

Prevalence of Moral Decadence Among Youths in Kaduna North Local Government Area, Kaduna State

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Abstract. This study is on the prevalence of moral decadence in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Moral decadence has been an issue in the Nigerian society today, especially in urban areas. Kaduna North Local Government Area is one of those urban areas that have witnessed a rise in moral decadence committed mostly by youths. These immoral acts range from examination malpractices, indecent dressing, drug abuse, among others. The study adopted the Social Learning Theory, as it explains that individuals, especially youths, tend to learn and act based on their observation in the society. The research made use of primary and secondary types of data. Questionnaires were distributed in the study area. Books, Journals, Newspapers as well as online materials were also used. The findings of this study revealed that parents have neglected their roles with regards to moral teachings. Similarly, poverty and unemployment, peer influence and technology have also played a huge role in the collapse of morality in the study area. The study therefore suggested that there is the need for parents to firmly educate their children about moral norms and values. The government will also do well to create job opportunities, especially among youths. There is also the need to include religious leaders in the fight against moral decadence in the society.

Keywords: Youth, Moral Decadence, Immorality, Kaduna.

1. Introduction

Moral decadence, especially among youths is a global issue. In Nigeria, morality has degenerated over the years and resulted into many vices in the society. Researches that have been conducted discovered how Nigerian youths have engaged themselves in all kinds of immoral acts such as drug abuse, theft, cultism, thuggery and other similar

crimes and violence (Adebisi, 2013). However, moral decadence have not been taken seriously in our society today, a situation which has led to the presence of poor breed of youths (Sofadekan, 2016). This lack of morality is mostly found in urban areas, a situation which led to all kinds of vices committed mostly by youths, mostly between the ages of 15-25.

In Nigeria today, immorality is visible in all aspects of our lives. Due to lack of morality, youths have adopted anti-social behaviors as the only way of enriching themselves (Wokocho, 1991). Hence, prostitution, thuggery, kidnappings, among numerous others, have increasingly become common in the society, some even leading to violence which has affected the development of the Nation as a whole. Gbenga (2009) explains that, there is a great increase in the public outcry against vices in the society such as bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, the desire to get rich quick, loss of family values among others, all of which have become a bane in the society. This study is therefore focused on evaluating the prevalence of moral decadence in Kaduna North Local Government of Kaduna State.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Moral Decadence

Morality refers to a system of principles and judgments which are based on religious, cultural, philosophical beliefs and concepts, which determines if actions are right or wrong (Hare, 1996). Morality is expected to shape an individual's behavior into the accepted values in the society. Similarly, Okwueze (2003) also explained morality to mean "specific form of social consciousness or awareness of your relatedness to others without which social life would be impossible" (p 68). Similarly, morality is explained by Adebisi (2018) as relating to the issue of what is right and wrong. It is something that is

ethical, proper and honorable. Decadence on the other hand involves the decline of morality in the society. It is the state of corruption, dissolution, profligacy, debauchery, excess etc. It is a period of decline of accepted morals, usually from a higher standard, to a lower one (Hume, 1995). Individuals who have neglected the acceptable norms and values guiding their community are hence viewed as deviants and are capable of becoming a nuisance to their respective communities.

Therefore, moral decadence according to Odeh (2013), represents the inability to uphold sound morality in the society. Similarly, Muraiwo and Ugwumba (2014) explained it to mean the process of acting in such a way that portray low moral standards. It is thus about the collapse in moral norms, values and ethical standards. Hume (1975) also explained moral decadence to mean a condition of having a decline in morals. Nwankwo (2012) opines that moral decadence mean “a flight from moral values”. These moral values are good habits and without these moral virtues, human beings are regarded as good for nothing (Muhammad and Abubakar, 2018). Similarly, Afuye (2015) stated that moral decadence come in the form of cultism, examination malpractice, teenage pregnancy, rape, sexual harassment among others. It is a behavior that defiles the accepted norms and values of the society. It is in direct conflict with the society’s values.

In the Nigerian society today, immorality can be found in all aspects of our being. It is so common that sometimes children learn from adults and the circle goes on. Immoral behaviors are found in schools, homes, on the streets, at work places and even in places of worships. This situation has greatly affected national development and has led to the bad reputation of the country overseas.

2.2 Youth

Mofoluwawo (2010) explains youth to mean young persons between the ages of 17 and 30. This category of individuals are the most active, yet vulnerable segment of the population. Similarly, Tanaka (2014) define youth to mean persons between the ages of 18-31. It is equally a stage where individuals are young before reaching adulthood. Alfrey (2010) explained that youths are individuals that possess certain physical characteristics such as the ability to show strength towards achieving goals, as well as the ability to change a state of art.

Youths represent the most active individuals in the country. Thus, the higher the number of youths, the higher the wealth and national income of that country

(Nkwopara, 2011). According to Roche et al (2004), youths represent a transition from childhood to adulthood. This implies the process of biological, psychological, emotional and sexual maturation, that are associated with puberty. Similarly, Adebisi (2018) described youths as individuals full of energy and curiosity about life and their environment. This make them vulnerable to societal vices, as it is a period of exploration, uncertainty and doubts. They are regarded as the younger generation of the society, within the period of adolescence and below the age of forty.

2.3 Moral Decadence Among Youths

Youths are considered the backbone of every society and are seen as the leaders of tomorrow. However, youths have remain at the center of immoral acts and other vices which are capable of destroying their future. Many Nigerian youths today have been lured into accepting dangerous life styles, involving the acts of smoking, cultism and other vices (Sofadekan, 2016) Energetic youths have continuously been involved in both religious and political violence, leading to the deaths of many and the destruction of property worth millions of naira. Adebisi (2018) argued that;

“In the world today, shame and shamelessness are rewarded with encomiums and emphasized recognition, unclothedness is now directly proportional to your fame and acceptance, skimpy dresses are now tickets to classy events, songs that have intimate talking in them sell faster than the meaningful ones” (p 192).

Therefore, moral decadence has continue to replace core values in the society. Youths now are not concerned with how their tomorrow will be better through innovations but rather focus on enriching themselves by any means necessary at a tender age (Afuye, 2013). Similarly, Adebisi (2018) explained that many youths have today engaged in numerous ways of accumulating wealth and enjoying the good things of life. As Idensi (2010) also opined that, moral decadence thrives in different societies around the world , and these immoralities such as drug abuse, school violence, sexual abuse, killings, among others are common among youths and children.

Adebisi (2018) opined that the belief that was proved by researchers indicated that a large percentage of Nigerian youths that are involved in anti-social vices are products of practices that do not conform with the decent and moral acts transferred to the present generation of parents by the previous one. Hence, the parental irresponsibility shown today is alarming and

capable of destroying Nigeria's tomorrow. Alimba et al (2010) explained that, the conditions of the youths is frustrating to the extent that leaders do not take it seriously, as their children are not involved. This Nigerian youths thus, no longer uphold societal norms and values like hard work, honesty, respect for elders, cooperation, self reliance, decent dressing, among others (Adebisi, 2018). A significant number of youths have imbibed the culture of immorality for their selfish gains. The result of which does not only affect the perpetrators and or victims, but the whole society as well.

Further more, Alimba et al (2010) argued that many Nigerian youths have been rendered unproductive, instead of becoming useful to themselves and the country. Youths have involve themselves in numerous immoral acts to satisfy their needs and wants. Those within the age range of 25-39 have even traveled oversea in search of a better life (Mofoluwawo, 2012). Some of these youths that have traveled abroad in search of a better life, often portray a bad image for their country. Folaranmi (2012) observed that;

"Mention anything negative, corruption, violation of human right, fallen standard of education, electoral malpractices, epileptic power outage, incessant strike, unemployment, fraud, greed and the rest, Nigeria is in the fore-front" (p 7).

Nigerian youths today are not interested in upholding societal norms and values, such as hard work, respect for elders, honesty, decent dressing, among others, due to the fact that much emphasis is not mounted on teaching morals in schools and homes (Adebisi, 2018). Omordu (2007) also explained that:

"The Nigerian youth today are in a state of confusion on account of conflicting messages from parents and elders on one hand and the effects of various mass media such as radio, video, television, books, newspaper, computer networks etc, instead of submitting themselves to the control and advice of parents and elders, the youths rather resort to personal choice and right to live one's live" (p 32).

Alimba et al (2010) explained that youths in our society today have been rendered incapacitated, unproductive and demoralized. The ineffective educational system has affected youths to the extent of making these youths aimless. Mofoluwawo et al (2012) also pointed out that many youths have been involved in all kinds of activities regardless of whether it is right or wrong, so long as they can be able to sustain themselves. Lawal (2012) explained that:

"While corruption is on the increase, our life expectancy seems to be decreasing, poverty and powerlessness are the order of the day. People's lives are being disposed of cheaply through different means such as armed robbery, hired assassins, kidnappers and portholes on most of our high ways" (p 9).

Bilkisu (2019) also explains that, today we find ourselves living in a world where dressing up decently (especially by the female folks) is no longer a pride. Abusing drugs is also on the increase and youths are willing to risk their future in the process. We also live in a world where modern slavery is tolerated and children are subjected to hardships of all kinds. We imbibed the culture of political and religious violence which often lead to blood shed.
Causes of Moral Decadence Among Youths

Several factors have been associated with the decline in morality in our society today. For instance, unemployment today has exposed youths to immoral acts. As Adebisi (2018) puts it, that youths who roam the streets due to lack of jobs or unstable academic session, have become nuisance to the society. The jobless youths have become easy targets for radical organizations and have been used as tools by politicians to perpetrate mayhem especially during electoral season. Ajufo (2013) argued that:

Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youth, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behavior. Youth unemployment is devastating to both individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically (as it is) causing frustration, dejection and dependency on family members and friends, who also have their own problems to contend with. The high rate of unemployment among the youth in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country (p 307-308).

Similarly, O'Donovan (2000) argued that poverty has been responsible for a lot of vices in urban cities. It is one of the major causes of prostitution, stealing, and kidnapping in the society today. Due to poverty, young girls have turn to prostitution, thereby contracting and other diseases, while others lose their lives due to abortion. Therefore, youths who are unable to provide for their needs have joined gangs of armed robbers, or are involved in political thuggery and have endangered themselves and the society (Mofoluwawo, 2010). As youths are exposed to criminality, so has the society felt the enormous pressure and repercussions, capable of impeding the

development of the communities affected. As pointed out by Kayode and Adeyinka (2009):

“The majority of youths who are currently engaged in militancy, thuggery, gangsterism, cultism and other forms of anti-social behaviours are usually people who are aggrieved with the social system and who are deprived one way or another” (p 38).

Poor parental upbringing has also been seen as one of the major causes of moral decadence among youths. Some parents have fail to inculcate moral values in their children and that has resulted into exposing these youths to criminality, capable of becoming a nuisance in the society. Obiano (2016) argued that:

“Parents and guardians leave the house early in search of the means of survival and come back late and tired. They abandon their responsibilities to outsiders and technological devices. The result are bad habits learned from television, films, video games, telephones, internet and other social networks. These are expressed in the forms of indecent dressing, permissive lifestyle, wild partying and drug abuse. It gives rise to armed robbery, cultism, 419, prostitution, abortion, child trafficking and abuse” (p 11).

However, Adebisi (2018) explained that, although the decline in moral values have been largely attributed to the lack of proper upbringing of children by their parents, the government is also to be blamed. Nigerian leaders, due to their corrupt nature, have neglected the rule of law and are deeply involved in bribery and corruption. Thus, when government is unable to provide for the youth, these youths engage in both legal and illegal means to provide for themselves. In the same vein, Airahuobhor (2006) argued that Nigerians do not have leaders yet. Rather, what Nigerians have are rulers. They do not have vision and only think of how to fill their pockets. Thus, they do not value human beings. This has resulted into impoverishment in the country (Okam, 2001). Thus, as the masses continue to be impoverished and uncared for by their government (leaders), so has the number of crimes increased.

The mass media has also been blamed for encouraging immoral acts among youths in the society. Adebisi (2013) explained that the information that is widely broadcasted in the media is not always censored. Youths that watch pornographic scenes, war films, drug addiction and trafficking scenes, tend to practice what they learn. The media and technology have played huge roles in promoting moral decadence among youths. As Chinedu et al (2020) explain that the presence of electronic media through cable networks, Nollywood home videos and foreign movies have exposed youths to sex and other

sexual activities. It has also promoted acts of kidnapping, cultism, rituals and other vices. Smith (2007) also noted that most teenagers are exposed to sexual materials on TV and magazines. The exposure of sexual contents thus leads to permissive behaviors. Therefore, the influence of media has affected the relationship between youths and others in a negative way. It is no surprising that killings, kidnapping, cultism, drug addiction, high rate of divorce and other vices are very common in the country (Sofadekan, 2016). Through social media networks such as facebook, twitter, instagram, youtube and many others, youths have learn and adopted immoral behaviors of disrespect for their family members, elders, and members of the community in general.

The influence of peer group is also one of the major causes of moral decadence. Faustine (2013) argued that peers are regarded as an important influence in the character of an individual, especially at young age. Therefore, the affiliation with peers who engage in risky behaviors is known to be a strong prediction of the youth’s character. Similarly, the lack of discipline and willingness to learn, especially in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, has resulted into immoral acts. Poor pupil-teacher relationship, strained teacher-headmaster relationship, disrespect for school heads have all amounted to immoral acts (Chinedu et al, 2020).

The gradual imposition of the western culture on the traditional African society has also contributed to the decline in morality today. This has resulted into a rapid shift from traditional society. Hence, the colonization of African countries by western countries have exposed these colonized countries to new western values (Sofadekan, 2018). These western values do not represent the true African norms and values that existed before the coming of colonial masters to the continent. Thus, globalization has negatively affected the African continent with respect to its traditional norms and values.

3. Effects of Moral Decadence In the Society

Moral decadence is not without consequences. These socio-economic effects of moral decadence cannot be overlooked. Nigeria as a developing nation is struggling to actualize its developmental goals. The problems that occur as a result of immorality cannot be part of the progressive development of the country. Foreign investors tend to back down from doing businesses in the country (Sodefakan, 2016). Immoral acts committed mostly by energetic youths have cripple the progress of the country. Muhammad and Abubakar (2018) share this view when they

argued that moral decadence has resulted into the slow pace of development. These immoral vices ranging from stealing, bribery, examination malpractices, insubordination among others, have contributed immensely to the educational and economic decline in the country.

Moral decadence according to Louw (2009), impedes the growth and development of any nation. The consequences of moral decay has led to the collapse of family and the community life, because youths imbibe the attitude of lack of integrity, violence, self-decline, etc. Awonyi (2003) explained that a visit to the police stations and court rooms have shown that most of the crimes committed are perpetrated by youths. They engage in vices such as arson, cultism, forgery etc, all of which are detrimental to the progress of any society. If such actions are left unchecked, the society will be negatively affected and the youths who are suppose to be useful, become social deviants (Alloy, 2000).

Moral decadence has affected the integrity of Nigeria as a whole. Corruption and other immoral acts taking place in the country has affected the image of the Nigerian societies internationally (Chinedu, et al, 2020). No wonder Ituma (2008) argued that:

“The image of the country in the international arena has become so battered that every Nigerian should psychologically feel a scorching hurt inflicted on his individual psyche. The dent has gone so far that everywhere in the world Nigerians are said to be generally dreaded like mad dogs and criminals, cautiously approached like dangerous snakes, and avoided like lepers” (p 37).

Therefore, the Moral decadence led to the shortage or absence of foreign investors, as a result of the prevalent of unethical vices in the country (Sodefakan. 2016). Similarly, criminal activities in the society affects tourism, a sector which could generate huge capital to then country (National Orientation Agency. 2009; Enu and Enu. 201). Moral decay has also impeded moral education, because it does not assist the society with respect to molding a good character that should have been instilled right from the beginning (Oliver et al, 2017). Hence, the implications of moral decadence, both nationally and internationally cannot be overemphasized.

4. Theoretical Explanation

Social Learning Theory: This study has adopted the social learning theory. The theory as propounded by Albert Bandura , explains that new behaviors are acquired through observation and the imitation of others (Bandura, 1971). According to Ormrod (1999),

social learning theory emphasizes that behavior of an individual is dictated by the thought mechanisms of the person, the atmosphere, as well as the action itself. Basically, Learning here is cognitive and can happen through observation or a direct instruction (Bandura, 1963). Furthermore, learning can also take place through the observation of rewards and punishments. Thus, when a particular type of behavior or character is rewarded or condoned, it will most likely persist, and if a particular behavior is punished, then is will most likely be stopped (Renzetti et al, 2012). The social learning theory has the following basic assumptions:

- Learning is not only behavioral, but also a cognitive process, which takes place in a given context.
- Learning occur through observation of behavior as well as their consequences.
- Learning is about observation and the extraction of information from those observations, as well as making decisions concerning the performers of behaviors (observational learning and modeling).
- While reinforcements play in the process of learning, it is not completely responsible for learning.
- The learner is not a passive recipient of information. Hence, cognition, environment and behavior all mutually influence each other (Reciprocal determinism).

The social learning theory is relevant for this study because is explains how individuals, especially youths, easily learn (good or bad behaviors) through observation in their environment. As such, the immoral behaviors as portrayed by youths in the society are as a result of what they learn either through the influence of their peers, parents or other individuals (adults) in the society.

The social learning theory has been criticized for not explaining why certain behaviors are condoned or punished. The theory also failed to explain why some children, despite facing bad influence in the society, choose not to copy.

5. Methodology

This study has made use of primary and secondary types of data. The primary data was obtained through the administration of questionnaires, while the secondary data was obtained from books, journals, Newspapers, printed and electronic materials. The projected population of Kaduna North Local Government Area as at 2016 according to the National Bureau of statistics (NBS) is 492,100. The

sample size for this research work was obtained using the Krejcie and Morgan’s table and according to the table, 384 sample size was adequate. The questionnaires were distributed equally among all the wards that constitute the study area. The study also made use of the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) in analyzing the data.

6. Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

As shown below, the information gotten from the field through the administration of questionnaires have been presented in a tabular form using frequency distribution and simple percentage. Table 1 demonstrated the level of moral decadence in the study area, Table 2 captured the causes of moral decadence in the study area, Table 3 highlighted the consequences of moral decadence in the study area, and Table 4 captured the solutions to moral decadence in the study area. Out of the 348 questionnaires that was administered in the field, 372 were filled and returned which constitute 96.9% . The unreturned 5 questionnaires constitute 1.3%, and 7 invalid ones constitute 1.8%.

Table 1: Level of Moral Decadence

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
1	High	191	51.3
2	Very High	158	42.5
3	Low	14	3.8
4	Very Low	9	2.4
	Total	368	100

Source: Field work, 2020.

Table 1 as shown above, is on the level of moral decadence in the study area. Majority of the respondents, constituting 51.3% agreed that the level of moral decadence in the study area is high. This is followed by the category of respondents constituting 42.5% who believe that the level of moral decadence is very high. The next category of respondents constituting 3.8% agreed that moral decadence is low, while the last category constituting 2.4% believe that the level of moral decadence is very low.

The data above has clearly indicated that majority of respondents constituting 51.3% agreed that moral decadence in the study area is High. This view is also shared by Adebisi (2013), where he explained that moral decadence has reached an unbearable level in our society today. Researches have shown that a high percentage of both secondary schools and university students have engaged in immoral acts such as violence, cultism, examination malpractices, sexual immoralities, among numerous others. Sofadekan (2016) also argued that many youths in our society

today have succumb to the life style of smoking, obsessive womanizing, alcoholism, cultism, etc.

Table 2: Causes of Moral Decadence

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Poor parental upbringing	101	27.2
2	Technology	99	26.6
3	Poverty/Unemployment	98	26.3
4	Peer group influence	74	19.9
	Total	368	100

Source: Field work, 2020.

Table 2 above is on the causes of moral decadence in the study area. Majority of the respondents constituting 27.2% are of the view that poor parental upbringing is a the major cause of moral decadence in the study area. This is followed by the category of respondents representing 26.6% who agreed that technology is responsible for moral decadence in the study area. The next category of respondents constituting 26.3% believe that moral decadence is caused by poverty and unemployment in the study area. The last category constituting 19.9% agreed that moral decadence is a product of peer group influence.

As shown in the data above, majority of the respondents representing 27.2% are of the view that moral decadence in the study area is as a result of poor parental upbringing. This opinion is also shared by Obiano (2016) who explained that parents and guardians have abandoned their responsibilities to outsiders. The result of this are bad habits, expressed in the form of indecent dressing, wild partying and drug abuse.

Therefore, parents have been blamed for failing to properly educated their children about the accepted norms and values. Despite family being the first agent of socialization, many parents have fail to assume their roles and have left their children at the detriment of the society.

Table 3: Consequences of Moral Decadence

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
1	Violence/Unrest	74	19.9
2	Absence of norms and values	92	24.7
3	Kidnappings/Robbery	65	17.5
4	All of the above	141	37.9
	Total	372	100

Source: Field work, 2020.

As shown in Table 3 above, Majority of respondents constituting 37.9% are of the view that all the categories are the consequences of moral decadence. This is followed by the category constituting 24.7% who believe that the absence of norms and values are the consequences of moral decadence in the study

area. The next category constituting 19.9% believe that violence and unrest are the consequence of moral decadence. The last category of respondents representing 17.5% agreed that kidnappings/robbery are the consequences of moral decadence in the study area.

The table above has clearly indicated that majority of the respondents in the study area shared the view that all three categories constitute the consequences of moral decadence in the study area. This view is also shared by Louw (2009) who opined that moral decadence has resulted into the collapse of the community life, because youths imbibe the attitudes of lack of integrity and violence. Similarly, Achor (2015) opined that youths being the driving force of any economy are engaged in vices that are capable of promoting corruption ridden society.

Table 4: Solution to Moral Decadence

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
1	Moral teaching	42	11.3
2	Employment opportunities	43	11.6
3	Parental guidance/control	96	25.6
4	All the above	191	51.3
	Total	372	100

Source: Field work, 2020.

Table 4 above is on the solution of moral decadence in the study area. Majority of the respondents in the data above, who constitute 51.3% agreed that all three categories are the solution to moral decadence in the study area. This opinion is followed by the category of respondents constituting 25.6% who believe that parental guidance/control is the solution to moral decadence in the study area. The next category representing 11.6% believe that employment opportunities is the solution to moral decadence in the study area. The next category representing 11.3% agreed that moral teaching is the solution to moral decadence in the study area.

The data above has clearly indicated that majority of respondents constituting 51.3% believe that the mixture of all three categories (moral teachings, employment opportunities and parental guidance/control) are some of the major solutions to curbing moral decadence in the study area. This view is also shared by Adebisi (2018) who explains that, there is the need for change of attitudes, especially in homes, on the part of government, religious bodies and other meaningful members of the society, towards mobilizing youths for the nation's development. Similarly, Njoku (2016) equally opined that there is the need for proper home training for children. There

is also the need for counseling services provided for youths in their respective schools.

7. Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings are written below:

- The prevalence of moral decadence was discovered to be high in the study area.
- Lack of proper home training on the part of parents, was discovered to be one of the major causes of moral decadence in the study area.
- Poverty and unemployment has also aided the problem of moral decadence in the study area.
- Peer group influence, together with technology has promoted the menace of moral decadence in the study area.
- Moral decadence was also discovered to have affected the development and progress of the study area and the Nation as a whole.
- The study also found that moral decadence could be addressed through the promotion of moral teachings at homes and in schools.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Moral decadence as shown in this study has been responsible for numerous criminal activities in our society today. Youths have engage in immoral acts ranging from stealing, drug abuse, violence, political thuggery, examination malpractice, indecent dressing, among others. If left unchecked, these immoral behaviors are capable of impeding the development and progress of our societies. The study therefore recommends that parents, as the first agents of socialization, should strive to inculcate in their children the accepted norms and values of the society. The government should play the important role of improving the standard of living of the people because many individuals, especially youths, are engaged in immoral acts due to poverty and high rate of unemployment. Offences committed should also be dealt with accordingly which will serve as deterrence to others. Last but not least, religious leaders should be included in the fight against moral decadence in the society, through their preaching especially because the two major religions do not condone any act of immorality.

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