

CAN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND GENDER INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF ADOLESCENTS POPULATION WITHIN AWKA METROPOLIS?

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated if intimate partner violence and gender will influence academic performance of adolescent students. Two hundred secondary school students in Awka south LGA, Anambra state served as participant for the study: Their age range from 10 to 16 years with mean age of 12.5 and standard deviation 1.16. 120 (60%) were males and 80 (40%) were females selected using the convenient sampling techniques. Instruments administered on them included the academic performance scale developed by Birchmeier and colleagues, 2010) and the children exposure domestic violence scale developed by Edleson et al., 2008). The study was a survey research and adopted correlational research design; this is because the study aimed to understand the possible relationships that exist between the variables under study. Multiple regression statistics served as appropriate statistics for analyses of the data. Result showed that intimate partner violence significantly and inversely predicted academic performance with ($\beta = -.342$, $p < .05$). Gender significantly predicted academic performance with ($\beta = .270$, $p < .05$). Lastly, intimate partner violence and gender jointly predicted academic performance with ($F = 2.119$, Adjusted $R^2 = .245$, $p < .001$). Therefore, based on these results, it was recommended that educators and school staff should receive training on recognizing the signs of intimate partner violence, responding appropriately to disclosures, and connecting students with requisite resources necessary to mitigate such effect. Training should also emphasize the intersectionality of gender, violence, and academic performance to ensure a holistic approach to supporting students.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, gender, academic performance, adolescents

INTRODUCTION

The poor academic performance of students especially between the age of 10-16 can be attributed to various factors, each contributing to their academic struggles. Unsupportive home environments, including lack of parental involvement, intimate partner violence, unstable living conditions, or exposure to domestic issues, can hinder a child's ability to focus on learning. If a student falls behind in certain subjects and those gaps are not addressed promptly, they may struggle to keep up with subsequent lessons, leading to further academic difficulties. Adolescents are susceptible to peer pressure and may prioritize social activities over academics. Negative peer influences, bullying, or feeling socially isolated can impact their motivation and engagement in school (Donald, 2022). Also, children living in households where Intimate partner violence occurs may experience disruptions in school attendance due to safety concerns, injuries sustained during violent incidents, or emotional distress. Irregular attendance can lead to gaps in learning and hinder academic progress.

Education is the bedrock of development. It is very crucial for individual growth, societal progress, and economic development. But unfortunately Education in Nigeria is bisected with myriads of problems (Ogunsola, 2018). These includes; poor funding and thus poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids (projectors, Computers, Laboratories and libraries), paucity of quality teachers and poor polluted learning environment (Adeyinka, 2019). Nigeria's educational infrastructure often lacks adequate resources, including textbooks, classroom materials, and technology. Academic performance is

a term used to describe the level of success that a student has reached in their educational pursuits (Beth, 2020). It encompasses a wide range of factors, including grades, test scores, attendance, and participation in extracurricular activities. The main focus of educational policy makers in every nation is academic accomplishment. A well-adjusted student is one who does not get affected adversely by the interactions such as conflicts, emotions etc., and whose personality development goes through a healthy course of socialization (Sangeeta and Chirag, 2012). Academic involves a variety of demands differing in kind and degree and requiring lot of coping responses or adaptations. It is not only academics with which the students are concerned; they are equally affected by the social and emotional changes.

There has been a link between Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and poor academic outcomes of adolescent in Nigeria today (Chavez, 2017). Intimate partner violence can have profound effects on children, impacting various aspects of their lives, including academic performance. According to (Lee et al., 2022) Intimate partner violence is a pervasive and complex issue that encompasses various forms of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse inflicted by one partner upon another. The implications of IPV extend far beyond the immediate victims, impacting families, communities, and society as a whole. Sauber and O'Brien (2020) indicate that IPV can lead to a myriad of negative outcomes for both victims and their children, ranging from physical injuries and emotional trauma to long-term psychological distress and economic hardship. Intimate partner violence (IPV) can significantly impact the academic performance of middle-aged children, leading to a host of challenges and hindrances in their educational journey (David, 2018). Adolescents exposed to IPV often experience emotional distress and mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These psychological challenges can impair their ability to concentrate, learn effectively, and engage in academic activities. According to (Fantuzzo J, et al, 1997)., witnessing IPV can lead to emotional and behavioral problems, which in turn can impact their academic performance. Students from homes with intimate partner violence may withdraw socially or isolate themselves due to fear, shame, or embarrassment about their family situation. This social withdrawal can affect their interactions with peers and teachers, leading to difficulties in forming supportive relationships and participating in classroom activities (Fantuzzo J, et al, 1997.). Exposure to IPV can also result in physical health issues, such as headaches, stomachaches, and fatigue. These health problems can lead to frequent absences from school, difficulty concentrating in class, and decreased academic performance (Fantuzzo et al., 2017).

According to Caetano (2016), living in an environment characterized by violence and conflict can disrupt a child's home life and routine, making it challenging to focus on schoolwork and attend classes regularly.. Chronic exposure to stress and trauma associated with IPV can impair cognitive functioning and academic achievement in children. Dube and Anda (2020) suggested that adverse childhood experiences, including witnessing IPV, are associated with lower academic performance and educational attainment. Students exposed to IPV may exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression, defiance, and delinquency, which can disrupt classroom dynamics and impede their learning process (Brown, 2018). These behavioral issues may result from the modeling of aggressive behavior or the psychological effects of trauma. However, exposure to IPV during this vulnerable stage can disrupt these developmental processes and have lasting effects on children's academic functioning (Supoletal.,2021).

Gender, on the other hand, has long been a subject of interest in educational research due to its potential impact on academic performance Fayombo, G. A. (2012) (Fayombo, 2017). Gender refers to the socially culturally constructed characteristics and roles, which are ascribed to males and females in any society. Gender is a major factor that influences the adaptation of students to academics (Okeke, 2008). Gender is determined by attributes such as tasks, functions and roles of women and men in the society rather than the biological characteristic of women and men. However, gender gap is one of the variables in the educational system that tends to influence the academic adjustment of students owing to some societal stereotypes (Yau and Cheng, 2014). While some studies have suggested that gender differences in

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academic achievement may be attributed to biological or cognitive factors, others have pointed to social and cultural influences that shape students' attitudes and behaviours towards learning. Evidence suggests that there are gender differences and similarities in academic performance at different levels of education around the globe (Kutnick, 2015). Gender disparities in academic performance among middle-aged children in Nigeria are influenced by several challenges and problems. Traditional gender roles and expectations in Nigerian society often dictate that boys should excel in subjects like mathematics and science, while girls are encouraged to focus on humanities and domestic skills. This stereotyping can limit children's academic interests and opportunities.

Research Questions

The research would provide answers to the following:

1. Would exposure to intimate partner violence predict the academic performance of adolescent?
2. Would gender predict the academic performance of adolescent?
3. Would exposure to intimate partner violence and gender jointly predict the academic performance of adolescent

Theoretical Framework

This study can be explained by the Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Bandura, It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals learn and develop behaviors through interactions with their environment, particularly through observation, imitation, and modeling. Adolescents often observe and learn from the behaviours modelled by their parents or caregivers. In households where IPV occurs, adolescents may witness aggressive or violent behaviors, leading to the internalization of such behaviors as acceptable or normal. This can contribute to the development of aggressive coping mechanisms or maladaptive behaviors that interfere with academic performance. The theory emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks. Adolescents who experience or witness IPV may have lower self-efficacy due to feelings of powerlessness or helplessness in their home environment. This diminished sense of efficacy can undermine their academic performance as they may feel less capable of overcoming academic challenges or pursuing their educational goals. Adolescents often look to role models for guidance and emulation. In households affected by IPV, the role models available to adolescents may exhibit dysfunctional or abusive behaviors, rather than positive, prosocial behaviors conducive to academic success. This can perpetuate cycles of violence and hinder academic achievement by limiting access to positive role models who prioritize education and personal development.

The theory recognizes the influence of gender socialization on behavior and development. In many societies, traditional gender roles perpetuate stereotypes and expectations regarding appropriate behaviors for males and females. Adolescents exposed to IPV may internalize gendered expectations related to power, control, and aggression, which can influence their attitudes and behaviors in academic settings. For example, boys may adopt aggressive behaviors as a means of asserting dominance, while girls may internalize feelings of inferiority or passivity, both of which can impact academic performance.

Overall, social cognitive theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how intimate partner violence and gender dynamics can influence the academic performance of adolescent students. By considering the interplay of observational learning, self-efficacy, modelling, and gender socialization educators, policymakers, and practitioners can develop targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate the negative impacts of IPV and promote academic success among vulnerable adolescents.

Hypotheses

In order to guide and give directions to the current study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested.

1. Exposure to Intimate partner violence will negatively and significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students.
2. Gender will significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students.
3. Exposure to Intimate partner violence and gender will jointly predict the academic performance of adolescent students.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the method used in carrying out the study. It includes participants, instruments, Procedure, design and statistics.

Participants

A total of two hundred secondary school students in Awka south LGA, Anambra state served as participant for the study: Their age range from 10 to 16 years with mean age of 12.5 and standard deviation 1.16. 120 (60%) were males and 80 (40%) were females. There are about 19 public school in Awka south and Systematic sampling technique was used to select seven (7) out of 19 Secondary schools in Awka-south LGA. This is because it gave the researcher the opportunity in selecting every 3rd school on a list of the population. The selected schools include: Community secondary school Umuokpu, Community secondary school Okpuno, Community secondary school Amawbia, Union secondary school Umuawulu, Community secondary school Isiagu, Igwebuikwe grammar secondary school Awka, and Nneoma community secondary school Nibo. The participants were selected using convenient sampling techniques, this is because, and the administration of the instruments to the participants is based on students who are available and willing to participate in the study. Further analysis showed that all were singles and Christians. Inclusion criteria were;

a. Must not be less than 10 years and not more than 16 years.

B. Must be living with parents or guardians.

Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection: The academic performance scale (Birchmeier and colleagues, 2010) and the children exposure domestic violence scale (Edleson et al., 2008).

RESULT

This chapter presents the result summary of the study analysis on the effect of intimate partner violence and gender on academic performance of adolescence in Awka south. The results of the statistical analysis of the data obtained in the study are presented in the section.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
APS	200	18.00	50.00	28.18	3.5634
CEDV	200	7.00	30.00	73.04	7.3134

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Age	200	14.00	16.00	12.534	1.1631
Gender	200	2.00	1.00	1.2636	2.44262
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Table 2: Correlations among the variables

	1	2	3
CEDV	1		
GENDER	.368*	1	
APS	-.484**	.418**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of correlation showed that correlation between CEDV and APS was negative and significant at $r = -.484$, $P < .05$. The result of correlation between gender and APS was positive and significant $r = .368$, $P < .01$.

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression analysis showing the predictive impact of intimate partner violence and gender on the academic performance of adolescence.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	91.364	5.291		14.321	.000
CEDV	-.410	.094	-.342	-2.213	.025
GENDER	.342	.054	.270	4.630	.000
CEDV/GENDER	.347	.088	.378	5.482	

Dependent Variable: Academic performance

The above coefficient table indicates that exposure to intimate partner violence significantly and negatively predicts academic performance with ($\beta = -.342$, $p < .05$). The first hypothesis which states that “exposure to intimate partner violence will negatively and significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students” is hereby accepted.

From the table above, findings showed that gender significantly predicted academic performance with ($\beta = .270$, $p < .05$). This implies that females which were coded 2 have more tendencies to academic performance than male coded 1. Based on findings, the second hypothesis which states that “Gender will significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students” is accepted. Also, the results showed that exposure to intimate partner violence and gender jointly predicted academic performance ($F = 2.119$, Adjusted $R^2 = .245$, $p < .001$) as it can account for 65.5% of the variance observed in the Academic performance of the respondents.

Summary of the Findings

Based on the findings above, the following summary is made:

1. Exposure to intimate partner violence negatively and significantly predicted the academic performance of adolescent students at ($\beta = -.342$, $p < .05$).

2. Gender significantly predicted the academic performance of adolescent students at ($\beta=.270$, $p<.05$).
3. Exposure to intimate partner violence and gender jointly predicted the academic performance of adolescent students at ($F=2,119$, Adjusted $R^2=.245$, $p<.001$).

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of intimate partner violence and gender on academic performance of adolescent students in Awka south LGA. Three hypotheses were tested.

The study revealed that hypothesis one which stated that exposure to intimate partner violence will negatively and significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students was accepted. This implies that adolescents exposed to such violence can face greater challenges in managing their emotions and academic responsibilities potentially leading to lower grades, decreased attendance and academic underachievement. This finding is in line with the study of Arias et al., (2017) which examined the effect of Intimate partner violence on the academic performance of adolescent with a sample of 516 adolescents from an urban high school in the US. The researchers found that adolescents who had experienced IPV performed worse academically than those who had not. The study's findings supported the hypothesis that experiencing IPV has a negative effect on academic performance. It is also in support of a study by Brewer et al. (2019), which examined intimate partner violence and academic performance: the role of physical, mental, behavioral, and financial health on undergraduates. The scholars examined if past-year IPV victimization was associated with an increase in students' self-perception of health interfering with academic performance. This demonstrates that IPV has a spiral effect, such that IPV's impact is perceived by students as detrimental to their academics.

Theoretically, this study is in line with the conflict theory, developed by Marx in the mid-19th century. The theory provides a lens through which to understand intimate partner violence (IPV) and its impact on the academic performance of adolescent students. According to this theory, IPV can be viewed as a manifestation of power imbalances within intimate relationships, often stemming from broader societal inequalities. Adolescents who witness or experience IPV in their homes often face numerous challenges that can negatively impact their academic performance. The stress and trauma associated with living in a violent environment can lead to difficulties concentrating, learning, and retaining information. Moreover, adolescents may struggle with emotional regulation and social interactions, which can further hinder their academic progress.

Secondly, the study revealed that the hypothesis two which stated that gender will significantly predict the academic performance of adolescent students was accepted. This shows that females which was coded 2 have more tendency to academic performance than male coded 1. This is consistent with the study of Attah and Ita (2019) on gender as predictor of academic performance among senior secondary school two students in calabar metropolis, cross river state. The result of the analysis showed that female students had a good academic performance than male among senior secondary school students in Calabar metropolis. The findings of the study is also in line with the study of Parajuli (2016) on gender differences in the Academic achievement of Students. The study found significant gender differences in the academic performance of students. The female students were found outperforming their male counterparts. Also, Bularafa (2015) examined the gender difference in Students Academic performance in Colleges of Education in Borno State, Nigeria. The results indicated that significant differences exist between gender and Academic performance in Colleges of Education in Borno State, in favor of female students.

Theoretically, this findings is in support of Social role theory (Eagly and Carli, 2000), it posits that societal expectations and roles associated with gender influence behavior and outcomes. When applying this theory to academic performance, gender roles may contribute to differences in educational experiences and achievement as females are more likely to achieve better than their male counterparts.

Thirdly, the study revealed that the hypothesis three which stated that exposure to intimate partner violence and gender will jointly predict the academic performance of adolescent students was accepted. This implies that students who have experienced intimate partner violence may face additional challenges that impact their academic performance and that gender play a role in how these challenges manifest indicating that female students may be at a greater risk of experiencing IPV and suffering adverse consequences as a result. This findings is line with the study of Swahn and colleagues (2014), which examined the exposure of intimate partner violence and gender differences on adolescent. The sample consisted of 6,516 male students and 5,805 female students. This study found that the prevalence of IPV was higher among female students than male students. Specifically, 21.8% of female students reported experiencing IPV, compared to 12.8% of male students. The study also found that the impact of IPV on academic achievement was slightly stronger for female students than male students. The study focused on high school students in order to examine the impact of IPV on academic achievement during a critical developmental period. The researchers noted that this age range is particularly important because it is a time when many students are making decisions about their future, including decisions about college and career. It is also a time when many students may be experiencing physical and emotional changes related to puberty.

Theoretically, the findings is in support of the Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Bandura (1970), which emphasizes on how adolescents often observe and learn from the behaviours modeled by their parents or caregivers. In households where IPV occurs, adolescents may witness aggressive or violent behaviors, leading to the internalization of such behaviors as acceptable or normal. This can contribute to the development of aggressive coping mechanisms or maladaptive behaviors that interfere with academic performance. The theory recognizes the influence of gender socialization on behavior and development. In many societies, traditional gender roles perpetuate stereotypes and expectations regarding appropriate behaviors for males and females. Adolescents exposed to IPV may internalize gendered expectations related to power, control, and aggression, which can influence their attitudes and behaviors in academic settings. For example, boys may adopt aggressive behaviors as a means of asserting dominance, while girls may internalize feelings of inferiority or passivity, both of which can impact academic performance.

Limitations of the Study

The study suffered from sampling bias as the participants are not representative of the larger population of adolescent students. For example, the study only includes students from Awka south and cannot be generalized to all adolescents. Secondly, the data collected on intimate partner violence were subjected to self-reporting bias. Adolescents may underreport or misrepresent their experiences due to fear of retaliation, stigma, or other social pressures even after the researcher assured them of confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher had a limited time frame in reaching out to other geopolitical zones.

Suggestions for Future studies

Future studies could employ longitudinal research designs to track the impact of intimate partner violence on academic performance over time. Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to examine how patterns of violence exposure, coping mechanisms, and support systems influence academic outcomes longitudinally, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects. Also, future studies should adopt an intersectional approach to examine how multiple dimensions of identity, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, intersect with gender and intimate partner violence to influence academic performance. By considering the intersecting systems of oppression and privilege, researchers can better understand the complexity of adolescents' experiences and tailor interventions accordingly.

By incorporating these suggestions into future research endeavors, scholars can advance our understanding of the complex interplay between intimate partner violence, gender dynamics, and academic performance among adolescent students, ultimately informing evidence-based interventions and policies to support survivors and promote educational equity.

Implications of the Study

According to the findings of this present study, the study has both theoretical, practical, and empirical implications.

Theoretically, the findings of the study would add to the existing body of literature on the effect of intimate partner violence, gender and academic performance covering observed gaps of previous research works. Other researchers will therefore make reference to this research work as they delve into research in similar area in the future.

Practically, the study underscores the need for targeted interventions within schools to address the impact of intimate partner violence on academic performance. Practical strategies may include implementing school-wide prevention programs, providing counseling services, and training educators to recognize and respond to signs of violence. Schools can collaborate with community organizations, such as domestic violence shelters and mental health agencies, to provide comprehensive support services for students affected by intimate partner violence. This may involve establishing referral pathways, coordinating care, and raising awareness within the broader community. The findings of the study can inform the development and implementation of policies aimed at preventing intimate partner violence and supporting survivors. This could include advocating for changes in school policies, legislation to address gender-based violence, and funding for prevention and intervention programs.

Empirically, the study contributes to the empirical literature by providing further evidence of the relationship between intimate partner violence, gender, and academic performance among adolescent students. It adds to existing knowledge by offering insights into the specific mechanisms through which violence impacts educational outcomes. The study also identified specific risk and protective factors that influence the relationship between intimate partner violence, gender, and academic performance. This empirical evidence can inform targeted interventions and guide efforts to mitigate the negative effects of violence on students' educational experiences.

In conclusion, a study on the effect of intimate partner violence and gender on the academic performance of adolescent students has theoretical implications for understanding developmental processes, practical implications for informing interventions and policy, and empirical implications for advancing knowledge and guiding future research efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- **Implement Comprehensive Support Services:** Schools should establish comprehensive support services for students experiencing intimate partner violence, including access to counselling, advocacy, and safety planning. These services should be sensitive to gender dynamics and tailored to address the unique needs of adolescent survivors.
- **Promote Gender-Responsive Education:** Schools should adopt gender-responsive education programs that address stereotypes, promote healthy relationships, and empower students to recognize and challenge gender-based violence. These programs should be integrated into the curriculum and provide opportunities for open dialogue and peer support.
- **Train Educators and Staff:** Educators and school staff should receive training on recognizing the signs of intimate partner violence, responding appropriately to disclosures, and connecting

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students with resources. Training should also emphasize the intersectionality of gender, violence, and academic performance to ensure a holistic approach to supporting students.

- **Strengthen Policies and Protocols:** Schools should review and strengthen policies and protocols related to intimate partner violence, including reporting procedures, confidentiality measures, and disciplinary responses. Clear guidelines should be established to ensure that students feel safe and supported when seeking help.
- **Foster a Safe and Inclusive School Environment:** Schools should foster a safe and inclusive environment where all students feel respected, valued, and supported. This includes implementing anti-bullying initiatives, promoting positive peer relationships, and addressing factors that contribute to a culture of violence and discrimination.
- **Provide Academic Support:** Schools should provide academic support to students affected by intimate partner violence, such as flexible deadlines, tutoring, and access to educational resources. Teachers should be aware of the potential impact of trauma on learning and adjust their instructional approaches accordingly.
- **Engage Parents and Guardians:** Schools should actively engage parents and guardians in efforts to address intimate partner violence and support students' academic success. This may involve providing resources, facilitating communication, and offering opportunities for parental involvement in school activities and decision-making processes.
- **Advocate for Policy Changes:** Schools can advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels to address the root causes of intimate partner violence and promote gender equity. This may include advocating for funding for prevention programs, supporting legislation to strengthen protections for survivors, and collaborating with community organizations to raise awareness and drive change.

By implementing these recommendations, schools can play a vital role in addressing the impact of intimate partner violence and gender dynamics on adolescent students' academic performance, promoting safety, well-being, and educational success for all students.

Conclusion

The summary of the study serves as a pivotal moment to synthesize the research findings, reflect on their significance, and propose avenues for future research and practical applications. The study reaffirms the well-established relationship between intimate partner violence and academic performance among adolescents. It provides empirical evidence demonstrating that exposure to intimate partner violence, whether as a witness or a victim, correlates with lower academic achievement, increased absenteeism, and decreased engagement in school-related activities. Gender emerges as a critical factor influencing the experience and consequences of intimate partner violence on academic performance. The study highlights gender disparities in the prevalence, severity, and reporting of IPV among adolescents, with girls often disproportionately affected. This underscores the importance of considering gender dynamics in understanding and addressing the impact of violence on educational outcomes.

The study discussed the practical implications of the study's findings for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working with adolescent populations. It underscores the importance of implementing trauma-informed approaches, providing comprehensive support services, and fostering safe and inclusive school environments to mitigate the negative effects of IPV on academic performance. The researcher also acknowledges the limitations inherent in the study, such as time constraints, sampling biases, and the complexity of measuring intimate partner violence. It also identifies areas for future research, including the need for longitudinal studies, qualitative inquiries, intersectional analyses, and evaluations of intervention strategies.

Lastly, the study on the effect of intimate partner violence and gender on the academic performance of adolescent students encapsulates the significance of the research findings, their implications for practice and policy, and the directions for future inquiry. It serves as a call to action for stakeholders to prioritize the well-being and educational success of adolescents affected by IPV, while also advancing knowledge and understanding in the field.

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