al., 2024). Parental unemployment can negatively impact academic performance by creating economic hardship and limiting access to necessary resources such as smartphones, which are essential for accessing the Internet and obtaining information necessary to complete school assignments (Burns et al., 2019). Active parental involvement in academics, including school activities, home education, and goal-setting, can enhance a child's motivation and performance, while low involvement may lead to declines (Yang et al., 2023).

2.10 Conceptual framework

The literature review of the covariates of job opportunities is summarized in Table 1 and the covariates of academic performance is summarized in Table 2.

Table 1. Covariates of Job Opportunities in previous studies

Covariate	Detail variables	Type of job opportunities	Previous studies
Academic performance	Practical Course Scores	Employability scale	Tentama and Abdillah (2019)
	GPA	Employability perception	Ergün and Şeşen (2021)
	Academic score in last degree	Acceptance rate	Manjunath (2021)
	Degree class & degree type	Candidate Preferability	Byrne (2020)
	GPA	Employability skills	Lam and Zhou (2022) & Li et al. (2022)
General health	Impairments	Discrimination, limited job opportunities, and difficulties in carrying out duties	Cancelliere et al. (2018)
	Long-term health problems	Presenteeism, absenteeism, and poor job performance	Finkelstein et al. (2019)
	Poor physical and mental health	Difficulty finding and keeping a job	Harvey et al. (2018)
	Untreated mental health issues	Absenteeism rate	Wang et al. (2018)

Personal finances	Financial stability or instability	Self-employment	Kartika et al. (2024)
	Personal Financial Management Skills	Traditional Employment	Gunawan and Safira (2022)
	Financial literacy levels	Entrepreneurship	Nickson and Rigoli (2018)
	Socioeconomic status	Remote Work	Mañero (2018)
	Access to resources for networking and education	Gig economy	Krueger (2018)
Family status	Parental Income Level	Employment prospects	Lee and Seon (2019) Lee and Seon (2019)
	Family financial difficulties	Unfavorable Employment	Suhi et al. (2021)
	Social-economic families	Social Expectations	DeOrtentiis et al. (2022)
	Parental support	pressure on job	Siddiky and Akter (2021)
	Family preferences	Limiting career choices	Polenova et al. (2018)
	Familial expectation	Limiting career options	
Romantic relationships	Partnership role	The pursuit	Kornblum et al. (2021)
	Guide and support	Job path decision	Domene and Johnson (2021)
	Time spent together		
	Desire for romantic involvement	Work availability	Utoft et al. (2024)
	Prioritization of partner	Professional aspirations	Beckmeyer and Cromwell (2019).
		Career advancement	Overall and Hammond (2018)

Table 2: Covariates of academic performance in previous studies

Covariate	Detail variables	Type of academic performance	Previous studies
General health	Mental health issues	Higher education	Dekker (2020)
	Depression disorders	College years	Auerbach et al. (2018)
	Anxiety	Academic underperformance and 'study stress'	Cant (2018)
	Worry, sadness, and low self-esteem	Poor college performance	van Eerde and Klingsieck (2018)
	Stress	Leaving university	Egan et al. (2022)
Personal finances	Economic status	Grades	Hu et al. (2020)
	Access to educational resources and support services	Attendance	Fricke (2018)
		Homework completion	Kapur (2018)
	Part-time job responsibilities	Class Participation	Munir et al. (2023)
	Psychological burden of financial instability	Lack of knowledge gained	
	Self-esteem and motivation		
Family status	Divorced family	Poorer college attendance rates and school changes	Brand et al. (2019)
	Financial instability in family	Accessibility of Academic Resources	Chauke and Obadire (2019)
		Academic Guidance	Werang et al. (2024)
	Parental support	Limiting access to learning resources	Burns et al. (2019)
	Parental unemployment	Lack of home education	Yang et al. (2023)
	Parental academic involvement		
Romantic relationships	Healthy romantic relationships	Reduction in failure rate and rise in CGPA	Ting et al. (2022)
	Romantic activity	Standardized score of tests in class	Jin et al. (2021)

	Pregnancy	Missed classes, assignments, or exams/Study distractions	Thwala et al. (2021)
	Marital status	CGPA	Beard (2018)

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework was conceived to mediate the action of academic performance on job opportunities, with predictors of the personal finances, general health, romantic relationships and family status, as shown in Figure 1.

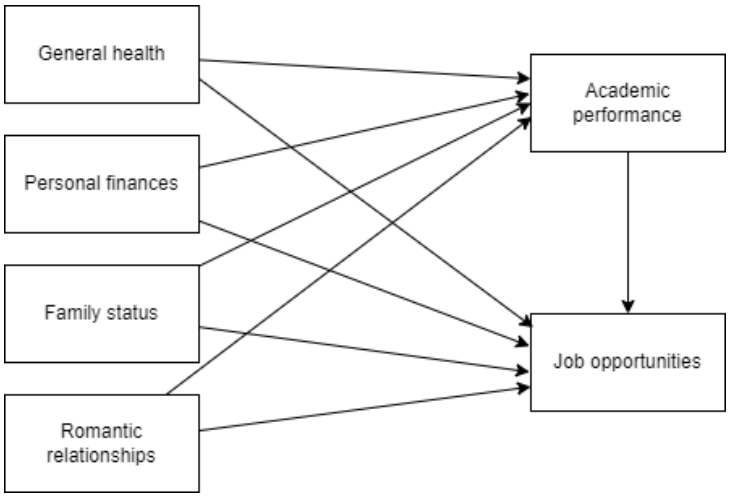

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of covariates and mediators of job opportunities covariates & mediator (this conceptual framework is constructed by this study based on the literature review).

H1: General health correlates positively with academic performance.

H2: Personal finances correlate positively with academic performance.

H3: Family status correlates positively with academic performance.

H4: Romantic relationships correlate positively with academic performance.

H5: General health correlates positively with job opportunities.

H6: Personal finances correlate positively with job opportunities.

H7: Family status correlates positively with employment opportunities.

H8: Romantic relationships correlate positively with job opportunities.

H9: Academic performance is positively with job opportunities.

H10: Academic performance mediates the relationship between general health and job opportunities.

H11: Academic performance mediates the relationship between personal finances and job opportunities.

H12: Academic performance mediates the relationship between family status and job opportunities.

H13: Academic performance mediates the relationship between romantic relationships and job opportunities.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes data sets obtained from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), a globally recognized repository of social science data. ICPSR serves as a vital resource for researchers, offering access to a vast array of data sets (over 16,000 discrete studies/surveys with more than 70,000 datasets) that span various fields within the social and behavioral sciences. One notable data set used in this study is the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, also known as Add Health, archived under ICPSR number 21600. Add Health is a longitudinal study that has amassed extensive demographic, social, family, education, job, socioeconomic, psychosocial, cognitive, romantic relationship, health, and more data from

adolescents and adults in the United States across multiple waves of data collection from 1994 to 2018.

For this research article, Wave III of the Add Health study, conducted between August 2001 and April 2002 through in-home interviews, was selected for analysis. Wave III of the study focused on reinterviewing and gathering detailed information from 15170 Wave I participants who had transitioned into adulthood between 18 and 26 years old since the initial study (Wave I) conducted in 1994 to 1995. The data set collected a wide range of information, including details on family, key labor force events, education histories, graduation, marital, childbearing, as well as demographic and health indicators.

Specifically, this paper uses four publicly available datasets from wave III. The first dataset, DS8, contains demographic and general health information collected through the Home Questionnaire. DS16 focuses on education-related data, providing insights into participants' academic performance. Romantic relationships are examined through DS9 and DS11, which, respectively, delve into general aspects and detailed aspects of romantic relationships, including factors such as relationship duration and quality. These datasets were merged and subjected to cleaning procedures using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 to ensure data integrity and reliability with the process described in Figure 2.

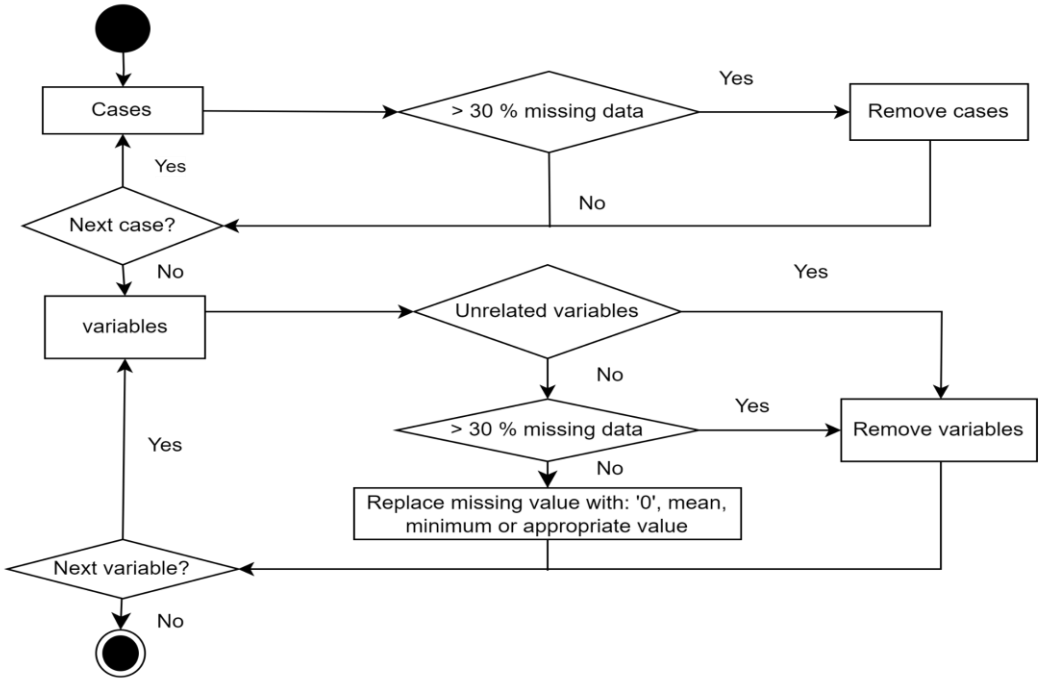

Figure 2: Data set cleaning & transformation workflow (Ting et al., 2022)

This methodology is adapted from the research by Ting et al. (2022), which used the ICPSR big data set to discover the covariates of romantic relationships among young adults in the USA (Ting et al., 2022). Following this approach, when viewing the first variable, if cases have over 30% missing values for this variable, the cases with missing values are removed. Subsequently, unrelated variables are excluded. For each variable, if missing data exceed 30.0%, the variable is removed; otherwise, missing values are substituted with appropriate values such as 'zero,' mean, minimum, or other suitable replacements.

Given the longitudinal nature of the Add Health study and the potential for internal threats such as subject attrition over time, the article acknowledges the need for meticulous data cleaning and transformation. Detailed explanations of the data cleaning and transformation procedures are elucidated in subsequent sections, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Questionnaire item details of variables

Category	New Var ID	Ori Var ID (source)		Questionnaire Item
Respondent Identifier	AID	AID	DS8 DS9 DS11 DS16	Respondent's Identifier
Relationship Number	RRELNO	RRELNO	DS9 DS11	Relationship Number
General health	GENHLTH	H3GH1 H3GH3 H3GH6 H3GH7 H3GH8 H3GH10 H3GH15 H3GH16 H3GH18 H3GH19 H3GH20	DS8	In general, how is your health? What are you currently doing to lose weight? In the last 7 days, have you eaten much and felt embarrassed? In the past 7 days, have you been afraid to start eating because you are unable to stop? Have you been told by a doctor that you have an eating disorder? In the past month, how often did health problems cause you to miss a day of school or work? In the past seven days, how often did you fall asleep when you should have been awake? In the past seven days, how often did you take a nap? In the past seven days, how many days did you eat from a fast-food place? In the last month, have you taken any vitamins or minerals? How many of the past seven days did you eat breakfast?
Personal finances	PRSNFIN	H3EC1A H3EC1B H3EC1C H3EC1D H3EC1E H3EC1F H3EC1G H3EC1H	DS8	During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: wages or salaries, including tips, bonuses, and overtime pay, and income from self-employment During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: interest or dividends from stocks, bonds, savings, etc. During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: food stamps During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), public assistance, welfare, or a state TANF program During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: housing assistance During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, disability, or social security benefits, including SSI (supplemental security income) During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?: child support or alimony During any part of {2000/ 2001} did you receive income from the following sources?:

				family and friends (Include only transfers of income to you yourself from family and friends. Do not include a spouse's salary or a scholarship, for example.)
Family status	FAMSTAT	H3CJ160 H3TO135 H3HR14 H3HR23 H3HR24 H3HR25 H3HR26 H3MA1 H3MA2 H3MA3 H3MA4 H3MA5 H3MA6 H3WP2 H3WP5 H3WP11 H3WP12 H3WP18 H3WP19 H3WP20 H3WP21 H3WP29 H3WP30 H3WP31	DS8	Has your biological father ever served time in jail or prison? During the past 12 months, have any of your family members tried to kill themselves? Does anyone in your household act as a father to you? Did you ever run away from home? Have you ever been homeless for a week or longer—that is, you slept in a place where people weren't meant to sleep, or slept in a homeless shelter, or didn't have a regular residence in which to sleep? Have you ever stayed in a homeless shelter? Have your parents ever ordered you to move out of their house? By the time you started sixth grade, how often had your parents or other adult care-givers left you home alone when an adult should have been with you? How often have your parents or other adult care-givers not taken care of your basic needs, such as keeping you clean or providing food or clothing? How often had your parents or other adult care-givers slapped, hit, or kicked you? How often had one of your parents or other adult care-givers touched you in a sexual way, forced you to touch him or her in a sexual way, or forced you to have sexual relations? How often had Social Services investigated how you were taken care of or tried to take you out of your living situation? How often had you actually been taken out of your living situation by Social Services? Is previous residential mother still alive? Is previous residential father still alive? Do you know anything about your biological father? Is your biological father still alive? You enjoy doing things with your current residential mother. Most of the time, the current residential mother is warm and loving toward you. How close do you feel to the current residential mother? Has {HE/ SHE} given you any money or paid for anything significant for you during the past 12 months? Don't include regular birthday or holiday gifts.

		H3WP32 H3WP36 H3WP37 H3WP38 H3WP39 H3WP40 H3WP42		In the previous year, you were living with your previous residential mother. Are you still in touch with {HIM/ HER}? You enjoy doing things with your previous residential mother. Most of the time, the previous residential mother is warm and loving toward you. How close do you feel to the previous residential mother? In the previous year, you were living with your previous residential father. Are you still in touch with {HIM/ HER}? You enjoy doing things with your previous residential father. Most of the time, the previous residential father is warm and loving toward you How close do you feel to the previous residential father? Has the previous residential father given you any money or paid for anything significant for you during the past 12 months? Don't include regular birthday or holiday gifts. Do previous residential mother and previous residential father still live together in the same household?
Romantic relationships	ROMREL	H3RD109 H3RD110 H3RD111 H3RD112 H3RD113 H3RD114 H3RD115 H3RD116	DS9 DS11	How often have you threatened your partner with violence, pushed or shoved {HIM/HER}, or thrown something at {HIM/HER} that could hurt? How often has your partner threatened you with violence, pushed or shoved you, or thrown something at you that could hurt? How often have you slapped, hit, or kicked your partner? How often has your partner slapped , hit, or kicked you? How often have you insisted on or made your partner have sexual relations with you when {HE/ SHE} didn't want to? How often has your partner insisted on or made you have sexual relations with you when you didn't want to? How often have you had an injury, such as a sprain, bruise, or cut because of a fight with your partner? How often has your partner had an injury, such as a sprain, bruise, or cut because of a fight with you?
Academic performance	ACADPERF	EAOGPAC	DS16	Overall GPA for all courses taken cumulatively.
Job opportunities	JOBOPP1	H3LM1 H3LM14 H3LM37	DS8	Have you ever had a job? Don't count being in the military and don't count jobs such as babysitting or lawn mowing unless you were working for a business. At how many jobs are you now working for pay? At any time in the past 12 months, did social services or a welfare office provide job training, a Job Club, a job search program, or anything else to help you try to get a job?

		H3DA28 H3ED43		Do you currently have a job? Since the summer of 1995, have you received any vocational education or job training in a program that lasted or will last for at least three months?

After undergoing data cleansing and transformation procedures, the data set was refined to include a total of 73 variables and 3,212 cases. Subsequently, the variables were further refined to align with the conceptual framework utilized in the study. This refinement process resulted in the selection of four independent variables (IV), one mediator variable, and one dependent variable (DV), as summarized in Table 3.

For independent variables (IVs), data transformation involves merging variables based on the conceptual framework. Therefore, four new variables are obtained, namely "GENHLTH", "PRSNFIN", "FAMSTAT", and "ROMREL". Taking "general health" as an example, 11 variables were identified and merged. This consolidation involved summing the scores of 8 nominal and nominal variables indicating poorer health conditions and subtracting the scores of three variables indicating better health conditions. This merging process results in the creation of a single variable named "GENHLTH", The outcome is a single variable named "GENHLTH," reflecting overall health condition, with higher scores representing poorer health. Similarly, for "personal finance," eight nominal variables pertaining to the frequency of personal income levels were merged into a single variable named "PRSNFIN," where higher scores signify higher income levels.

Regarding "family status", 31 variables were identified and merged. This involved summing the scores of 23 nominal variables indicating poorer family status and subtracting the scores of 8 variables indicating better family status. The resultant variable, "FAMSTAT," represents overall family status, with higher scores indicating poorer conditions. In terms of "romantic relationships," 8 nominal variables reflecting the frequency of relationship strain were merged into the variable "ROMREL," where higher scores denote stronger strain in romantic relationships. For the mediator variable of 'academic performance', the cumulative GPA across all high school years. Lastly, for the dependent variable (DV) of "job opportunities," five nominal variables concerning the frequency of job opportunities were merged into a single variable.

Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 for Pearson's correlation analysis and the PROCESS 4.2 macro for mediation analysis. Initially, descriptive statistics were calculated for the quantitative variables. The Pearson correlation was then used to analyze the correlation between the chosen independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DVs). For mediation analyzes, the PROCESS macro by Andrew F. Hayes was used with 5,000 bootstrap samples, model number 4, standardized effects, and a 95% confidence interval to examine direct effects (DE) and indirect effects (IEs) in the mediation models. The significance level (p-value) for each pair of mediation analyzes (IV-mediator-DV) was indicated using asterisks.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demography

Table 4: Demographics of the respondents

		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Weight status	Very underweight	226	7.0
	Slightly underweight	309	9.6
	About the right weight	1451	45.2
	Slightly overweight	1067	32.9
	Very overweight	169	5.3
CGPA	CGPA <= 1.5	109	3.4
	1.5 < CGPA <= 2.5	955	29.7
	2.5 < CGPA <= 3.5	1628	50.7
	CGPA >= 3.5	520	16.2

Employability	Currently have a job Unemployed	1803 1409	43.9 56.1
Total Respondents		3212	

Table 4 shows the demographic information of all 3212 young adults who participated in this study. In terms of weight status, the majority of respondents are about the right weight, comprising 45.2% of the sample, while smaller proportions are slightly underweight (9.6%) or slightly overweight (32.9%). Only a minority are very underweight (7.0%) or very overweight (5.3%). Regarding academic performance, a significant portion of respondents have a CGPA between 2.5 and 3.5 (50.7%), followed by those with a CGPA greater than or equal to 3.5 (16.2%). The employment status shows that 43.9% of the respondents currently have a job, while 56.1% are unemployed.

4.2 Preliminary analysis

The descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation between IVs and job opportunities, together with academic performance, are reported in Table 5. The first discovery shows a significant positive correlation at the 0.05 level between general health and job opportunities (r = 0.443, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.05) as well as between romantic relationships and job opportunities (r=.043, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.05). **H8** is not accepted on this result. The correlation between romantic relationships and job opportunities here is positive, which means that the higher the romantic relationship scores (which means higher levels of involvement in strained romantic relationships), the better the academic performance. **H8** states that the better the romantic relationships, the better the academic performance. The correlation between general health and job opportunities here is negative, meaning that the higher the general health score (means poorer health condition), the higher the job opportunities. The **H5** states that general health correlates positively with job opportunities, meaning that the better the health condition, the higher the job opportunities. Hence, **H5** is rejected.

Table 5: Pearson correlation analyses between covariates & job opportunities

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. JOBOPP	3.643	1.811					
2. ACADPERF	2.765	.671	.104***				
3. GENHLTH	3.447	4.025	.043*	-.197***			
4. PRSNFIN	1.610	.881	.495***	.109***	-.004		
5. FAMSTAT	10.250	4.538	-.236***	-.134***	.065***	-.006	
6. ROMREL	.835	2.451	.043*	-.086***	.090***	.040*	.091***

***. The correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed). **. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N=3212

Since the correlation is positive, it indicates that young adults with poorer conditions will have higher job opportunities. Although general health is found to affect young adults' job opportunities, the result of this study is not consistent with the research by Cancelliere et al. (2018) research which shows that young adults with higher health scores(poorer health conditions) will have higher job opportunities. This is because young adults with poor health may experience physical impairments or long-term health problems that may hinder their ability to perform certain jobs, especially those that require physical exertion or manual labor (Asma, 2021). In addition, poor health usually results in increased absenteeism due to illness or medical appointments. This leads to reduced productivity while at work due to symptoms such as fatigue or pain, and finally reduced job opportunities, as employers normally will not hire individuals with poor health to increase the productivity of their companies (Wang et al., 2018). Additionally, young adults with poor health, visible or invisible, may face stigma or discrimination at work from other employees. They are being viewed as incapable or

not reliable, resulting in lower job opportunities or even dismissal (Harvey et al., 2018).

Based on the result obtained, romantic relationships and job opportunities are significantly related and there is a positive correlation between the two, indicating that more strained romantic relationships are associated with higher job opportunities among young adults. However, this result is not consistent with the study done by Kornblum et al. (2021), which emphasizes the importance of coordinating career aspirations with those of one's partner for career advancement, suggesting that healthier romantic relationships that are supportive in nature can impact individuals' job opportunities positively. Furthermore, the result also does not align with the Domene and Johnson (2019) study in which it is suggested that when partners are more involved in career decision making, individuals can make career choices better, leading to more effective job search approaches due to a broader perspective, and shared insights. This may be due to the fact that employers often assume that those who are in relationships where the partners often spend quality time together have less time to take on more workload, leading them to less job opportunities in terms of workload (Utoft et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the results reveal the significant relationship between family status and job opportunities ($r=-.236$, Sig.(2-tailed)<0.001). Therefore, family status affects job opportunities among young adults. Furthermore, family status is also significantly negatively correlated with academic performance at the 0.001 level ($r=-.134$, Sig.(2-tailed)<0.001). **H3** and **H7** are accepted.

Family status is found to affect the academic performance of young adults. The result of this study is consistent with the Chauke and Obadire study (2019), showing that young adults with lower family status will have poor academic performance. Since the correlation is negative, it indicates that young adults with lower family status scores (which means higher family status) will have higher academic performance. The reasons can be explained from multiple perspectives, mainly divorce. Young adults with divorced or separated parents are less well adjusted on average across a spectrum of outcomes, including general health, and do less well in school compared to those who grow up with nondivorced parents. Young adults whose parents divorce have been found to experience a decrease in overall grade point average (GPA) of a quarter to one-third of a letter grade and to fail more classes than those who live with both parents (Nilsen et al., 2020). In addition, due to divorce, they may relocate to another province or country. This can further exacerbate the situation, as it can involve changing schools, learning new languages, and facing challenges in adjustment, all of which contribute to lower academic performance (Brand et al., 2019). Furthermore, the financial instability resulting from divorce limited their access to educational resources (Chauke & Obadire, 2019). These resources may include books, devices, tutoring and tuitions, which can impact academic performance. Family status is also found to affect job opportunities for young adults. The result of this study is consistent with the study by Lee and Seon (2019), showing that young adults with a higher family status will have higher job opportunities. Since the correlation is negative, it indicates that young adults with lower family status scores (means higher family status) will have higher job opportunities. Young adults from higher-status families often have access to influential social circles and connections and therefore have more social contacts such as mentors, professional associations, and family contacts (Cao et al., 2020). These networks may offer beneficial job opportunities, recommendations, and opportunities for professional development. Then, families with higher status typically have more stable finances, allowing them to allocate resources toward professional development, training, and education. Higher levels of education can enhance skills, knowledge, and qualifications, increasing job opportunities (Carlevatti, 2022).

Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was found at the 0.001 level between personal finance and job opportunities ($r = 0.495$, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.001), and at the level 0.001 between personal finance and academic performance ($r=.109$, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.001). Therefore, **H2** and **H6** are also accepted.

The significance level of personal finance between academic performance and job opportunities is shown to be significant, and therefore hypothesis H2 and H6 are accepted based on Table 2 because personal finance is found to affect academic performance and job opportunities of young adults. Personal finance in this context refers to the management of an individual's or a family's financial resources which includes budgeting, saving, investing, and managing debt. Since the correlation is

positive, this clearly indicates that young adults with higher income will have higher academic performance. The result of this study is consistent with the study (Hu et al., 2020), saying that the academic performance is increasing for those teenagers who are from higher income teenagers. This is because young people who are under financial pressure may find it difficult to focus, experience increased stress, quit school, or give up on their academic goals, causing their academic performance to be decreasing. Your self-esteem and motivation to study can decrease due to financial instability. In addition, it also reveals that young adults with higher income will have greater employment opportunities. This result is also consistent with the study (Gunawan & Safira, 2022) that shows that young teenagers who have higher levels of financial literacy will have higher job opportunities. Those with a strong understanding of finance are better equipped to decide which jobs to accept and what kind of compensation to offer.

The result also reveals that a significant negative correlation was found at the 0.001 level between general health and academic performance (r=-.197, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.001), and at the 0.001 level between romantic relationships and academic performance (r=-.086,Sig. (2-tailed)<0.001) while academic performance is significantly positively correlated with job opportunities at the 0.001 level (r=0.104,Sig. (2-tailed)<.001). This indicates that **H1**, **H4,** and **H9** are true and accepted.

General health is found to affect the academic performance of young adults. The result of this study is consistent with the study by Egan et al. (2022), showing that young adults with poor general health will have a lower academic performance. Since the correlation is negative, it indicates that young adults with lower general health scores (which means better health) will have higher academic performance. This is because when they are unwell, they tend to skip classes frequently or may find it difficult to concentrate in class, leading to lower engagement and reduced participation in class (Bee, 2019). Additionally, poor health can cause mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, which can negatively affect student motivation, self-esteem, and ability to cope with academic challenges (Cant et al., 2018). Eventually, they are left with the thought of leaving school due to stress, which can directly affect the progression of their academics (Egan et al., 2022).

Romantic relationships significantly affect academic performance. However, as the correlation is negative, young adults with higher romantic relationship scores (which means higher levels of involvement in strained romantic relationships) will perform worse academically. This is consistent with the findings of Thwala et al. (2021), where unplanned pregnancy, often indicative of more problematic relationships, emerged as a significant challenge in higher education, as confirmed by university students in interviews. Unhealthy dating dynamics, including coercive sexual activities, within these strained relationships can contribute to missed classes and assignments, consequently leading to a decline in academic performance (Klencakova et al., 2021).

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between academic performance and job opportunities, indicating that better academic performance leads to higher job opportunities.The findings agree with the study of Tentama and Abdillah (2019) & Ergün and Şeşen (2021) that directly investigates the relationship between academic performance and job opportunities. This is expected considering that students who have high academic achievement tend to actively explore their careers and have higher confidence in their ability to achieve their goals, helping them to be more assertive during the job search process and gain exposure to diverse range of job opportunities that align with their skills (Bae et al., 2022).

4.3 Mediation analysis

DE and IEs with a bootstrap 95% confidence interval for the mediation analysis of academic performance in the relationship between predictors and crime are reported in Table 6. Through mediation analysis, academic performance was found to be a significant mediator when predictors are general health (IE = -.0230), personal finances (IE = .0055), family status (IE = -.0099) and romantic relationships (IE = -.0093). Therefore, H10, H11, H12, and H13 are accepted.

Table 6: Direct & indirect effects for mediation analyses

Predictor	Mediator	DV	DE	IE(BootLLCI, Boot ULCI)
GENHLTH	ACADPERF	JOBOPP	.0297**	-.0230(-0.319, -.0152)
PRSNFIN	ACADPERF	JOBOPP	1.0054**	.0055(.0020, .0097)
FAMSTAT	ACADPERF	JOBOPP	-.0901**	-.0099(-.0155, -.0050)
ROMREL	ACADPERF	JOBOPP	.0384**	-.0093(-.0146, -.0050)

*Note. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; DV: Dependent variable; DE: Direct effect; & IE: Indirect effect*

Based on Table 6, the significance level for the mediating effect of academic performance on general health and employment opportunities is significant, and therefore **H10** is accepted. This means that academic performance mediates the relationship between general health and job opportunities, with a negative correlation observed as the indirect effect is negative. The indirect effect is negative because the correlation between general health and academic performance is significant negative (r=-.197, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01) and the correlation between academic performance and job opportunities is significant positive (r=.104, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01). Academic performance plays an intermediary role in the relationship between general health and job opportunities, which shows that young adults with a lower health score (means better health) are bound to have higher academic performance, which will indirectly increase their job opportunities. According to Egan et al. (2022), young adults with poor general health will have a lower academic performance due to them skipping classes frequently (Bee, 2019). Eventually, they may not be able to keep up with academic challenges (Cant et al., 2018) and finally may drop out of school, which affects their academic progress. This causes them to not have the qualifications required for employment.

On the other hand, it is also shown in the results that the significance level for the mediating effect of academic performance on family status and job opportunities is significant and hence **H12** is accepted. This signifies that academic performance mediates the relationship between family status and job opportunities, with a negative correlation observed as the indirect effect is negative. The indirect effect is negative because the correlation between family status and academic performance is significant negative (r=-.134, Sig.(2-tailed)<0.01) and the correlation between academic performance and job opportunities is significant positive (r=.104, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01). Therefore, it means that having a lower family status score (which means a higher family status) can increase the academic performance of young adults, which will eventually affect their career opportunities. This is consistent with the study by Chauke and Obadire (2019), showing that young adults with lower family status will have poor academic performance, which in terms of preventing their employment rate. Young adults exposed to parental unemployment may experience difficulties in their academic performance (Burns et al., 2019). They may not be able to afford the resources required for education due to economic hardship in the home. Due to the lack of exposure to higher education, they may lack skills, knowledge, and qualifications, resulting in lower job opportunities (Wimer & Wolf, 2020).

Furthermore, the level of significance for the mediating effect of academic performance on personal finance and job opportunities is significant, and therefore **H11** is accepted. It shows that academic performance mediated in the relationship between personal finance and job opportunities was positively correlated as the indirect effect is positive. The indirect effect is negative because the correlation between personal finance and academic performance is significant positive (r=.495, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01) and the correlation between academic performance and job opportunities is also significant positive (r=.104, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01). A positive indirect effect indicates that personal finance is positively related to job opportunities through its effect on academic performance. The result is consistent with research (Krueger, 2018) that stated that academic performance, including grades and level of education, has a significant effect on a person's skills and abilities. Higher academic achievement may have obtained particular skills, credentials, and knowledge that make

them more attractive to employers. Furthermore, it is also compatible with a study (Munir et al., 2023) that demonstrated that teenagers from wealthy families have better access to educational resources and support services, which improves academic performance because they can concentrate on their studies without having to worry about financial resources. Furthermore, a person's confidence and self-efficacy, which are crucial qualities in the job search process, can be increased through academic success with a better personal finance condition (Petruzziello et al., 2021). Individuals with confidence and a record of academic success can demonstrate greater confidence in themselves during negotiations and job interviews, thus improving their chances of obtaining a position.

Furthermore, it is found that the mediating effect of academic performance on romantic relationships and job opportunities is significant and therefore **H13** is accepted. This aligns with the study conducted by Beard (2018), in which he found that marital status, particularly being married, is negatively correlated with cumulative GPA and perception of GPA. This is because romantic relationships can affect academic performance by serving as distractions from educational goals, potentially influenced by factors such as financial obligations and domestic duties. The results signify that academic performance mediates the relationship between romantic relationships and job opportunities, with a negative correlation observed as the indirect effect is negative. The indirect effect is negative because the correlation between romantic relationships and academic performance is significant negative, which means that more positive romantic relationships lead to better academic performance in this case ($r=-.086$, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01), and the correlation between academic performance and job opportunities is significant positive ($r=.104$, Sig. (2-tailed)<0.01). Academic performance plays an intermediary role in the relationship between romantic relationships and job opportunities, which shows that young adults with lower romantic relationship scores (healthier romantic relationships) are bound to have better academic performance, which will indirectly increase their job opportunities. The current result agrees with Thwala et al. (2021), in which it is found that unplanned pregnancy, which is often due to lack of communication or understanding coming from strained romantic relationships, can influence individuals' emotional well-being and impact the amount of time and energy individuals dedicate to their academic pursuits, causing lower academic performance. As poor academic performance can diminish students' belief in their employability compared to those with better academic performance (Ergün and eşen, 2021), these same individuals may find it difficult to sit for job interviews, as they lack self-confidence, leading to fewer job opportunities.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In exploring the mediating role of academic performance, the present study has found links between general health, family status, personal finance, and romantic relationship, each individually, with job opportunities. Furthermore, the mediation of academic performance to job opportunities was highlighted when the predictors were general health, family status, personal finances, and romantic relationship. Our study found that a young adult with better health is likely to perform better academically, which will subsequently lead to more job opportunities. Additionally, we found that a stable family status can increase young adult academic performance, which will eventually expand their career opportunities. On the other hand, our research also reveals that a young adult who has a higher personal finance condition may perform well in the academic field, while also having more job opportunities. Last but not least, we also found that stable romantic relationships among young adults correlate positively with academic performance, thus enhancing their job opportunities. These findings underscore the pivotal role of education in bridging the gap between socioeconomic background and employment prospects. Efforts to enhance academic performance and resources for young adults in the United States facing challenges in general health, family status, personal finance, and romantic relationships could potentially reduce disparities in access to employment opportunities.

However, our study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to the young adults in the US, therefore, it is in certain instances inappropriate for other cultural contexts or demographic groups. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design makes it more difficult for us to prove that one variable causes another. Furthermore, our study may have limited generalizability as there may be other important variables that were not included in the

investigation, but could confound the relationships under investigation. For example, personality traits, accessibility to social networks and neighborhood characteristics are some examples of factors that are not included in the study but may have an impact on both life circumstances and academic performance or job opportunities. Thus, future research should apply comparative studies across different countries or regions that would enrich our understanding of how social and educational policies influence the interplay between life circumstances, academic performance, and job opportunities. Additionally, future research could explore how intersecting identities, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, intersect with life circumstances, academic performance, and job opportunities. A more comprehensive knowledge of social inequality would be possible by understanding the ways in which these variables interact and may either exacerbate or reduce disparities.

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