Self or Others: Exploring the Role of Truancy as the link between Personality Traits and Peer Influences found in Truant Students

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Abstract—Current research aims to investigate the role truancy plays between personality characteristics of a adolescent and the kind of peers they affiliate with, it adds to existing knowledge by evaluating the extent to which a truant life style lures the right personality to seek peers that can help initiate and/or maintain it (Allen, Chango, Szwedo, Schad, & Marston, 2012; Oetting & Beauvais, 1987). Most previous research has ignored the glamour and adrenaline- inciting quality that a life of truancy holds for the youngsters. Specifically the study investigated whether a clear meditational pathway can be traced between personality traits and peer influence and truancy. This study utilized contrasting groups (that of truant and punctual students) to study the mediation. Personality traits were characterized by Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Naqvi, 2007) which measures personality in terms of extraversion, introversion, lie, neuroticism, and psychoticism. research concentrated This on general, relations with peers and interpersonal the interpersonal incitation for drug use. Previous research considers truancy as the cause of criminal activities and antisocial lifestyles. Therefore exposure to ill-treatment, abuse and exploitation by adults and institutions in the civil government are blamed for exposing vulnerable children to a life of crime or delinquency. On the contrary, the current research is an attempt to investigate if the children themselves set out to a world of opportunity, free of monotony and chances of finding a breakthrough to better financial conditions or a secret for personal growth. In that the current research sees, truancy as a life choice, or a life choice that causes certain personality types to seek order and experienced peers who can aid their chances of getting involved and doing something exciting; the research is centred around the assumption that when majority of a country's population live near the poverty line, chances of truancy and related activities may be a choice rather than a chance factor. Employing purposive sample of 200 boys, the study found that the truant students were more predisposed towards the extrovert-introvert traits of personality than punctual students. It was also found that peer influences are influenced by extrovert-introvert traits of personality. Results revealed that truancy (truant & punctual students) is partial mediator between extrovert-introvert of personality traits and subscale of peer Influence. Recommendations of the study are that both truant and punctual can equally be benefitted by an intervention addressing peer influence however, truant students can get more benefit by addressing personality traits. This study would be helpful for pedagogical and clinical setting for truant school students. It also gives education policy makers food for thought to introduce activities in educational institutions for reduction of truancy.

Keywords-Peer Influence, Personality Traits, Truancy, and Punctuality.

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Introduction

Many scholars of different fields have consensus that truancy is one of most crucial problem in elementary and secondary schools globally, and it deleteriously effects on all socio-economic group of human culture (Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Maynard, McCrea, Pigott, & Kelly, 2013; Hassan, Jami, & Aqeel, 2016; Aqeel, Anjum, Jami, Hassan, & Sadia, 2016). Its harmful consequence are connected to learner's behaviour including substance use, additional disruptive behaviour, juvenile delinquency, academic performance, school bunking, and conduct disorder (Baker, 2000; Battin Pearson et al., 2000; Carney, Timms, & Stevenson, 2006; Fortin & Picard, 1999: Garry & Newsome, 2008: Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Maynard, Salas-Wright, Vaughn & Peters; 2012 Hassan, Jami, & Ageel, 2016; Ageel, Anjum, Jami, Hassan, & Sadia, 2016). Similar researches recommend that it is harmful behaviour and routine of a child and an adolescent, suffers in academics and social life. They indulge in delinquency and sever crime in later life (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001; Forsterling & Binser, 2002; Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Garry & Newsome, 2008).

Adolescence is an age that is marked by certain changes in personality and affiliations (Steketee, 2012). There are rapid changes in physical, moral, and intellectual growth. Physical and intellectual growths are usually apparent through milestone and daily interactions. However, moral development is more of a complex phenomenon; especially when viewed in relation to the fact that each child interacts with a wide variety of peers/adults and are involved with myriad interactions. Each interaction leaves their influences on their intellectual and moral development. The current research aims to explore the factors that cause these youngsters to choose to affiliate with delinquent and anti-social peers and assess the role that their truant lifestyles have in strength the relationship with deviant peers and drug addict peers. Adolescence is also a time of conflict, when they reject interference from parental and authority figures.

Truancy is a term used to denote 'the action of staying away from school without 'good reason' or 'absenteeism'. The term is used to refer to behaviour of school students who do not turn up at schools, despite leaving home with the intentions of attending schools. They tend to

spend the time in doing fun activities or just wandering around. It could be single child skipping school or in groups (Hassan, Jami, & Aqeel, 2016; Aqeel, Anjum, Jami, Hassan, & Sadia, 2016; Aqeel, Jami, & Hassan, 2015; Munawar, Aqeel, & Husain, 2015; Sadia, Aqeel, & Jami, 2015; Hassan, Aqeel, & Jami, 2015).

The reasons for truancy may be varied, and range from a simple activity of being bored at school, not liking certain subjects, or to more complex reasons like learning problem, or behavioural problems. There is lack of systematic research about truancy in Pakistan. The current research may be one the few researches that focus on truancy. Because truancy is not recognized as a state problem, not much facts and figures are available. Most research just thinks of truancy as the precursor for delinquency.

One of the problem with truancy its close link to juvenile delinquency and antisocial behaviour (Baker, 2000; Carney, Timms, & Stevenson, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Though, truancy is an innocent fun act to begin with, but boredom or bad company can soon lead to more delinquent behaviours. This could be incidental or simply due to increasing need for adventure. Not all truant children tend to get into mischief, but once they come onto the radar of the authorities they may be pushed towards delinquency. According to the world report in 2008, most truant student tends to be on the brink of delinquency and crimes. This could either be due to peer pressure or the attitude meted out to these children by the authorities and police. Harassment, abuse or ill treatment at the hands of authorities can push these innocent children towards delinquency and violence (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Similarly, truancy is more often linked with the non-exempt, illegal, secret absences, remaining absent from the school without any remorse and generally the absences are associated with the unawareness of their attitude. The absences are also linked with the delinquency and troubles in their studies: absences are linked with the societal settings e.g. destituteness and lack of income sources (Fremont, 2003).

Exposure to deviant behaviours and atmosphere can lead youngsters to choose friends that may reinforce the aggression and adrenaline enhancing experiences (Wikström & Butterworth 2006; Van Dijk & Steinmetz 1983). This is reinforced by the fact the truancy is rarely a solitary activity. Most youngsters indulge in truant acts when they are in company. Additionally, there are bound to be delinquent networks that each smaller groups or cliques can join (Dekker &Weerman, 2005).

Research related to deviant behaviours like drinking and drug abuse is also highly related to the peer influences (e.g., Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Ingram, Patchin, Huebner, McCluskey, & Bynum, 2007; Hassan, Jami & Aqeel, 2016; Aqeel, Anjum, Jami, Hassan, & Sadia, 2016) and the role of peer manipulate on adolescent drinking is important in many etiological theories (Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995). Commencement of alcohol use generally occurs during early adolescence (Johnston et al., 2005), a developmental period when the amount of time spent

with peers increases and peer relationships become the primary social context that influences social development (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998).

Method

The main objective of present study was to examine mediating role of truancy (truant & punctual students) between personality traits on both subscales of peer influence i.e relationship with peers and peer influence for drug use. Considering previous literature, present research concentrates on Eysenck's, personality theory. The theory gives credence to the role played by ego-control (over psychoticism). This allows the current research to assess the degree of personal control is aided (or hindered) by the truancy in selection and maintenance of friendships. Similarly, research focuses on relationship with peers and the impact it has on the drug usage among adolescents. Current study was cross-sectional based on quantitative approach. The goals of research have accomplished in two parts 1-Preliminary study and 2-Main study. In current paper we will just report one analysis of main study.

Instruments

Two scales were used to asses' personality and peer influence among truant and punctual students.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ).

The Urdu-version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Naqvi, 2007) was employed to characterize the personality dispositions of the sample. The questionnaire allows researchers to assess the impact of Extraversion_Introversion, Neuroticism, Psychotocism and Lie personality types and their relationship with peer influences. The EPQ consists of 81 items and high score on subscale are indicated more prevalence of traits. Low scores are indicated less prevalence of traits.

Index of Peer Influence (IPF). The Urdu-version of the Index of Peer Influence, (IPF Aziz, 1991; Ambreen, 2012) was employed to assess the peer influence. The index contains 12 items. It comprises of two subscales; *Relationship with Peers* (7 items), and *Peer Influence for Drug Use* (5 items). A score higher than 35 was considered as 'mean high peer influence' and below 35 was considered to be 'low peer influence'.

Sample

Purposive sample technique for (Punctual = 100, Truant = 100) was employed based on cross-sectional design. Only male truant students' were incorporated in present research from grade 6 to 10 with age range 12-18 years. Both truant and punctual students were selected from same class and different schools of Islamabad and Rawalpindi twin cities of Pakistan. The main reason for this selection criterion was the for sake of distinction between truant and punctual students. Truancy is defined as all those students who remained absent from school for past 21 days or more in previous academic year without any medical reason, without permission, and knowledge of teachers and parents (Crespo, 1974; Tahira, 2011, Hassan, Jami & Aqeel, 2016; Aqeel, Anjum, Jami, Hassan, & Sadia, 2016). This definition was not

appropriate in Pakistani context. That's why criterion for truancy was slightly adapted. For this purpose teachers and class proctor of classes were asked to identify the truant students of their specific classes. The students who were identified by class teacher and proctor as truant (students who remain absents in the class on regular basis) were included in this study.

Procedure

In the current research data of 200 participants were collected from different public and government schools of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Participant of study were approached by researcher with the permission of the school administration. Consent of the parents of children to be included in the sample was also sought through school administration so that the ethical considerations are fulfilled. The research objectives and nature of current study were explained to the school administration and parents of participants. It was assured to school administration and parents that study results would be kept confidential and would only be used for the research purpose. After taking the consent of the school administration attendance registers of the last year for 6th grade to 10th grade students were examined and students who were found absent for more than 21 days in the previous academic year without any medical reasons or without the permission of parents or teachers, this criterion was then authenticated by class teacher and the proctor of the class before considering a boy as truant students. The

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Variables	Constant	EXT	Students Types	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1(Regression Model)				.18	44**
β[Cls]		.42[.41, .77]			
В	17.46	.60			
SE	1.34	.09			
t(198)	13.01	6.60			
P	.000	.000			
Step 2 (Logistic Model)					
Odds ratio[Cls]	9.69	.85 [.78, .94]			
В	2.27	17			
SE	.69	.05			
Wald Test	10.70	11.21			
Cox & Snell R ²	.06				
x2	12.11**				
Prediction Between Groups	Truant= Punctual				
Step 3 (Regression Model)				.06	11.06***
β[Cls]			23[- 3.36, - .86]		
В	29.28		-2.12		
SE	1.01		.64		
t(198)	29.12		-3.32		

students who met the criterion were included in the sample as truant students. Then the questionnaires were handed over to the participants for filling up in the presence of the researcher. There was no fixed time limit for completing the questionnaires.

Results

Table 1

Mediating effect of Truancy (truant students & punctual students) on the Relationship between personality traits (extrovert-introvert) and Subscale of Peer Influence (Peer Influence for Drug Use).

Note. Significant results are only reported. Step 1 shows the simple regression, Step 2 & 3 show both Logistic Model and Simple Regression; Cls= 95% confidence intervals; SE=Standard error, EXT= Extrovert-Introvert **p<.05, **p<.01.

Simple logistic regression was carried out to examine the mediating role of truancy (truant students & punctual students) on the relationship between extrovert-introvert traits of personality and peer influence for drug use. This study analysis revealed that extrovert-introvert traits of personality was significant predictor for truancy (β = -.17, Wald Test=11.21, p<.01, truant students prediction=59.00%, punctual students prediction=57.00%) and peer influence for drug use (β = .67, p<.000). In turn, truancy (truant Students; punctual Students) was significantly predicted subscale of peer influence (peer Influence for drug use, $\beta = -2.76$, p<.000). Further table exposed that the value of $\Delta R^2 = .18$, with ΔF (2, 198) = 45.21, P < .000 explains variance of 18% by the extra effect in peer influence. The regression weight reduced (.43 to -.27) and turns non-significant in step 2. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this is a sign of full mediation. If regression weight is reduced to non-significance it is an indication of full mediation.

Table 2

Model of mediating effect of Truancy (truant students & punctual students) on the Relationship between personality traits (extrovert-introvert) and Subscale of Peer Influence (Relationship with Peers).

Note. Significant results are only reported. Step 1 shows the simple regression, Step 2 & 3 show both Logistic Model and Simple Regression; Cls= 95% confidence intervals; SE=Standard error, EXT= Extrovert-Introvert **p<.05, **p<.01

Simple logistic regression was carried out to examine the mediating role of truancy (truant students & punctual students) on the relationship between extrovert-introvert traits of personality and relationship with peers. This study revealed that extrovert-introvert traits of personality was significantly predicted for truancy (β = -.17, Wald Test=11.21, p<.01, truant students prediction=59.00%, punctual students prediction=57.00%) and relationship with peers (β = . .60, p<.000). In turn, truancy (truant students; punctual students) was significantly predicted subscale of peer influence (relationship with peers, $\beta = -2.12$, p<.000). Further table exposed that the value of $\Delta R^2 = .18$, with $\Delta F (2, 198) = 44.00$, P < .000 explains variance of 18% by the extra effect in peer influence. The regression weight reduced (.42 to -.23) and turns non-significant in step 2. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this is a sign of full mediation. If regression weight is reduced to non-significance it is an indication of full mediation. The result presented above are only those which proved to be significant. Results regarding the relationship between psychotic, neurotic, introvert, and extrovert personality traits leading to truancy were also explored are not reported here, but discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The analysis of data was carried out through SPSS-20. Imputation method was employed to handle missing values (Field, 2005). Simple logistic regression analysis was carried out to check mediating effect of categorical variable between personality traits and peer influence. For this purpose latest criteria for mediation analysis on categorical variable was used (Iacobucci, 2012).

Effects of personality traits on peer influence for drug use yielded mixed results. Simple logistic regression was carried out to examine the mediating role of truancy on the relationship between personality traits and subscale of peer influence (1.peer influence for drug use, 2.relationship with peer. The research found that extrovert personality trait was the only personality trait that to be enhanced truancy and was found related to both subscales of peer influence peer influence for drug use (β = .85, p<.000) and relationship with peers ($\beta = -.23$, p<.000), truancy ($\beta = -.17$, Wald Test=11.21, p<.01, prediction=59.00%, punctual students students prediction=57.00%). In turn, truancy (truant & punctual students) was significantly predicted subscale of peer influence (peer Influence for Drug Use, β = -2.76, p<.000). Further table exposed that the value of $\Delta R^2 = .18$, with ΔF (2, 198) = 45.21, P < .000 explains variance of 18% by the extra effect in peer influence. The regression weight reduced (.85 to -.27) and turns non-significant in step 2. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this is a sign of full mediation. If regression weight is reduced to non-significance it is an indication of full mediation (see Table 1). In turn, truancy (truant & punctual students) was significantly predicted subscale of peer influence (relationship with peer, β = -.23, p<.000). Further table exposed that the value of $\Delta R^2 = .18$, with ΔF (2, 198) = 42.21, P < .000 explains variance of 18% by the extra effect in peer influence. The regression weight reduced (.85 to -.23) and turns non-significant in step 2. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this is a sign of mediation. If regression weight is reduced to non-significance, it is an indication of full mediation (see Table 2).

Study finding reveals that both punctual and truant students are vulnerable on unpacked relationship between personality traits and relationship with peers. This Study reveals that truant students are more inclined toward delinquent behaviour. They like to set up relationship with deviant peers, and join delinquent activities

especially drug addiction with their school friends. This bad peer company can soon lead to more delinquent behaviours. Not only truant children, but punctual children also tend to get into mischief, but once they come onto the radar of the authorities they may be pushed towards delinquency. Previous numerous studies findings are consistent with our current study results(Allen, Chango, Szwedo, Schad, & Marston, 2012; Oetting & Beauvais, 1987; Fremont, 2003; Asendorpf & Aken, 2003). Study finding suggests that both punctual and truant students can equally be benefitted by addressing personality traits and peer influence intervention.

Truancy did not influence the relationship between psychotic traits of personality and peer influence for drug use (β = -.41, Wald Test=36.17, p = n.s, truant students prediction=74.00%, punctual students prediction=72.00%), or neurotic traits of personality (β = .85, Wald Test=1.16, p = n.s, truant students prediction=53.00%, punctual students prediction=48.00%), or the lie traits of personality (β = 1.01, Wald Test=.18, p = n.s, truant students prediction=46.00%, punctual students prediction=48.00%) and peer influence for drug use. Friends are an important part of life in adolescents. Tahira, (2011) researched that truants have been found having a large number of friends as compared to the students who perform well in their academics. What makes it clear that the truant adolescents are more involved in friends whereas punctual are involved in their studies than extracurricular activities Similarly, Henry and Huzinga (2007) found that numerous protective and risk factors are linked to truancy. Only two very much crucial prediction

Variables	Constant	EXT	Students Types	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1(Regression Model)				.18	45.21***
β [Cls]		.43[.47, .86]			
В	22.363	.67			
SE	1.478	.09			
t(198)	15.129	6.72			
P	.000	.000			
Step 2 (Logistic Model)					
Odds ratio[Cls]	9.69	.85 [.78, .94]			
В	2.27	17			
SE	.69	.05			
Wald Test	10.70	11.21			
Cox & Snell R ²	.06				
x2	12.11**				
Prediction Between Groups	Truant= 59.09	% Punctual=57.0%			
Step 3 (Regression Model)				.07	15.85***
β [Cls]			27[-4.13, -1.39]		
В	36.20		-2.76		
SE	1.09		.69		
t(198)	32.86		3.98		
P	.000		.000		
Sobel Test	.003				

have been done which are school performance and indulgence of the delinquent peers, but the students who perform well in their academics they play truancy less and their association with the delinquents and truants is less. Additionally, Eunyoung, Dae-Hoon, and Minwoo (2010) were interested to find out whether peers influenced teenagers behaviour of substance use or parents. The results of the study were furthered with social learning and social bonding theories which suggest that peer influence and parents can also cause substance use among the teenagers. Furthermore, parental influence was found to be greater than that of the peers. According to

Harris (1998), there is a great contribution of the peers in an adolescent's personality development and it largely depends on the heredity and less on parental relationship.

The influence of friends is highly problematic considering the intricacies involved with friends tend to attract innately similar characteristics in their friends. Therefore, friends may serve as crucial protective and the risk factors for teenager at same time (Claus-Ehlers, 2008). A large number of studies have reported that friends not only give support for activities, they are important for development of self-esteem and identity (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Maccoby, 1990), and body image (Paxton et al, 1999). This reciprocity has not been focused by research and needs to be discussed in order to be clarified. Previous research has however focused on identified how peer influence and need for affiliation may play a major role in enabling truancy.

Indeed, one of the most common debates in the study of peer connection regards the opposition of the peer socializing (influence) theory to the peer selection theory. On one hand, the socializing theory positions that peers' deviant behaviours and substance use are significant in explaining an individual's future actions. This theory is mainly important in explaining the role of peers on targets' substance use and is referred to in many longitudinal studies (Reifman et al., 1998; Wills & Cleary, 1999; Sieving, Perry, & Williams, 2000). On the other hand, the peer- selection theory states that an individual's own deviance and substance use will impact the selection of friends. This theory is also agreed by a number of studies (e.g., Iannotti, Bush, & Weinfurt, 1996; Poelen, Engels, Van Der Vorst, Scholte, & Vermulst, 2007; Knecht, Burk, Weesie, & Steglich, 2010; Husain, Gulzar, & Aqeel, 2016; Shoukat, Wasif, & Ageel, 2015; Amin, Wasif, & Ageel, 2015; Sidrah, Wasif & Ageel, 2015; Khan, Ageel, & Riaz, 2014; Ahmed, Ahmed, Ageel, Akhtar, & Salim, 2017; Cisheng, Jamala, Aqeel, Shah, Ahmed, & Gul, 2017; Khan, Amanat, Ageel, Sulehri, Amanat, Sana, & Amin, 2017).

The vulnerability of adolescent school kids to peer influence unusually reflected by changes in the quality and amount of time spent with peers (Brown, Dolcini, & Leventhal, 1997). Therefore truancy may allow them to spend more and more time with adult supervision; this may increase the bond between the peers; it may also strengthen certain personality characters that favour survival of the relationship. Delinquent peer groups are differentiated by insurgence against adult power, rule breaking, and premature adoption of adult roles (e.g., Haynie, 2002; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001), all of which are attuned with alcohol use. It is then not surprising that association with delinquent peers is one of the most vigorous correlates of initiation of alcohol use (Barnow et al., 2004; Dishion, Capaldi, Spracklen, & Li, 1995; Vitaro et al., 2001). These findings suggest that some peer groups provide the social context for delinquency and support and model alcohol use (Cashwell & Vacc, 1996).

Personality traits determine the youth's criminal tendencies such as suicidal ideation and likelihood of participation in delinquent acts (Bernier, 1997). These personality traits integrate social and emotional health of the teenagers, for example, self-esteem, dearth of confidence, social skill deficit and reduced peer relationships. From the childhood to adolescence the peers have a great impact on the individual (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). These models of typical behavior are associated with how people behave in a broad diversity of life spheres, such as work, education, family, and health (Kuncel, Ones, &Sackett, 2010; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). These different models of personality are explained different kind of personality traits such as extraversion refers to social articulateness and activity level. Extraverted individuals, scoring high (i.e., positive) on Extraversion, want other people's company and are talkative and

active, whereas their opposed—introverted individuals—score low (i.e., negative) on extraversion and favor to be left alone (Hendriks, Hofstee, & De Raad, 1999). De Raad and Schouwenburg (1996) also argued that neurotic individuals are more anxious and less independent (Judge & Bono, 2002). On the other hand psychotics is characterized by individual have some set characteristics that show certain symptoms like carelessness, improper, emotional expression, and they show no regards for the common sense.

Previous researches have been lacking in evidence relationship between personality traits and peers recognizing According to Harris (1995) children behave influence. comparatively different at home and outside home. Adolescent's personalities are affected by external environment than that of the home. The feedback from their friends weighs more than that of their parents. Asendorpf and Aken (2003) have concluded that the extroversion is strongly linked to peers and not with the family factors. Friendship is to be constructed whereas the parents are naturally present in our environment and teenagers become more extroverts in this regard. Friends have very significant impact on the personality development of the teenagers while heredity parental influence has very less influence (Harris, 1998). That is, social influence may be operating during this period and supposed approval and use may be an important factor of socialization. Indeed, Andrews, Hampson, Barckley, Gerrard, and Gibbons (2008) proposed that peer influence is predicted by shirker personality traits and engage adolescents in drinking, which is consequently predict instigation of alcohol use. That is, why we tested a meditational pathway such that truancy would mediate the association between personality traits and peer influence.

Conclusions

The current research concludes that children may be attracted towards a life of truancy because they lack stimulation in their everyday lives. These children at home and schools, do not take part in any cocurricular and/or extracurricular such as sports activities. As they are at the stage of development of their adolescent period. If these children are given independence and get involved in creative /sport activities at home and school, they will not end up in drug addiction and other criminal activities. Adolescent is marked by increasing need for independence and the need to make their own decisions? Parents and other authority figures including teachers do not allow them independence to do so, therefore they formulate peer groups to share their feelings and lead up in truancy.

Suggestions

- Government education policies may be revised to address the problem of truancy by introducing interesting co curricular and extracurricular activities in schools.
- Adolescents may be given more independence of thought and actions so that they feel their importance and do not end up forming peer groups leading to truancy.
- 3. Qualitative studies on the subject will help to find out underlying causes of truancy and better consequence can be suggested for its eradication.
- 4. Development of a truancy scale will help out researchers to do further research in the area.

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