



The Relationship between Social Studies Education and Students' Attitude towards Marriage and Divorce

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Abstract. The research aimed at investigating the relationship between social studies education and students' attitude towards marriage and divorce. The theoretical framework of the study is hinged on Bowenian family systems theory. The theory was posit that human beings function as an emotional unit and are easily understood along their problem when they are viewed within the context of their family bonds and relationships. The study adopted the correlational survey design. A questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Attitude towards Marriage and Divorce (QATMD) was used for data collection. A sample size of four hundred (400) students was selected using simple random sampling technique. Four mixed schools will be selected each from Oredo and Orhionmwon local government areas. Fifty students will be randomly selected from each of these schools. Two hypotheses were raised to guide this study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha statistics and a reliability coefficient of 0.775 and 0.880 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson correlation statistics and linear regression. The results showed that students' knowledge of social studies education have significance relationship to their attitude towards marriage and divorce. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst that divorce should be discouraged in its entirety through social studies education as it can make some children experience pain, confusion, anger, hate, bitterness, sense of self-doubt, and so on.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Students Attitude, Marriage, Divorce.

1. Introduction

Social Studies is a unique discipline that deals with moulding of the individual in line with acceptable patterns of behaviour of the society in which they

belong (Inyakpor, 2013). Hence, Social Studies is an integrated and a multidisciplinary discipline which uses theories in the field of Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology and other relevant field in dealing with contemporary issues and problems (National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies, 2011). It has the ability to inculcate the right type of value, standard, norms and acceptable behaviour.

Social Studies Education as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, endow man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills to enable him understand his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them living in the society (Dania & Emuebie, 2012). Dania (2011) asserted that Social Studies Education is a human construct to foster nationalism and patriotism on the one hand and for man to realize his existence as an individual and a citizen in a multicultural society on the other hand. Social studies education touches on all aspects of societal development; be it political, economic, social, cultural, technological or educational (Uzamere, 2018). Also, Dania and Emuebie (2012) argued that Social Studies education is an integrated body of knowledge formulated to equip the learner with significant values, attitudes, skills and knowledge in order to be productively functional in the society. In the context of this study, Social studies Education help students to be endowed with reflective or contemplative capacities, social and work skills to enable them understand the institution of marriage and the challenges that comes with it, so as to rationally solve or cope with them when they come of age.

Marriage is a common tradition in every society which represents a social agreement between two individuals to become husband and wife. It affords the husband and wife the legitimacy to sexual

relationship and reproduction of children. According to Uka, Obidoa & Uzoechina (2013), marriage is the legalizing of a special relationship between a man and woman to which the society gives approval; and it places partners under legal and social obligations to themselves and the society. Marriage has significant value for the individual, families and the society. It represents socially sanctioned behaviours and embraces traditionally virtuous, legal and predictable assumptions concerning what is moral and what is proper (Nock, 2005). By virtue of marriage, married individuals are transformed, perceived and treated differently by society and may even enjoy rights/privileges unmarried individuals do not. Married couples are perceived as more mature, committed, stable and responsible.

Marriage provides the atmosphere for companionship, procreation, establishing continuing and sustaining family ties by joining in matrimony two individuals who are of different gender to become husband and wife. Consequently, they become parents who bear and raise children. Infants arrive in the world unable to care for themselves as a result they expect protection, physical and emotional warmth from their parents and guardians. This expectation culminates into a relationship that creates the atmosphere for raising and impacting the child with some life principles. The relationship between parent and child seem to be one of the most significant relationships which is typical of virtually every human being and is formed by people over the course of their life either consciously or unconsciously. The interaction between parents and their children is unarguably one of the longest lasting social ties established by humans. It is a form of interaction which is often laden with nurture, support and care but it also involves some elements of frustration and tension due to the responsibility of training the child in school.

Marriage as a monumental issue elicits a social and legal agreement between adults and in some parts among children and other parts between children and adults; it is an avenue of shared responsibilities and obligations. Marriage is an aid to sustaining a family, it is a room created to nurture the existence of a people who are bonded by blood and other ties. In the days of old, marriage was a necessity for the existence of communities, it was an avenue to produce more members for the community; marriage was and is a symbol of maturity and a medium by which the society rates her members. Marriage has been seen by several authors and scholars as means to attaining sexual needs, creation of children and attending to the economic needs of adults and children. Wait and Gallagher (2000) explained that

marriage as a source of happiness has experienced a boost; it is really worth knowing that happiness is necessity for marriage. This is because satisfying the needs of the union must be of both couples as satisfying a particular couple's- needs deter commitment and procure unhappiness; and when the couples are not happy that union is as bad as dead.

Good marriages are the bedrock of strong societies, for they are the foundations of strong families. The future of the human race and all its component societies is embodied in each newborn. The ability to groom a newborn to become strong, contributive and responsible members of the society depends much on the marriage of his or her parents. Marriage as a universal institution is predominantly the platform to nurture generation of young people; it is mostly the platform that assigns positive and negative behaviours to the members of the society. Marriage as a legal union between adults according to Corvino and Gallagher (2012) helps to connect sex with love, men with women, sex with babies, and babies with moms and dads. Marriage has been established for several reasons ranging from love; tribal, political, economic to religious fulfillments and these have been the bane for the progress and retrogress of families.

The inability to satisfy the afore-mentioned reasons has called for several cases of divorce; divorce has been experienced in short-term and long term marriages. It is not a phenomenon that is ascribed due to the time spent but the state of marriage; anytime one of the couple feels uncomfortable or unsecured he or she can file for divorce. As divorce has become a modern-day norm in recent years, it appears that young adults tend to have a distrust of marriage as an institution. Divorce and separation of couples will bring with it some trauma and many issues, as well for the children. The negative side of marriage may alter children's attitudes toward marriage. Parental separation and divorce remains an important factor in our society that contributes to the risks of cognitive, behavioural and emotional development of children today, and it is predicted that 40 percent of children will have experienced parental divorce by their sixteenth birthday (Tanner, 2002).

Divorce elicits the annulment and termination of the civil effects of marriages in an agreed legal marital case; it is applicable to traditional marriages or religious marriages. It has been mostly referred to as a legal event that must be heard in a court of law; though some couples have been separated or divorced without legal consent. They often mutually agree to separate their legal marital status for reasons best known to them; though most of these cases are likely to re-unite. Divorce as a mutual consent of a couple

to go their separate ways has been defined by Kaslow (1994) not as a single event that occurred at the court of law but a process that begins early in a relationship and has numerous sequella in the post-divorce; he further narrated that it is a different experience for an adult and a child. This is supported by Pipher (1996) who asserted that divorce as a process poses a different experience for an adult and a child; for the child, there is loss of something that is fundamental to his/her development, namely, the family structure. The family structure lays the foundation for the child's physical, emotional and psychological ascent into maturity. The collapse of this structure leaves the child vulnerable to developmental problems because of changes in support structures.

Divorce was introduced as a law in Nigeria in 1970 under the Matrimonial Causes Act; this act also specified that divorce can take place for marriage that has stayed for one year and above. Divorce has affected the Nigeria populace as it has influenced upcoming youths to see marriage either as a liability or responsibility and constraint or an aid to living a comfortable life. The ordeals of divorced couples have spelt out significant attitudes for marital-aspiring young people, students to be precise; it has created views in them, often prompts criticisms and commitments. Divorce has created different attitude of people towards marriage, several authors have investigated divorce and people's attitude towards marriage; most of these authors have found divorce has a negative influence on people's attitude towards marriage. This is in relation with the aftermath of divorce; Wait and Gallagher (2000) found that divorced parents tend to have more economic hardship, higher levels of poverty, and lower levels of psychological well-being, less happiness, more health problems, and a greater risk of mortality. Morgan and Coleman (2004) stated that usually the spouse who leaves the other often experiences a heightened sense of guilt while the other may not feel ready for the marriage to end. However, these ambivalent feelings about ending the marriage may not be present in all marital situations because this depends on various marital relationship factors. Once the marriage has ended, some of the feelings that are often experienced include loss, anger, rejection, shame, loneliness, abandonment, denial, depression and grief.

An important aspect of students is the formation of attitude. An attitude is defined as, "a set of positive or negative beliefs that we hold in relation to an object, a person, thing, event or issue" (Crisp & Turner, 2007). Attitudes are formed throughout one's lifetime and are affected by how one perceives others, think

of a subject; the beliefs that inform attitudes are based on direct observation, acceptance of information from another person or group of people, and inference of new beliefs based on observations, and current knowledge (Pryor & Pryor, 2005).

Several trends and shifts seem to shape the attitudes of a young man or woman towards marriage and divorce, as well as the way they conceptualize the institution of marriage. These include the rising number of single parent headed households, advances in birth control, the gay rights movement, statistics of marital conflict and divorce, support for domestic egalitarianism and the increasing prevalence of dual earner families. Consequently, some young adults are increasingly choosing to delay marriage (Amato, 2004), holding more negative attitudes toward marriage, engaging in premarital cohabitation (Dennison & Koerner, 2008) and are placing greater importance on marital self-expression and independence than on more "traditional" values like obligation and dyadic commitment (Amato, 2004; Ripley, Everett, Worthington Jr., Bromley, & Kemper, 2005; Hall, 2006). There have been continued research and exploration into the potential effects that these political and cultural shifts may have on the marital attitudes, beliefs and intentions of young adults. Lots of individual, family (social) and cultural factors may be associated with the development of the marital attitudes, beliefs, and intentions.

The concept of marriage as a universal institution is one that should be respected, adored and honoured because it provides the atmosphere for companionship, procreation, sustaining family ties responsible for societal stability and growth. Thus, marital issues need to be carefully addressed to avoid divorce cases; this has called for measures and strategies to help address the issues facing marriage in the bid to foil occurrence of divorce cases. One of such measures and strategies is education which is a life-long process to equip an individual with knowledge capable of addressing his or her flaws thereby satisfying his or her quest for survival. Imperatively, Social Studies Education as an educational discipline is an apt discipline of education capable of addressing issues facing marriage and possibly exerting an influence on the attitude of students to marriage.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is today an insecure and poverty-ridden society flocked with predicted cases of crimes and consistent infringement of the citizenry fundamental human rights by governmental officials and non-

governmental personnel (illegal armed individuals). She is today a democratic and sovereign entity but little has she experienced the joy of democracy and freedom of her sovereignty due to her instability and corrupt state. The root causes of the bad fate of the country have been attributed to several factors ranging from political, economic, tribal, and religious to social factors.

One of the social factors is family which is the smallest unit of any society capable of procreating and grooming the subjects of such society; family cannot be established without marriage, thus marriage is imperative for family establishment and sustenance. Apparently, marriage which is expected to create and groom responsible subjects for the country has also experienced some setbacks leading to divorce. Most marriages in Nigeria have been rocked with issues that have led to divorce and this has effects on their children and the prospective subjects of the country. The divorce of marriages has made some children to experience pain, confusion, anger, hate, bitterness, disappointment, a sense of failure and self-doubt. Family disruption is an experience that follows children into adult life. These children face special challenges and burdens. No matter how unhappy the marriage has been, its break up usually comes as a shock to the children. They feel afraid of the future, guilty about their own perceived role in causing the divorce, hurt at the rejection they feel towards the parent who moves out and angry at both parents for not trying harder. They may become depressed, hostile, disruptive, irritable, lonely, sad, accident-prone or even suicidal. They may suffer from fatigue, insomnia, loss of appetite, inability to concentrate and loss of interest in academic work and social engagement.

These effects of divorce on children do not spell any good fate for the society they belong as they will contribute negatively to the society which they were born to promote. These children who often grow to become adults having no proper up-bringing are easy recruits of cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, kidnapping, political thugs, armed robbers and other crime-prone activities that have consistently foiled the pace of growing and developing the country. Fortunately, institutions both from government and private parastatals have been established to curb these crimes but have they been able to address the root causes one of which is divorce? The continuous practice of divorce and its consequences has created different attitudes in students who wish to get married someday; the divorce situation in which most children grew with single parents could cause such children to have unrealistic ideals about marriage and

can lead to a strong sense of dissatisfaction about getting married and consequently high divorce rate in societies. Hopefully, Social Studies Education was introduced in schools to address man's problems and issues; such problems that have become malignant is divorce. Despite the introduction of Social Studies Education with its rich content to solve the problem of divorce, there is still the practice of divorce and unascertained attitudes of students towards marriage and divorce; it is now ideal to establish if the knowledge of Social Studies Education is related to students' attitude towards marriage and divorce.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

- Is there a significant relationship between students' knowledge of Social Studies Education and their attitude towards marriage?
- Is there a significant relationship between students' knowledge of Social Studies Education and their attitude towards divorce?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of Social Studies Education and their attitude towards marriage?

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of Social Studies Education and their attitude towards divorce?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on Bowenian family systems theory which was put forward by Dr. Murray Bowen in the late 1960s. The theory was hung on the notion that human beings function as one emotional unit and are easily understood along their problem when they are viewed within the context of their family bonds and relationships. In most relationships, people solicit each other's attention, approval and support and react to each other's needs, expectations and distress. The connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent. A change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others.

Lieberman (1979) also mentions that much of Bowen's thinking intertwines with transgenerational theory which holds that family culture is passed from one generation to another, and in this way the sums

of individual family culture are passed on as community heritage. Furthermore, the emotional interdependence that evolves in the family helps to promote the cohesiveness and cooperation families require, to protect, shelter, and feed their members. Heightened tension, however, can intensify these processes that promote unity and teamwork, and this can lead to problems. When family members get anxious, the anxiety can escalate and affect other members. The increase of anxiety can undermine the emotional connectedness members experienced towards each other.

According to Bowen (1978) anxiety is a consequence of both the projection and processes within the family of origin. The family projects anxiety onto one or more children who then incorporates or introjects the anxiety within a personal intrapsychic system. The child then carries the anxiety into subsequent relationships. The first feature that may heighten this projection process is fusion, which is the degree to which the family relationships are emotionally bound. The second feature is triangulation in which a third party, in this case a child becomes the focus of tension in the marital dyad.

Triangulation serves to decrease anxiety in the relationship between a couple, but increases anxiety in the individual who is triangulated (Bowen, 1978). Such anxious individuals perceive close relationships as negative and threatening, contributing to lack of intimacy and satisfaction (Benson, Larson, Wilson & Demo, 1993; West, Zarski & Harvill, 1986). The third feature is the amount of control and intimidation by the parent to the child. Although the rigid expectations and excessive control by the parents over the child's behaviour may alleviate the anxiety in the marital dyad, it merely shifts the anxiety from the marital dyad to the child. The excessive expectations by parents that their children should only conform to family rules in controlling families, raises fears of disciplinary consequences such as parental withdrawal of affection.

Controlling dynamics in which children are not given the chance to express their own opinions and feelings about how they experience their environment also promotes intimidating views about the world. If these expectations and views are internalized, the result is a generalized apprehension across interpersonal situations. Another concept that Bowen uses is that of differentiation. This refers to those individuals who can transcend not only their own emotions but also those of the family system. Such people can extricate themselves from emotional entanglements. People who are differentiated are also flexible, adaptable,

and more self-sufficient. They feel their own feelings while being aware of the feelings of others around them and are able to maintain a degree of objectivity and emotional distance.

Amato and Booth (1991), Glen and Kramer (1987), and Conway (1990) used the term intergenerational transmission of divorce to refer to the probability that adult children of divorced parents are more likely to be divorced compared to those who come from intact families. Regarding the intergenerational transmission of marital instability, Beal and Hochman (1991) maintain that it is not the divorce legacy, but the family patterns leading to the divorce that seep into future generations. Divorce also affects the future generations' sense of commitment to relationships in a more profound and lasting way. However, this may not be the case for all children because this depends on, amongst others, the socialization process as well as which parent the child feels more close to. This suggests that parental divorce elevates the risk of offspring divorce by increasing the likelihood of offspring exhibiting behaviours that interfere with the maintenance of mutually rewarding intimate relationships.

Bowen's theory provides a basis for extrapolation of several hypothesis regarding attitudes and feelings about marriage. The experience of fusion, triangulation and control in the family of origin has an influence on the children's ability to develop independent thinking. This suggests that the child is not given opportunities to express his/her views, feelings, beliefs or to learn skills for developing intimate relationships outside the family. Such individuals tend to perceive major life changes such as marriage with fear. Their relatively unsatisfying dating relationships may create negative expectations and feelings about future relationships and discourage them from pursuing a more intimate relationship like marriage. Furthermore, they are more likely than individuals from more functional families to perceive marriage as a challenge and are likely to perceive themselves as less prepared for marriage due to negative feelings (Bowen, 1978).

In the light of the above exposition, Bowen's theory became a preferred theoretical framework because it addresses flaws in families and marriages and fosters a positive view of families and marriages; it is vital for this study because the study tends to investigate the concept of marriage and its later resultant to divorce as well as the influential nature of Social Studies Education on students' attitude towards marriage and divorce. This theory best explains strategic measure in helping Social Studies Education

to shape the attitude of students towards marriage and divorce. Therefore, the theory will help us understand how families function and how they deal and cope with situations that is stressful. It will also help to explain what parenting is about that result in children having negative or positive attitudes towards marriage.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was the correlational survey design. This design is applied to a study that seeks to establish if linear relationship exists between two or more variables. Such studies indicate the direction and the magnitude of the relationship between the variables being studied. Correlational studies do not establish causation. It could be the case that both variables are related to another variable which actually causes both variables. Correlational studies are however suitable for prediction, as a correlation coefficient shows how much one variable predicts the other (Omorogiuwa, 2006). The correlation design was used to establish the relationship between students' knowledge of the themes/topics in Social Studies Education and their attitude towards marriage and divorce. The independent variable in this study is students' knowledge of Social Studies Education; the dependent variable is students' attitude towards marriage and divorce

3.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of all public senior secondary school students in Oredo and Orhionmwon Local Government Areas of Edo State. There are a total of 41 Senior Secondary Schools and 18,845 Senior Secondary School students in these local government areas.

Source: Edo State Post Primary Education Board (2022).

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of four hundred (400) students was selected using simple random sampling technique. Four mixed schools will be selected each from Oredo and Orhionmwon Local Government Areas. Fifty students will be randomly selected from each of these schools.

3.4 Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection for this study was the questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Attitude

towards Marriage and Divorce (QATMD) was developed by the researcher. It has three sections. Section A sought to collect demographic information of the respondents. Section B which is the attitudinal scale was structured into Likert Modified Four Point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses will be scored as follows: SA=4, A=3, D=2 and SD=1 for positively worded items, while negatively worded items will be scored as SA = 1, A = 2, D = 3 and SD = 4. Any item that gets a mean of 2.50 and above will be considered a positive attitude, while items that attracts 0 to 2.49 will be considered a negative attitude. The section has twenty two questionnaire items that solicits information directed at measuring students' attitude towards marriage and divorce. Section C is a two scale response mode of True (T) or False (F) and it is made up of test questions directed at ascertaining students' knowledge of the themes/topics in Social Studies Education.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by the researchers supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology. These experts vetted the items of the instrument in terms of appropriateness and clarity of words and sentences, as well as relevance to the work. Their corrections and modifications was meticulously considered, effected and incorporated into the final draft of the instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of this instrument was determined using a pilot test of 20 students who are part of the population but will not form part of the sample for the study. Data generated was subjected to Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.775 and 0.880 for the two instruments (attitude and knowledge scale) respectively which is an indication that the instruments are good and reliable.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using Pearson correlation statistics and linear regression. Pearson correlation was used in answering the raised research questions 1 and 2, while linear regression statistics was used in testing hypotheses 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards marriage?

Table 1: Pearson correlation statistics on relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies and attitudes to marriage

		Attitude to marriage	Knowledge	N
Pearson correlation	attitude of marriage knowledge	1.000	.102	400
		.102	1.000	

The data in table 1 revealed that the Pearson correlation r is 0.102 between student knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards marriage. This reveals that there is a weak positive relationship between knowledge and attitude towards marriage.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards divorce.

Table 2: Pearson correlation statistics on relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards divorce

		Attitude to marriage	Knowledge	N
Pearson correlation	attitude to divorce knowledge	1.000	.173	400
Sig. (1-tailed)	attitude to divorce knowledge	.173	1.000	
		.000	.000	

The Pearson r value of 0.173 and level of significance of 0.000 showed that there is a weak positive significant relationship between knowledge of social studies and attitude towards divorce.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards marriage.

Table 3: Summary of linear regression showing relationship between knowledge of social studies and attitude towards marriage

	R	R Square	Beta	T	Sig.
Knowledge and attitude	0.102	0.01	0.102	2.054	0.041

The data in table 3 revealed r value of 0.10, R² of 0.01, Beta value of 0.102, t value of 2.054 and p-value of 0.041. The R² value showed that knowledge of social studies explains 1% of the variance in their attitude to divorce, while the beta value showed that the magnitude of relationship is weak positive (0.102) and significant as the alpha level is 0.041 which is less than 0.05.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between students’ knowledge of social studies education and their attitude towards divorce

Table 4: Regression Statistics showing Relationship between Knowledge of Social Studies and Attitude towards Divorce

	R	R ²	B	t	Sig.
Knowledge and attitude towards divorce	0.173	0.03	0.173	3.501	0.001

The data in table 4 above showed R² value of 0.03 which showed that knowledge of social studies explains 3% of the respondents’ attitude towards divorce (degree of association), while B value of 0.173 showed that the magnitude of relationship is weak, but it is significant at set alpha level of 0.05 (level of significance is 0.001)

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question 1 in line with hypothesis 1 showed that there is a weak positive relationship between knowledge and attitude towards marriage. This finding somewhat goes with that of Goslin (2014) who in his investigation of the attitudes towards marriage and intentions to marry among young adults found that young adults with divorced or separated parents do not have a negative attitude towards marriage.

The result of research question 2 for hypothesis 2 showed that there is a weak positive significant relationship between knowledge of social studies and attitude towards divorce. This somehow follows the finding of Beal and Hochman (1991) who found that divorce affects the future generations' sense of commitment to relationships in a more profound and lasting way. Thus, suggesting that parental divorce elevates the risk of offspring divorce by increasing the likelihood of offspring exhibiting behaviours that interfere with the maintenance of mutually rewarding intimate relationship.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Social studies as taught in schools have the capability of moulding students' attitude towards marriage and divorce. Also, divorce as an aftermath effect of marriage can be addressed using social studies education.

6.2 Recommendations

- Social studies education is capable of addressing issues facing marriage and should be used as a tool to positively exert influence on students' attitude to marriage
- Divorce should be discouraged in its entirety through social studies education as it can make some children experience pain, confusion, anger, hate, bitterness, sense of self-doubt, and so on.
- Social workers in understanding students' attitude towards marriage and divorce should properly shape these attitudes as they are potential predictors of actual marital behaviour.

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