

The Challenges of Muslim Parents in Rearing Digital Native Children

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Abstract. Parenting plays an essential role in forming children's character in the family. As the religion of mercy, Islam has principles that Muslim parents can refer to in bringing up their children. In today's changing world, Muslim parents face numerous challenges in childrearing, especially with digital native children -- those who grow up surrounded by technological advancements, particularly the internet, which has become integral to their lives. The current study uses a case study design, which involved four parents as informants to answer question on the challenges from their experience, that they face in raising their digital native children. The study findings show some emerging themes and sub themes of challenges in raising digital native generation faced by Muslim parents, which can be classified into three categories, namely: challenges originating from the responsibility as Muslim parents, challenges from the characteristics of the digital native children, and challenges from the characteristics of the technology and the media.

Keywords: digital native, parenting, Muslim parents

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Today's technology and science have increased dramatically as innovations are being carried out all over the world. Technology that was originally developed to increase the productivity of companies and industries is now being optimized to support the ease of human activities. Discussion about changes driven by technology at least portray those who agree with the widespread use of technology to facilitate human activities, including learning activities and conversely, those who are concerned and aware that the expansion of the use of technology will have an impact that is not easy to control (Livingstone, 2014; Zulaifah, Qudsyi, Rumiani, and Wahyuningsih, 2019). Technology has penetrated most areas of human life and contributed to changing patterns of human behavior in everyday life. This change has undoubtedly affected various groups, including the family as the smallest social unit within a society.

With the continuing changes and development in technology, children are one of the groups who are significantly affected. There is one term that refers to children who grow up surrounded by technological advancement, including the internet, that the new technology has essentially become a part of their life, namely digital native (Prensky, 2001). With easy access to all different kinds of information from around the world, the digital native is known to show unique characteristics such as: independent, firm, and expressive (Williams and Page, 2011); and innovative, curious, and are learners (Suharjo and Harianto, 2019). On the other hand, Rusdiyani (2016) stated that digital natives are at risk of having problems with self-identity as they can easily adopt values and lifestyles that are not always in concordance with the values of the society in which they live, the culture and their immediate surroundings. Beside giving positive effect, the presence of the internet technology could easily advance

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the erosion of their cultural (and religious values), which otherwise should guide them to the future of their society.

The data from the Ministry of Education of Indonesia show that 30% of the Indonesian population are children of this Digital Native who actively access the internet. As a result, these children are at risk of facing cyberbullying, hoaxes, pornography, interacting with strangers online, and facing data security issues (Kemdikbud, 2021). In 2018, The Ministry of Information of Indonesia revealed that 65.34% of individual internet users are in the age range of 9-19 years old, that is they belong to the age category of children and late adolescence. An online study done by Zulaifah, et al (2019) tracked the digital news on crimes that are triggered by internet access from 2010 to 2017. It revealed that the negative consequences of internet access would qualify as problematic internet usage and could be categorized as crimes triggered by internet access, which include Cyberbully, kidnapped- rape after social media contact, and pedophilia (children become the victims of sexual misconduct by adults) through internet access, and game addiction. A few cases met the criteria of extraordinary crime that involve a murder of a girl in Bengkulu, after being raped by a gang of boys who intensively accessed porn through the internet. Another case was a murder perpetrated by an 18 years old young man towards a high school girl who made contact through Facebook and was raped after dating. It has become more important than ever that families (especially parents) should protect their children from the problematic use of the internet.

So strong is the influence of the internet and the need to formulate children's digital rights (Livingstone, 2014) for this digital native generation. It is then important to bring this discussion to the context of the family, the smallest social institution where the next generation grows. Family is the first and the main educational institution for children. It is at the hand of the parents to make sure that children receive the love that they need and that there are ties in the family where children could feel safe and comfortable. It is from the family that children learn and grow to become functioning individuals in their life and to learn to earn their success in this world and in the Hereafter. Parents, as the head of the families, are the number one educator for their children, who teach them about akhlaq (character or conducts that are rooted in values), and the rights and wrongs in life.

In conventional Psychology, parenting has been understood as the approaches that parents use in bringing up their children. It involves not only educating but also balancing and monitoring of the environment in which the children live and interact with others. The environment includes physical and social environments as well as education. Parenting also involves creating harmonious communication. Controlling children's behavior and setting up moral standards that need to be followed by the children (Hurlock, 1988).

In Islamic tradition, Muslims see Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a role model in all aspects of life, including in the process of educating children. There are many methods of parenting that were exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that can be found in the hadiths, such as the treatment towards children, and the interaction of the Prophet PBUH with his children. One of the Islamic parenting principle is that: when children are God conscious and obedient in following what Allah expects of them, all other things in their life will become right, following their righteousness in their excellence conducts (akhlaq). Thus, Islamic parenting is a way to lead them to the path of righteousness, excellent conducts, obedience (Taat), and to have a perspective that their life in the world will be

temporarily and there will be the hereafter (Akhirah) that is everlasting, where they will be reunited as a family in Jannah (heaven).

Currently in Indonesia, educating Muslim children in ways that follow the examples of the prophet (PBUH) as prescribed in Islam is often referred to as Prophetic Parenting. This is basically a parenting practices that is based on Islamic principles stated in the Qur'an and hadith and is oriented towards the way Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) raised his children (Suwaid, 2010). The application of the principles of Islamic parenting can be summarized into important dimensions that need to be seriously taken into account, namely: giving children a good role model, giving advice to children at the right time, being fair in providing for children, fulfilling children's rights, praying for the good of their children, and helping the children in performing their obedience towards the religion). In the current article the parenting practices is understood as parenting from Islamic teachings, that is based on the Quran and the traditions of prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The term Islamic parenting or parenting based on Islamic principles are used interchangeably to refers to parents who practice the principles.

A hadith narrated by Muhammad bin Ajlan from Al-Qa'qa bin Hakim from Abu Salih from Abu Hurairah stated: Rasulullah (PBUH) said "Indeed I was sent to this earth to perfect human characters" (Ahmad, Baihaqi, and Malik), and Allah SWT says in surah Al-Ahzab verse 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

which means "*Indeed, the Messenger of Allah is a good role model for you (namely) for those who hope for the (grace) from Allah and (the arrival of) the Day of Judgment and he is in a lot of remembrance of Allah*"

Based on the hadith and the verse from the Quran above, it is explained that Rasulullah (PBUH) as the representative chosen by Allah for mankind is to be a role model, the best figure in the world and serve as the standard for perfecting human morality. This includes a role model on how to educate or raise children properly. The teachings of Rasulullah (PBUH) in raising children have been taught for a long time, so for Muslims they become the reference, especially in applying parenting to children.

With the complexity of the environmental context of today, raising the digital native certainly poses various challenges. This study aims to explore and discuss the various challenges faced by Muslim parents in raising their digital native children.

Research Question

Being Muslim parents that adhere to the principles of Islam in rearing their children, we are interested in knowing the challenges of the Muslim parents in raising their children, who are born and live in the context of information technology advancement known as the digital native. The current study aims to explore the following research question: What are the parenting challenges and dynamics in dealing with digital native children among Muslim parents?"

Method

Research Design

This research was conducted using a qualitative method with a case study design. The informants were four Muslim parents who applied Islamic parenting to their digital native children (born during or

after the year 2000). All interviewed subjects experienced challenges in applying parenting as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The research uses a case study design to explore challenging points from the research questions. When such challenges are identified they can be used to understand the context and to develop strategies for parents in the application of Islamic parenting (based on prophetic tradition) to the digital native generation.

Procedures

Data collection was carried out by interviewing the informants. We prepared research instruments in the form of written questions in accordance with the research objectives. Informed consents were obtained before the interviews were conducted in regards with their voluntary participation, exploration of their experience and permission to record the entire interview process. The interview questions that were asked to the study subjects were: 1). What kind of challenges do you face in carrying out parenting as Muslim parents for your children who belong to the digital native generation?; 2) Are there any concerns for your children regarding technology and the internet which are currently showing stronger influence in their life?; 3) What are your hopes for your children in facing a world with increasing dependence on information technology?

Data Analysis Method

The data obtained from the interview were analyzed using data reduction techniques. According to Stake (Creswell, 2007), data analysis and interpretation carried out in case study research has four stages. The first stage is to collect categories (categorical aggregation), namely the process of finding sentences with relevant content to the research questions. The second step is direct interpretation, namely the process of extracting meaning from the categories that have been made so that the information obtained is more meaningful. The third step is to form a pattern by looking for two or more categories that have equivalent meanings. The final step is to develop naturalistic generalizations, namely generalizations with the aim that other researchers can learn from the research they have done so that they can be applied to the wider community or further research.

Findings

The findings from a series of interviews show several emerging themes that represent challenges experienced by parents who apply prophetic parenting to their digital native children. These challenges can be categorized into three aspects based on the source of the challenges, namely challenges originating from Muslims parental responsibilities, challenges originating from the characters of digital native children, and challenges originating from the technology and media.

4.1. Challenges Originating from Muslim parental responsibilities:

The existence of a generational gap between parents and digital native children is known to have a significant role in the challenges they face. Challenges originating from the task as Muslim parents are also influenced by the dynamics of the parents' personal lives, for example, the condition of both parents working or one of them working (that is dual or single career parents). The forms of challenges originating from the parents' responsibilities can be described as follows:

4.1.1. Consistency and Continuity in Guiding the Children

The consistency and continuity of parents in reminding and guiding their children's behavior are considered as something important to do and can be categorized as a challenge that is commonly felt. Muslim Parents need to be consistent and continued in reminding of Islamic values towards their children. This includes reminding the children to be wise in using technology and the internet.

"In the end, it really becomes exhausting, so it's tiring because you have to remind them every time, every day to refrain from being tempted by habits of postponing what needs to be done when opening the internet." (Parent A)

"One of the things that is mandatory or important is that parents give advice to pray, wake up children for worship every day, but sometimes children wake up, sometimes they don't so that is a challenge in itself. Yes, children don't like it, but I have to keep reminding them, yes, it's tiring, but there's a reason for that." (Parent A)

"Actually, right now, gadgets are a necessity, right? So how can the child be selective in choosing information? Meanwhile, what I can do is to remind them that when they have finished dealing with gadgets, the gadgets can be stored away. So I was so fierce that I said to them "your father is not pleased (Radhiy) not for a second when the facilities in this house are being used to disobey Allah." (Parent A)

"So I keep reminding them more, even though I often grumble, like when coming home from school, instead of taking a shower right away, they look for the cell phone first, for example." (Parent B)

"Social media gives lots of challenges, for example, they see the lifestyle of public figures that is not quite appropriate, so they want to imitate and so on, so that becomes a challenge, even though I have often said that what you see must be sorted out, which is good and which is bad. The principle is that -what is ugly is something that Allah doesn't like- so don't look for something that Allah doesn't like." (Parent B)

"... but indeed I have often given messages that you should not access something that Allah does not like." (Parent B)

"If we go back to those dimensions of the challenges, the first challenge is consistency. The persistence in setting a good example..." (Parent D)

"... and also the challenge is educating children about the dangers of excessive smartphone access." (Parent D).

4.1.2. *Lack of Supervision/Monitoring and Involvement*

The time that parents spend with their children is a valuable opportunity to interact, impart Islamic values, and provide education. However, working parents often have limited time to spend with their children, resulting in reduced interaction and limited parental supervision and control.

"I, myself, am still not capable of providing intensive companionship to my children. My husband and I both work all day, so I cannot fully accompany them in the process of parenting and education." (Parent B)

"There is not a lack of direct assistance, but rather a lack of intensive direct monitoring. Keeping an eye on them tends to happen only when I am with the children, such as in the morning before they go to school and in the afternoon until bedtime." (Parent B)

"Another challenge in raising digital native children is the issue of supervision, right? Although I have set limits on the amount of time they can spend on their cellphones, there are times when I am not able to monitor them closely." (Parent D)

The variety of content that is readily available to children through existing technologies present challenge for parents in filtering and monitoring them.

"I feel challenged when it comes to controlling access to certain programs." (Parent C)

"Since my child uses my account, I can check the viewing history and try to monitor their stories as much as possible. I check it and if I find something, I immediately ask, 'What is this?' My child usually replies, 'Just a game.' They claim it's just a gaming video, but then I tell them, 'You're not allowed to watch this anymore.'" (Parent C)

"Oh, like this content is not allowed to be watched. From now on, you and your younger sibling will only watch the subscribed channels. We have determined what is and is not allowed, and nothing beyond the subscribed content." (Parent C)

4.1.3. *Responding Appropriately towards Children's Inappropriate Behavior*

When children accidentally encounter inappropriate content, parents must maintain composure and refrain from displaying emotions or feelings of shock. That enables them to effectively and positively guide their children.

"Parents should remain calm when faced with any situation, and it should be managed appropriately." (Parent C)

"Perhaps I reacted emotionally yesterday, but it shouldn't have been like that, right? Because when we react emotionally, the child becomes confused and may even deny it. I'm afraid that if we don't handle it properly, they might refuse to talk to us tomorrow."
(Parent C)

4.2. Challenges Derived from the Characteristics of Digital Native Children

Technology advancement sets a context in which digital natives are born and raised. It determines the things they are exposed to, the learning process they go through, and the activity they are engaged in for much of their time. This could possibly shape their habits, their liking and inclination, or the characteristics of the new generation, as parents describe in the following sub theme:

4.2.1. Children resist rules and restrictions

With children's engagement on technology and the internet, they become exposed to the outside world and all the information it holds. Consequently, children develop a critical mindset and begin to question the reasons behind the prohibitions and instructions given by their parents.

"...especially in today's digital age, children tend to resist being restricted." (Parent A).

"... children find it difficult to understand the danger (of the virtual world), like... it's fun, how can it become dangerous? So, it becomes a challenge of its own - how to get them to understand." (Parent D).

"... it's very easy for them to imitate, to copy, to listen and to model things they access on the internet from social media like Instagram, TikTok and Youtube that have reel function. That becomes a challenge because children get attracted to them." (Parent B).

4.3. Challenges Derived from the Technology and Media

Parents and their children today have their differences in relationship with information technology and the internet. The technology however is something that the digital natives are exposed to early in their life, meanwhile for the parents this is something new that they have to catch up with. In terms of the information, the online media are much more open and are easily accessible by all, that information filtering is needed both in the direct technology usage, or in the topics they bring about in their communication. These narration from the parents are grouped in the following sub themes:

4.3.1. Contents that are not aligned with Islamic Values

Content related to violence, sensitive broadcasts, and information material inconsistent with Islamic values is increasingly prevalent on social media and the internet, making it easily accessible to children. Moreover, at times, the content that surfaces cannot be fully controlled.

"For example, yesterday there was an accident when I was about to open something like that, at first it was just a game, a game but in video form. Then suddenly, the game leads to something inappropriate, it's a bit suggestive but in a cartoon animation style" (Parent C)

"So, when they access YouTube, for example, our intention is for them to watch cartoons, yes, cartoons, and we hope there are no dirty words, nothing inappropriate, but in reality, children's cartoons nowadays also contain dirty words " (Parent C)

"Sometimes the content is not as wholesome as we expect. Sometimes Diva shows are good, although at times there are phrases like 'ah, you're a naughty child,' and for example, in Spongebob, there are expressions like 'I'm an idiot, I'm an idiot,' which can have a psychological impact on children if heard or seen repeatedly " (Parent C)

4.3.2. Lack of Parental Insight about Gadgets/ IT

Generational differences between children and parents certainly have an impact in terms of knowledge of technology and the internet. Parents who are not a digital native generation need the adjustments and the learning process so they can understand the good use and convenience of the internet and to supervise the use of the technology among their children.

"Both the mother and father are not digital natives. So, it is clear that both of us need adjustments because we are often left behind, so we can only trust our children." (Parent A).

"I don't have the skills yet, for example, how to blacklist YouTube for websites that are not appropriate for access, now to be honest I don't understand how to do it. So, it's fine for now to control it through verbal reminding "I just remind you, I advise every time they access the internet." (Parent B).

Discussion

The purpose of this research is to examine and understand in depth the challenges faced by parents who apply Islamic principle in parenting to children born and raised alongside digital technology, commonly known as digital natives. The research findings highlight various challenges experienced by parents when raising their children in the digital era. These challenges can be classified into three main themes, each with sub themes emerging from their experiences, namely: challenges originating from the responsibility as Muslim parents, challenges stemming from the characteristics of the digital native children, and challenges arising from the technology used and the media.

Challenges originating from Muslim parental responsibility were reported as occurring in various forms, including: (1) Maintaining consistency and continuity in guiding the children; (2) Lack

of Supervision/Monitoring and Involvement; (3) Responding Appropriately towards Children's Inappropriate Behavior.

The consistency and continuity of parents in guiding children are considered significant factors that can be categorized as the most common challenge in applying Islamic parenting to digital native children. In this context, parents engage in an educational process focused on imparting Islamic values and teaching children how to use technology and the internet wisely. The consistency and continuity demonstrated by parents in educating their children is aligned with the principles of parenting, which involve advising and guiding their obedience to Allah/God. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

"Do good deeds properly, sincerely, and moderately. Always adopt a middle, moderate, regular, and acceptable course whereby you will reach your target (of paradise)" (Narrated by Bukhari).

This hadith emphasizes that individuals who consistently perform good deeds, even if they are small, are greatly loved by Allah SWT. Similarly, parents exhibit this behavior by continually reminding their children to follow the right path. Thus, parenting their digital native children is seen as not easy, yet parents remain guiding their children and not giving up when they think of the purpose of why they have to do this.

Another challenge faced by parents is the limited amount of time they can spend with their children. Spending time with children is a valuable opportunity for parents to connect with them and to provide education. Desiningrum et al. (2023) explained that the presence of affiliation, two-way communication, and compassionate relationships within the context of parenting has a significant impact on the well-being of both children and parents. However, due to work demands, many parents experience a shortage of quality time/ involvement with their children. Accompanying children is one of the rights that parents must fulfill according to Islamic parenting. Therefore, the inability to allocate sufficient time for children becomes a challenge in implementing one of the principles of parenting, as described by Suwaid (2010), which is fulfilling children's rights. The absence or scarcity of time to accompany children opens the door for them to access information more independently. Previous studies have shown that parental involvement, such as providing guidance and engaging in internet activities together, is associated with an increased frequency of accessing educational websites (Jung Lee & Gil Chae, 2007), yet these become challenges for the parent.

Furthermore, the challenge that arises from parents' responsibility is that they must be able to filter and monitor the content consumed by their children, so they can steer clear of contents that are not favored by Allah SWT. Parents can inform their children about things that are prohibited by Allah SWT, enabling them to independently filter their shows and refrain from engaging in unfavourable acts. That is in line with the following Prophet Muhammad's hadist:

"Teach them to obey Allah, fear disobedience to Him, and command your children to obey His commandments and stay away from His prohibitions. That will safeguard both them and you from the fire of Hell." (Narrated by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Al-Mundzir)

Another challenge faced by parents is the need to respond appropriately towards Children's inappropriate Behavior, that is to remain wise and composed when their children engage in inappropriate behavior related to internet access. When parents encounter situations in which their children unintentionally act in ways that escalate parental emotions, parents must remain calm and avoid displaying anger in front of their children. Maintaining composure and controlling one's anger hold many virtues, especially for parents. They can learn to restrain themselves until they become accustomed to refraining from expressing their desires through improper actions. Allah SWT has praised individuals who can control their anger in His words (Q.S Ali-'Imran: 134) as follow:

"And those who restrain their anger and pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good."

Challenges in applying Islamic parenting to the digital native generation arise not only from parents but also from the characteristics of digital native children. One of these characteristics is their resistance to being prohibited. Children who dislike restrictions, challenge orders and prohibitions, and are expressive, pose a challenge for parents in establishing appropriate rules and principles. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Zulaifah et.al (2019), which highlights that children's dispositional factors also play a role in determining the effectiveness of strategies to control internet access. In this context, effective communication becomes essential in conveying important teachings to children so that they can be well-received. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

"Respect your children and teach them good manners." This hadith was narrated by Imam Ibn Majah from a companion of Anas bin Malik (RA).

The findings of this study are consistent with past research findings that specify the unique characteristics of digital natives, highlighting their distinctive attributes in comparison with earlier generations. They showed an elevated degree of proficiency in their utilization of the internet, mobile phones, and other technology devices. It is common for digital natives to actively interact with technology devices and exhibit competence in navigating complex technological interfaces (Prensky, 2001). It is also a common practice among individuals classified as digital natives to communicate through the utilization of visual images, such as photographs or videos (Berk, 2006). Additionally, they exhibit a tendency to prioritize the use of the most efficient techniques accessible in order to fulfill their demands (Teo et al., 2014) and are able to multitask through the utilization of the internet and technology (Helsper, 2010).

Challenges also arise from technology and the media, namely 1). The spread of inappropriate content not in line with Islamic Values. Certain social media platforms lack features to filter inappropriate content, thereby inadvertently exposing children to materials that contradict Islamic teachings. Furthermore, content that was initially deemed beneficial and educational did not fully meet parental expectations. Many instances contained inappropriate language and imagery, such as references to pornography and blasphemous words. 2). Lacking knowledge about gadgets and the internet. The lack of parental knowledge about the latest technology and the internet is another significant challenge faced by parents in raising digital native children. The majority of digital native

parents belong to the digital immigrant generation, born between 1965 and 1982 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). As adults, they had to adapt to technology, requiring them to enhance their proficiency in using technology and the internet. However, expertise in these areas is crucial for parents responsible for raising children in the digital age, as highlighted by Ramadani et al. (2021) in their study. The lack of parental knowledge about technology and the internet, poses limitations in effectively supervising their children's technology usage. This is in line with the study findings of Zulaifah et.al (2019), who identified parents' internet savviness, knowledge, and skills as one of the challenges in exerting effective control over online information access within families. In the context of implementing Islamic parenting, this relates to parents' inability to set an example for their children by demonstrating safe and responsible use of technology and the internet. This aspect connects to one of the dimensions of parenting based on the prophetic tradition of Rasulullah Muhammad (PBUH) proposed by Suwaid (2010), which is being a positive role model for children. Furthermore, parents' limited understanding of gadget and social media developments hinders their ability to educate their children in the current era. Umar bin Khattab (RA), the second Caliph said:

"Teach your children according to their time, for they live in their time, not yours. Indeed, they were created for their time, while you were created for your time."

Based on such message, Islam places faith education as a crucial matter. Allah emphasizes in the verse that Prophet Jacob (PBUH) was diligent in imparting faith to his children until they reached adulthood. Similarly, the above verse explains that parents have a primary obligation to consistently impart guidance and remind their children to worship Allah SWT and instill faith in their hearts. This way, parents can pass on the faith to their children, enabling them to continue their life journey on the path of Allah SWT.

Based on the presented information, the complexity of challenges faced by parents in implementing Islamic parenting for digital native children becomes evident. Several challenges have been successfully addressed, such as maintaining consistency and continuity in guiding children, which parents have managed to uphold despite various obstacles. Additionally, content filtering and monitoring have been implemented by monitoring children's viewing history and selectively subscribing to YouTube channels for children.

However, there are still unresolved challenges. One of these challenges pertains to spending quality time with children, where parents must engage them in activities that divert their attention away from gadgets. Another challenge is parents' lack of insight into gadgets and the internet due to the significant generational gap, necessitating parents to adapt and keep up with the latest updates, which requires substantial time and effort.

Conclusion

In summary, the challenges faced by Muslim parents in rearing their digital native children stem from three sources: parental responsibility, children's characters, and technology and media that offer uncontrollable contents. These challenges are interrelated and create complex conditions for parents when it comes to carrying out Islamic parenting to guide their children in this internet era. Based on the various challenges encountered, some have been successfully addressed with solutions, while

others still require more attention from parents to establish effective parenting for children of the digital native generation. The knowledge acquired from the current study regarding these challenges is expected to serve as learning information and ideas for building foundation in enhancing the quality of parenting implementation among Muslim parents today and in the future.

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