EDUCATION, SECURITY AND HEALTH CHALLENGES IN COVID 19 NIGERIA: REFLECTING ON THE ROLE OF ALMAJIRAI

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ABSTRACT

African countries have been severely harmed by terrorism, insurgency, secession, instability, violence and religious crises since the beginning of the 21st century. Countries are on the verge of collapse, wars engulf society, and instability remains a recurring experience since the collapse of colonial rule and subsequent independence from African nations. The increasing incidence of the insecurity crisis in Nigeria is worrying enough to emphasize that the West African regional organizations that have legal responsibility for insecurity management have not been able to adequately address this issue. Nigeria's security challenges seem to be getting worse, threatening the fundamental development and health and education challenges of our nation especially for you almajiri. National security has become a troubling and challenging issue. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to prove the truth of the existence of a negative correlation between the transmission of covid19, education and other related hazards by the almajiri system. This study uses qualitative research methods with several analytical techniques and several ways of collecting data. This study resulted in recommendations for constitutional reform. Primary and secondary data collection sources are used to provide direction and give credence to the originality of this work and recommendations will be offered for policy makers to consider future steps.

Keywords: Security, Health, Covid-19, Almajiranci System, Almajiri and Nigeria.

ABSTRAK

Negara-negara Afrika telah sangat dirugikan oleh terorisme, pemberontakan, pemisahan diri, ketidakstabilan, kekerasan dan krisis agama sejak awal abad ke-21. Negara-negara berada di ambang kehancuran, perang melanda masyarakat, dan ketidakstabilan tetap menjadi pengalaman yang berulang sejak runtuhnya pemerintahan kolonial dan kemerdekaan berikutnya dari negara-negara Afrika. Meningkatnya insiden krisis ketidakamanan di Nigeria cukup mengkhawatirkan untuk menekankan bahwa organisasi regional Afrika Barat yang memiliki tanggung jawab hukum untuk manajemen ketidakamanan belum mampu menangani masalah ini secara memadai. Tantangan keamanan Nigeria tampaknya semakin parah, mengancam pembangunan mendasar dan tantangan kesehatan dan pendidikan bangsa kita terutama untuk Anda almajiri. Keamanan nasional telah menjadi isu yang meresahkan dan menantang. Oleh karena itu, tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk membuktikan kebenaran adanya korelasi negatif antara penularan covid19, pendidikan dan bahaya terkait lainnya oleh sistem almajiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan beberapa teknik analisis dan beberapa cara pengumpulan data. Kajian ini menghasilkan rekomendasi untuk reformasi konstitusi. Sumber pengumpulan data primer dan sekunder digunakan untuk memberikan arahan dan memberikan kepercayaan pada orisinalitas pekerjaan ini dan rekomendasi akan ditawarkan bagi pembuat kebijakan untuk mempertimbangkan langkah-langkah di masa depan.

Kata kunci: Keamanan, Kesehatan, Covid-19, Sistem Almajiranci, Almajiri dan Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The country's historical past and present cannot be succinctly explained without understanding the fact that Nigeria as a nation has long history of contradiction. The colonial rule encouraged regional politics that provided opportunity for the independent groups, fighting for the interest of their ethnic identity (Gomment & Esomchi, 2017). The mutual co-operation that existed in the pre-colonial Nigeria was diluted due to the British colonial policy of divide and rule. Security challenges have characterized the region as a result of socio-political and economic upheaval which epitomized into the institutionalization of several Islamic radicalism, ethnic militias and religious fundamentalists (Aghedo & James Eke, 2013).

It is already a settled matter that insecurity and wrangling has established a gloomy and permanent presence on the Nigerian socio-political landscape. It is indeed a constant feature of the Nigerian existence. Since the inauguration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, insecurity around ethnic and religious affiliation has become more pronounced and has taken its toll on the development of the entire country. It seems to be on the path of consuming and destroying the very system that breeds it (Alli Y, 2013). The incessant conflict has brought insecurity into lime light of the nation's history.

One of the fundamental challenges that have bedeviled socio-economic development in Africa is the preponderance of terrorist groups which have engulfed the entire Africa and Nigeria in particular for more than three decades now. It has devastated the wheel of spontaneous transformation and peace in the country. Since the demise of colonial rule and beginning of the 21st century Nigeria is challenged by varieties of complex, political, environmental, economic and social upheavals in degrees and intensities that is unprecedented in the northern region (Garba et al., 2017). These challenges have launched the region into a series of devastating inter and intra states conflicts ever experienced in any part of the world. Consider the event of the 11th September 2001 terrorist attack of the World Trade Centre in New York has again raised questions on international terrorism, its network and the threat it posed to international security. The emergence of this group requires increase global attention to combat this menace (Mashema et al., 2018). These series of terrorist acts call for changes in international security measures from a state centric affair to include a wide range of non-state actors and their networks.

Since the exit of the military from the political scene and the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria about 21 years ago, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented security challenges that have put Nigerians and foreigners on their toes. More particularly, since 2009, the state of insecurity in the country occasioned by the activities of different groups has assumed an alarming dimension. Such activities include militancy in the south south region, kidnapping in the south east, violent armed robbery, political assassination, ritual killings, suicide bombings, rustling, banditry and communal crisis in some parts of the northern region especially north east (Igbini, 2020). These social menace reinforce insecurity and impede Nigeria's efforts towards socioeconomic development.

Northern Nigeria has become a hotbed of terrorist activities, including hostage taking, suicide killing, car bombing, drug trafficking and smuggling. The region is under the menace of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria (Takougang & Krieger, 2019) The menace of terrorism emerged from complex and deep rooted political, social and economic problems. The global act of insurgence is associated to religious extremism especially violent radicalization which has become the excuse used by terrorist sects to gain more support and sympathy to recruit new members from almajiri who were less due to the wide gap between the rich and the poor (Abbo et al., 2017).

The impact of their activities greatly affects economic integration and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. It is on this premise that the Nigerian government has established strong mechanisms and several institutional frameworks to address the scourge of insecurity in Nigeria. some previous research is still not

seen to explain this almajiri system especially in the fields of health and education so this paper is structured in such a way as to carry out concept definition, framework expression, historical perspective of Almajiri, insecurity and Almajiri in Nigeria in the meantime.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method (Anney, 2014) which with this method will facilitate researchers in formulating data obtained from library studies and interviews into short and solid sentences so that a description is formed which will later answer the objectives of this research. Researchers used several research techniques such as interactive analysis from Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to carry out some data validation from some of the data that the authors found in the form of documents, articles and books and even interviews. Table 1 shows some of the resource persons that the researchers interviewed.

Oral interview

Name	Age	occupation	Place of interview	Date
Zakari H	68	Arabic Teacher	Sabongari Zaria	11/11/2020
Abdulahi, Sadiq	55	Trader	Sango Ilorin	15/11/2020
Ado,Ishiaku	53	Nurse	Kotangora	20/11/2020
Salleh Tahib	11	Almajiri	Samaru, Zaria	24/11/2020
Haruna Idris.	13	Almajiri	Sabo, Ibadan	30/11/2020
Yosuff Nasir.	75	Malam	Sabo Ibadan.	30/11/2020

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

EMERGENCE OF ALMAJIRANCI SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Almajiranci is a system of Islamic education practiced in northern Nigeria. It is a system of Islamic education that requires children to be sent away from their homes to study the Quran. The male gender seeking Islam knowledge is called Almajiri, female gender is Almajira (plural Almajirai). It is mainly practiced in northern Nigeria. The word Almajiri is a Hausa term that means a student or pupil, the word is derived from Arabic word "Almuhajirun", meaning "emigrant". The term is believed to have an origin from Prophet Muhammad's famous migration from Makkah to Madinah in the early days of jahiliyyah period in Islam. In another version, the chief promoter of such system is Imam Shafi'i as he also extended it to businesses and other things during his reign (Alli Y, 2013). In fact, he likened it to precious stone, which according to him is nothing unless it is mined and transported away from its soil, summarized thus

"emigrate from your home in quest of excellence and other benefits, which are: relief from sorrow and earning a livelihood, then knowledge, good manners and friendship with the famous" (Ohwojeheri). The almajiri phenomenon is originally established for learning Islamic values, principles, theology and jurisprudence. It is a replica of Islamic learning centres in countries like Indonesia and Pakistan. Originally, it is believed to be rooted in the Islamic concept of migration for knowledge. An Almajiri is therefore a person who migrates from his home to an acclaimed teacher in search for Islamic knowledge. This is because acquisition of knowledge at home is insufficient, inconvenient and characterized with delay.

In Northern Nigeria, Islamic scholars accept voluminous male children occasionally for the purpose of teaching them Qur'an and other basics of Islam, and in order to avoid distractions, such scholars takes the Alamjiri to a camp outside the city or even a different city entirely. As at 2017, Rai et al (2017) observed that over 11 million children registers into Qur'anic schools and by 2019, there are about 12.5 million Almajirai in Northern Nigeria.

In the words of Nnabuchi (2013), majority of this Almajiri that engages in begging are aged between three and 18 years and they survive through begging from dusk till dawn. After begging, some of them go back to their various Islamic centres for more acquisition for knowledge, while others remain on the streets. The few privileged ones among them will have some few hours of Quranic recitations with their mallams. Almost all forms of illnesses and diseases be it psychological, biological and physical are today prevalent among Almajirai in northern Nigeria including the spread of covid19. These could be attributed to non –adherence to World Health Organisation on the preventive measures against COVID-19 as well as where they inhabit. Beyond this, cholera, malaria, ulcer and many other contagious diseases are common amongst the children and they seldom take birth or change their clothes which are tattered mostly.

There is doubt almajiri is popular in Northern Nigeria due to its domination by Islamic principles as well as high level of poverty and illiteracy. The region centre stage of discussion for years because of these phenomena and leaders find it very difficult to curtail. The central attribute is Bara (begging) (alms) rather than the original concept, which is Quranic education. The system has been legitimized on religious and socioeconomic basis. It is today the business of the old and young, disabled and even abled people on the streets, at mosques, market places and door-to-door, on permanent or temporary basis. On the contrary however, this is against the etiquettes of Islam.

Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar III, popularly referred to as Sarkin Musulmai (King of Muslims) in Nigeria had warned that Islam enjoins man to work and use his faculties in making a living. It is therefore forbidden to resort to begging while having full active faculties (Mashema et al., 2018). The Sultan further posits that Almajiri (pupil/student) is a representation of hunger and poverty, rather than Islam.

However, almajiranci system in northern Nigeria started in the 11th century due to the inclusion of Borno rulers in Quranic literacy. Seven hundred (700) years later, Sokoto caliphate was founded through Islamic revolution based on Holy Quran teachings. The two empires (Borno and Sokoto) run similar Quranic learning systems, which later came to be known as Almajiranci system of Islamic education (Hansen et al., 2016). Initially, particularly during the pre-colonial period, this system of education was not as bastardised as it is today. The Almajirai then lived with their parents and such schools are situated around the immediate environment from where the pupils came from. Also, schools were also maintained by zakkah, parents, communities, the state and complemented by the pupils and their teachers through

farming, while the pupils and their teachers gives Islamic education to the community in return (Interview with zakari 2020).

Although, the system is today characterized by its central attribute 'Bara', which means begging for sustenance, and other inferior attributes like dirt, ignorance, disease , violence, extremism and theft. The British invasion and colonial administration are largely the genesis of the ill fate in the Almajiranci system. With their invasion, lots of emirs were recorded to have died and many others became displaced. The incidence which forces them to lose control over their territories and the fundamental control of the Almajiranci system of education in the period under review (Alzola et al., 2020). The colonialists further abolished the funding of such system because of its religious connotation. This loss of support from the government and subsequently the community, the Almajiranci system was bastardised forcing the Almajiri and Islamic cleric to resort to menial jobs and bara for survival as they no longer have reliable financial support. The present operation of the Almajiri sees many children not succeeding. Some of them die through violence on the streets, child stealing, diseases, hunger, among many other evils (Shittu & Olaofe, 2015). The few who succeeds does that by completing the memorization of the Holy Quran without its translation, and eventually became drivers, traders or cleaners. More so, they remained untrained armies available to conflict entrepreneurs, and anybody poised to ferment trouble.

Conceptualizing insecurity and almajiri

To say that the literature on insecurity has been growing over the years with lightning speed is stating the obvious . This growing scholarly interest in security studies is understandable: insecurity has the potential of wreaking havoc on societies affected by it, hence, it is generally perceived as not in the best interest of the society.

Security Crisis: The word "security crisis" has been viewed broadly as philosophical denoting the clash of power against power in the strong of all things to become manifest or as a distinct category of social behaviour as the parties trying to get something they cannot get. further noted that security crisis is a balancing of vectors of power of capabilities to produce effects. He postulates that it means balance of equilibrium of power or a stable resultant. Ogunleke observed that contradiction is universal absolute existing in all process from the beginning to the end. Then, it can be regarded as security crisis in a situation in which people or group of people are involved in a serious disagreement. It may be in a violent form. Security crisis is therefore a natural phenomenon. We become concerned and worried when security crisis become violent, destructive and impedes development. Insecurity, according to World Book dictionary is the process of lack of security, being insecure and in an unsafe condition. It is described as a situation when someone is not safe or protected in the community, state or nation. The security crisis which scholars noted to have turned Africa, the most diverse of all continents in the world into a continent unable to turn its potentials of diversity into opportunities for development.

Insecurity has become a central part of political competition across much of Nigeria and it takes many forms from assassinations to armed clashes between gangs employed by rival politicians. This violence is most often carried out by gangs whose members are openly recruited and paid by politicians and party leaders to attack their sponsors' rivals, intimidate members of the public, rig elections, and protect their patrons from similar attacks. Insecurity is the state of being insecure or unsafe. The state is liable for providing security for members of the public. Wherever a state fails in this regard, the state is considered to be a weak state. Most of the weak states in the world are considered weak because they failed in their primary function in providing security for their citizens (Ojo, 2020).

The insecurity situation in the present Nigerian democratic dispensation has intensified since the emergence of Boko Haram. The incessant Boko Haram attacks has recorded many casualties, while some are displaced, despite the government measure in curtailing sect heinous crime against humanity. Apart from the activities of the dreaded Islamic sect, Nigeria has also witnessed a surge in kidnapping, youth restiveness, oil bunkering, militancy and armed robbery. The failure of the Nigerian state to provide adequate security for the citizens in the Northern East of the country where the activities of extremists are predominant, prompted the citizens of the region to form a civilian Joint Military Taskforce called 'Civilian JTF aimed to act as a counter terrorism youth movement to checkmate the menace of insecurity.

ALMAJIRAI FROM INTINIRANT SCHOLAR TO MILITANT

The almajiri menace, to reiterate, is a consequence of a terrible youth bulge syndrome. Apart from being the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria also has the highest birth rate on the continent (Aghedo & James Eke, 2013). High levels of illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty accompany this explosive youth demographic cohort in the North. As noted by theorists of youth bulge, such societies are prone to violent conflict. Though, the educational crisis in the country is worse in the North than in the South. The wide educational imbalance between the North-South has been in existence since colonial times when formal education was introduced into the country by European Christian missionaries. While the missionaries were given a free rein and allowed to establish schools in southern Nigeria, British administrators strictly restricted their activities in the northern region as part of a policy of indirect rule that allowed emirs there to remain in power as figureheads while in fact serving as agents of the British (Ochonu, 2014). Today, the northern region remains backward in terms of formal education and human capital development. In fact, in its latest education-for-all global monitoring report, UNESCO reveals that 12.5 million school-age children are out of school in Nigeria.

One of the core drivers of violent conflicts in northern Nigeria is widespread almajiri engendered by poor education. To date, the North has the highest level of illiteracy in the country despite efforts aimed at promoting literacy, including the universal primary education program launched in 1976 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, which was re-launched in 1999 (just before the proclamation of the millennium development goals by the international community). The Universal Basic Education aimed at providing free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age. At best, these programs have only prioritized quantity over quality; as Hoechner remarks, "The push to expand primary school enrollment often has, for the children of the poor, resulted in swollen classes, lacking even the most basic educational resources, supervised sometimes by underpaid, barely trained teachers".

The psychological destitution coupled with socio economic disadvantages of the almajirai makes them easy prey to conflict enterpreneurs desperate politicians, who will stop at nothing in their quest for power and resources—who pay the street urchins peanuts to execute criminal acts. Today, the almajirai have become ready-made recruits for prosecuting violence against political and business opponents and rivals and readymade tools for Islamic fundamentalists in the northern Nigeria.

THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF *ALMAJIRI*

The history of insecurity in Nigeria can be located within the colonial transgressions, which forced the various ethno-religious groups of the northern and southern provinces into one entity, called Nigeria in 1914. Since the various ethno-religious groups inhabiting these provinces were not consulted regarding this forced merger, this British colonial policy was autocratic and undemocratic, and thus laid the background for insecurity and suspicion. It follows that, it denied the people's basic needs of participation, equality and social well-being.

Although, Nigeria has been enmeshed in a firebox of insecurity leading to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, some members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials and many government workers. The insecurity challenge has assumed formidable dimensions forcing the country's political and economic managers and, indeed the entire nation, to rue the loss of their loved ones, investments and absence of safety in most parts of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others has increasingly become the regular signature that characterized life in Nigeria.

The abuse of the almajiri has a number of implications for state and society in Nigeria as well as for the country's immedite neighbors. As noted earlier, the abuse of the children makes them extremely vulnerable to conflict entrepreneurs—especially do-or-die politicians—desperate business persons, and clerics preaching religious intolerance (Imobighe, 2012) who promise better life opportunities. The system has over time become a breeding ground for criminality and insecurity, spawning youths who are significantly inclined to violence as a means of survival or making their voices heard. Almajiri training provides one of the easiest avenues for indoctrination and radicalization. For example, the almajirai are made to chant songs of protest and radicalization that criticize "makarantan boko" (schools providing western education) and praise "makarantan addini or makarantan allo

Indeed, the case of almajiri Usman Musa demonstrates the evil consequences of manipulation. On July 9, 2010, the 19-year-old was arrested by the police for attempting to assassinate the emir of Kano with a gun during a Jumal service at the Kano Central Mosque. The emir of Kano is one of the most prominent Muslim leaders in Nigeria. On interrogation, the almajiri confessed that he was only doing the bidding of his mallam, who also gave him the weapon and some charms. He added that a week earlier, he had deposited the sum of 1 million which he and his mallam had robbed from an Igbo trader (Garba et al., 2017). Furthermore, confessions of children arrested in connection with BH terrorism provide insights into the vulnerability and radicalization that lead them into violence. Some of the 35 children released in May 2013 confessed to be almajirai. One of them admitted that they were paid about $30 each by some politicians and rebel leaders to spy on troops, vandalize property, and maim and kill non-Muslims: "We were given a keg of petrol by our bosses to set some schools ablaze, which we did within Maiduguri and we were paid N5000" (Alli Y, 2013).

Another almajiri "child soldier" said: We were taken to Damaturu. We watched out for the soldiers at their units and reported back to them [BH]. We were reporting when soldiers were at ease or enjoying themselves and when they were off guard, and we were paid for giving out information (Alli Y, 2013).

It is important to note that many people have died due Boko Haram-related conflicts in Nigeria. Most of the victims were innocent civilians, including men, women and children, who have been killed in such public places such as worship centers, schools, markets, and relaxation spots. A sizable number of security personnel have also been killed as a result of carefully planned and executed attacks on security formations. Though, the Nigerian government and the Muslim community saw the almajiri menace as

palpable insecurity threat but the muslim ummah paid a lip service to it coupled with health implication associated with their unstructured movements. Indeed, various studies have also implicated the almajiri system in several urban revolts in northern Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2013; Imobighe, 2012)

However, the use of social miscreants as cannon fodder has a long history in northern Nigeria, as shown by the Maitatsine urban revolts which broke out in Kano in 1980 and spread to Maiduguri and Kaduna in 1982, Jimeta-Yola in 1984, and Gombe in 1985. Muhammed Marwa, who led the Maitatsine uprising which claimed over 5000 lives, obviously the precursor to BH terrorism, had exploited the dwindling economic situation of northern Nigeria in the early 1980s by recruiting foot soldiers from the almajiri system. Street urchins who were unable to afford the basic necessities of life became diehard patriots of the Islamic sect and Marwa. The Maitatsines preached that killing was compulsory and they believed they would go to heaven if they killed arnas (infidels).

ALMAJARAI AND SREAD OF COVID19 IN NIGERIA

As the number of COVID-19 cases steadily rise in Nigeria, there are growing concerns over the fate of children who left home to study Islam in northern Nigeria while majority are roaming the streets amid the pandemic, there is no evidence of any special attention, to the plight of the Almajirai children, either by federal or state government in their respective areas (Amanambu, 2020). It could be recalled that the COVID-19 pandemic also known as Coronavirus is an ongoing pandemic ravaging the world. It is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARs-COV-2) with the first confirmed case announced in Nigeria on 27th February 2020. Since then, there has been an upward trajectory in the rate of infection across the country owing to widespread community transmission with high spread among the Almajirai. Indeed, the Almajirai do not have place to call home — they survive by begging in the streets — a practice that has put them at a high risk of contracting the coronavirus. States in northern Nigeria have deported considerable Almajirai to their respective regions of origin due to the increase in COVID-19 cases. States like Kano, Bauchi, Jigawa and Katsina received the young pupils resulted in put them into isolation centers to undergo medical screening before handing them over to their respective parents, while some were rejected by various state governments.

Since the outbreak of this virus the northern governors has embarked on evacuation of Almajirai from the street. Majority of them are taken from their various local boarding houses, some of which are definitely free of COVID-19, and then merged with others from different boarding houses which may have been infected by the virus and transported together. This can be a reason to further make COVID-19 spread to where it was not before. To curtail the spread of covid19 most states' border were closed but closure was not that effective after all, because some security officers are being compromised. Several motorists admitted that they could still move passengers from Kano to other states in the region, despite the inter-state restrictions on movement. The increase in coronavirus cases in northern Nigeria is on cross-border travel. Travelers from densely populated Lagos have been blamed for spreading the coronavirus to northern Nigeria. It is of no surprise seen these children of this nature under the ages of 5 roaming the streets in search of what to eat without any protective measures. Thus, contributing to high increase of suspected cases in the northern part of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

the government itself causes the crisis directly by not respecting the aspirations of the people. It's no surprise that the poor almajirai in the north rely heavily on public philanthropy and alms to survive—

a fact that makes them vulnerable to conflict mobilization and the spread of infectious disease. To reduce the widespread insecurity in the vast north, an effective and quality education system is needed. As there is a deep disdain for Western education in the region, the almajiri education system must be overhauled, and orthodox subjects such as History and English should be added to the curriculum along with relevant subjects that will prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century. century. The ranks of soldiers from fundamentalist Islamic sects continue to swell even in the face of the onslaught of their membership by state forces. In contrast to the mainstream analysis that highlights the salience of radical Islamism in the face of insurgent proliferation, this article suggests that the jihadist insurgency in northern Nigeria is better understood as a consequence of the youth bulge syndrome, particularly the availability of cheap foot soldiers from the almajiri demographic group. Abandoned by parents and the state, Qur'anic students travel the streets, begging for alms and survival. And "street life" exposes delinquents to abuse, criminalization and subsequent mobilization for violent causes including terrorism. It is said that until rampant child abuse practices and state neglect of almajirai and other vulnerable groups are addressed through better education. Nigeria, with the involvement of a fairly large almajirai and the most transmission of the covid-19 virus, occurs in the north. It has been suggested that a number of interrelated factors explain this, including poverty, corruption, marginalization, and unfavorable policies.

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