

Factors influencing cooperative performance on youth development in multi-purpose cooperative in Awka south Anambra State

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Abstract: The study assessed the factors influencing cooperative performance on youth development in Awka South, Anambra State, with specific objectives to investigate the relationship between youth participation and skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South, determine the relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth in these cooperative societies, and examine the relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The study population was made up of 99 registered cooperative societies from which a sample of 268 members were selected. The primary data for the study were collected from the questionnaire administered on the respondents. The analyses of data was done using descriptive statistics tools, frequency distribution tables, and percentages to measure the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Pearson correlation was used in testing the hypotheses of the study. The findings revealed that: there is a significant positive relationship between youth participation and skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South ($r = 0.593$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$); there is a significant positive relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth in cooperative societies in Awka South ($r = 0.743$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$); there is a significant positive relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South ($r = 0.615$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$). In conclusion, enhancing youth participation, building management competence, and implementing strategic planning within cooperative societies are essential steps towards fostering skill development, improving livelihoods, and ensuring sustainable economic growth for the youth. Thus, the study recommends that cooperative societies in Awka South should actively engage youth members in decision-making processes and cooperative activities to enhance their skill development.

Keywords: Cooperative Performance, Youth Development, Youth Participation and Skill Development Cooperative Societies

1.0 Introduction

The history of cooperative societies in Nigeria is significantly marked by the pioneering efforts of individuals such as C. F. Strickland, Major F. G. Haig, Captain W. J. W. Chessman, Captain A. G. C. Stainforth, Chief Akinpelu Obiasesan, O. Bateye, J. U. Eka (MBE), Chief A. A. Laditan, and R. M. Leslie, the first registrar of cooperative societies in the Eastern region (Odey, 2009). Cooperatives play a crucial role in economic development by serving both their members and the wider community (FAO, 2013). They allow individuals with limited resources to unite and pursue common economic goals. Lecoutere (2017) notes that cooperatives are often initiated by unemployed individuals with low skill levels and no prior business experience, particularly among the youth. This cooperative model provides young people with opportunities to create employment, align with their values, and participate as member-owners where their voices are valued (ICA, 2012). Cooperatives offer a "work space" that can improve livelihoods through values-driven principles, providing a training ground for organizational skills, social solidarity, and democratic processes (Felstead et al., 2009). They present a significant opportunity for youth development by promoting livelihoods and providing a platform for acquiring essential skills (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Previous studies indicate that the success or failure of cooperatives is primarily influenced by internal factors (Oliveira Junior & Wander, 2021), which can be assessed through performance metrics. Cooperative performance encompasses economic, social, and sustainability aspects (Co-operatives UK, 2013), and involves various strategies for monitoring, assessment, and evaluation. This study aims to use a unique reference to guide the monitoring and measurement of cooperative performance in youth development within Awka South, Anambra State.

The term "youth" is commonly used to refer to young people, typically defined as individuals between the ages of 14 to 35 years in many African countries (World Bank, 2007; National Youth Development Policy, 2009-2014). In Nigeria, the 2019 National Youth Policy defines youth as those aged 15 to 29 years, explaining why the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is limited to graduates under 30 (Unini, 2020). The vitality and responsible conduct of youth are crucial for national development (FGN, 2019). Providing opportunities for youth to develop their creative energies for personal and societal growth is a key aspect of youth development

(NYP, 2014). Youth development is often viewed as a natural process of growing capacity, similar to child or adolescent development, where individuals learn to understand and engage with their environment (Hamilton et al., 2004). Youth are naturally innovative, and their involvement in cooperatives can lead to positive impacts on community responsibility, market dynamics, and economic development. Cooperatives often focus on credit, handicrafts, weaving, animal rearing, poultry, and food preparation, offering valuable opportunities for youth to develop skills and improve their economic prospects (Lecoutere, 2017).

Cooperatives are principle-based organizations that prioritize people over profit (ILO, 2012). The cooperative approach to youth development aims to enable young people to actively engage with others in solving their problems and addressing their needs through cooperative efforts. However, many youths are often disengaged from cooperative activities due to a lack of interest. Okafor et al. (2023) highlight that younger generations often perceive the cooperative movement as outdated and inflexible, lacking an understanding of its potential benefits for economic development. Despite numerous studies exploring strategies to improve livelihoods (Muchopa, 2011; Chikaine et al., 2011), many youths still face high unemployment, inactivity, and precarious work conditions. Issues such as limited access to education, inadequate healthcare, and financial services, coupled with insufficient education and training, adversely impact the transition from school to work. Additionally, the lack of financial access for those wishing to start their own businesses remains a significant barrier.

The cooperative system's failure to fulfill its role in fostering self-reliance and independence among young people poses a challenge. Youth inclusion is often viewed as a future concern rather than a present solution. The low quality of leadership and management within cooperatives undermines their ability to offer opportunities for youth, impacting their potential to promote livelihoods, income, and skills development in organizational, social, and democratic areas. The concept of "mutuality," which once drove cooperative efforts, has diminished, affecting social, cultural, and economic awareness among youths and the support available within cooperatives. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the factors influencing cooperative performance in youth development, with a specific focus on Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

1.1 Research Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to assess the factors influencing cooperative performance on youth development in Awka south Anambra state. The specific objective is to:

1. To investigate the relationship between youth participation on skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South.
2. To determine the relationship between management competence on provision of skill development for the youth in cooperative societies in Awka South.
3. To examine the relationship between strategic planning on promoting the livelihoods on income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Concept of cooperative performance

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 2012) defines cooperatives as autonomous associations of individuals who voluntarily unite to fulfill their economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises. These organizations operate on a non-profit basis, aiming to provide essential services to their members. The democratic ethos inherent in cooperatives fosters active participation, enhances ownership, and supports youth empowerment (ILO, 2012). With a focus on sustainability and social responsibility, cooperatives hold the potential to deliver long-term economic benefits both to their members and to society at large. Abdulkarim (2010) notes that where cooperatives are effectively implemented, they significantly benefit their members. Despite their potential, cooperatives alone may not resolve all employment challenges; they must collaborate with other stakeholders and advocate for broader societal and economic changes. Cooperatives are ideally positioned to address inequalities and promote inclusive economic development due to their democratic, member-owned, and value-based nature. The internationally accepted cooperative values of equality and equity ensure that all members have equal voting rights and equitable access to products, services, and profits, aligning with the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to "leave no one behind" (ICA, 2021). However, measuring cooperative performance is challenging as their primary goal often involves securing the best possible prices for members' products (Kyriakopoulos et al., 2004). Despite numerous personal opinions and some research on cooperative performance, empirical studies are lacking.

2.2 Concept of Youth Development

Youth are pivotal in shaping the future of their countries, as their actions and inactions can significantly influence national development (Uba & Chiwuike, 2022). Many young people lack sufficient education and skills for employability, which has led political elites to exploit them for political enforcements, violence, and other detrimental activities (Uba & Chiwuike, 2022). There is no universal definition of youth; many nations define it based on culturally specific social processes transitioning from childhood to adulthood. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy (2019) defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 29, which explains why the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) targets graduates under 30 (Unini, 2020). This definition underscores the need for preparation and training of youths to prevent future negative outcomes.

Nigerian youths face numerous challenges, including lack of education and skills, which can only be addressed through curiosity, proper education, innovation, and an entrepreneurial mindset (Aja & Adali, 2013). Youth development and empowerment are crucial for building human capital, enabling young people to escape poverty and lead fulfilling lives (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010). Empowerment encourages youths to take control of their lives, transforming them into social change agents and strategic partners, thereby influencing development policies and programs (Charles & Jameson-Charles, 2014). Empowering youth helps them rise out of poverty and contribute meaningfully to national development (Emeh, 2012).

2.3 Synergy Between Cooperative Performance and Youth Development

The cooperative model, with its core values and principles, provides a theoretical framework for addressing youth challenges. The ICA (2012) defines a cooperative as an autonomous association of individuals who voluntarily join together to meet their common needs through a democratically controlled enterprise. Cooperatives can introduce young people to enterprise management while equipping them with necessary business skills. Novkovic (2020) views cooperatives as vehicles for addressing the social and economic needs of youth, offering opportunities for financial pooling, knowledge exchange, and self-employment (ICA, 2021).

To assess how cooperatives contribute to youth development, performance measurement is crucial (Aini et al., 2012). Performance metrics help in strategic planning, member participation, and management competence, which are vital for cooperative success (Kakhaki et al., 2009; Unal et al., 2009; Gholifar & Baniyadi, 2013; Oliveira Junior & Wander, 2021). Cooperatives should enhance youth participation by fostering democracy, autonomy, and community involvement, creating opportunities for skill development, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking since entrepreneurial thinking is linked with poverty alleviation (Meshack, Orji & Nworie, 2022). These cooperatives can support youth by generating jobs, improving working conditions, and providing access to capital.

The high unemployment rate among youth often results from inadequate professional experience, skill development, poor job quality, and lack of resources. Chikaire (2011) emphasizes the need for stable livelihoods and equal opportunities to improve youth income. Government and non-governmental programs, like the "One Youth, Two Skills Initiative" in Anambra State, are steps towards enhancing youth livelihoods (Vanguard, 2023). Cooperatives can play a role by offering microfinance, facilitating small and medium-scale enterprises, and monitoring the use of funds to ensure proper implementation and support.

The effectiveness of cooperative management—measured by its responsiveness, accountability, and overall performance—is crucial for supporting youth development. Competence in cooperative management, encompassing knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes, directly impacts performance (Gordon, 2012). Previous studies confirm that skill development positively affects cooperative performance, with a focus on practical, short-term interventions rather than lengthy, costly training (ILO, 2020). Effective cooperatives should provide resources, increase community awareness, and ensure market access, adhering to the principle of "one member, one vote" (International Co-operative Alliance, 2020).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Theory of Positive Youth Development

This study is grounded in Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory, which emerged in the 1990s and emphasizes that fundamental psychological conditions are crucial for youth well-being. According to Lerner (2009), as cited by Abdul-Kadir and Mohd (2021), PYD is a relational developmental systems theory that posits young people have inherent resources that can be nurtured and developed. A key resource in PYD is the social context of youth, including their family, school, and cooperatives. PYD promotes the "5Cs": competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Lerner (2009) describes thriving youth as those who actively cultivate and develop positive attributes. PYD advocates for a strength-based approach rather than a deficit-based approach to youth development.

PYD not only emphasizes the development of individual strengths but also focuses on fostering positive relationships between young people and their social-community resources. This approach suggests that a variety of strengths and a positive identity, including a sense of purpose, are essential for youths to adapt and flourish as they transition to adulthood (e.g., marriage, career). PYD is supported by research indicating that certain "protective factors" or positive influences can help young people succeed and prevent problems.

2.5 Review of Empirical Studies

Okoli (2018) investigated the role of cooperative societies in youth development within Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study aimed to evaluate and describe the profile of cooperative societies, their activities, and their impact on youth development. Data were collected from members of six selected cooperative societies, with primary data obtained through questionnaires administered to 159 members and secondary data sourced from existing literature and documents. Descriptive analysis, including means, percentages, a 5-point Likert scale, chi-square, and z-test, was employed to analyze the data and test two hypotheses. The findings revealed a positive correlation between cooperative activities and youth development, with significant improvements in youth exposure to development activities post-membership. Recommendations were made on enhancing the role of cooperatives in supporting youth development.

Pham (2022) examined the factors affecting the performance of agricultural cooperatives in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta. Using a disproportionate stratified sampling method, the study gathered 308 valid samples from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in various districts and the Management Boards of Agricultural Cooperatives (ACs) in nine provinces. Performance was assessed using five indicators: return on sales (ROS), return on assets (ROA), return on equity (ROE), responsiveness to member needs, and job creation. Multivariate regression analysis identified four factors positively associated with cooperative performance: management competency, contributed capital, membership size, and member participation. The study also highlighted interactions between variables, such as management competency and contributed capital, and recommended that ACs innovate in resource use and optimize support policies and performance evaluation metrics.

Mahazril et al. (2012) explored the impact of strategic planning and member participation on cooperative performance in Kota Setar District, Malaysia. A survey using self-administered questionnaires was distributed to 50 cooperative board members, and data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Descriptive statistics were employed to guide cooperatives in addressing performance deficiencies and achieving the objectives outlined in the National Cooperative Policy 2011-2020.

Haryono et al. (2020) analyzed the enhancement of cooperative management competency to improve members' welfare and business strategies in Malang. This qualitative study utilized direct interviews and questionnaires distributed to 171 cooperative members. Descriptive qualitative analysis revealed that cooperative membership positively influenced welfare indicators, including increased family income and improved health and education. However, the income increase was modest, partly due to rising costs of necessities. The study underscored the effectiveness of cooperative membership in improving overall welfare.

3.0 Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive survey methodology to analyze factors influencing the performance of multi-purpose cooperatives on youth development in Awka South, Anambra State. According to Okeke, Olise, and Eze (2008), survey research involves posing questions, collecting, and analyzing data from a representative sample of the population at a specific point in time to assess the current state of that population regarding one or more variables under investigation.

The research focuses on Awka North Local Government Area, which was established in 1991 and is situated in the Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Nigeria. This area includes towns such as Awba Ofemili, Ugbene, Ebenebe, Achalla (the capital), Urum, Amansea, Amanuke, Isu Aniocha, Mgbakwu, and Ugbenu. Agriculture plays a significant role in the local economy, and residents also engage in fishing in the region's rivers and tributaries (source: Awka North Local Government Area, www.manpower.com.ng, retrieved 2023-10-04).

Out of the 99 registered cooperative societies in Awka North, 8 are multi-purpose cooperatives with a total membership of 268 individuals (Cooperative Department, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Awka, Anambra State). The study population comprises all registered multi-purpose cooperative societies (MPCs) in Awka North Local Government Area.

Table 1: Sample Size from Distribution of Membership Selection from Selected Multipurpose Cooperative Society

S/N	Name of Cooperative	Local Government Area	Town	Membership
1	DeParach Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited	Awka North	Isu Aniocha	14
2	Fruity Seed multipurpose cooperative	Awka North	Mgbakwu	19
3	Peace Mgbakwu Fug Multipurpose	Awka North	Mgbakwu	21
4	Ezeadi Ugbenu FMCS Ltd	Awka North	Ugbenu	32
5	Igwemma Achalla FMSC Ltd	Awka North	Achalla	62
6	Amansea Star FMSC Ltd	Awka North	Amansea	45
7	Ezinauno Eziagu FMCS	Awka North	Achalla	33
8	Country Farmers Mgbakwu FMCS	Awka North	Mgbakwu	45
	Total			268

Source: Ministry of Trade and Commerce Anambra secretariat, cooperative Department

The primary data for the study were collected from the questionnaire administered on the respondents. The analyses of data was done using descriptive statistics tools, frequency distribution tables, and percentages to measure the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Pearson correlation was used in testing the hypotheses of the study.

4.0 Result and Discussion

4.1 Socioeconomic Profile of the respondents Table 2:

Distribution of the respondents Socioeconomic Profiles

Table 2: Distribution of Socio Economic Profile of Members

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25	68	25.3
26-35	97	36.2
36-45	56	20.9
46-55	47	17.5
Gender		
Male	127	47.4
Female	141	52.6
Educational Qualification		
Primary		
Secondary	185	69.0
Tertiary	83	31.0
Cooperative experience (Years)		
0-3	28	10.4
4-6	57	21.3
7-9	86	32.1
Above 10	97	36.2
Occupation:		
Farmer	113	42.2
Civil Servant	28	10.5
Trader	91	34.0

Artisan	23	8.6
Retired	13	4.9

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table revealed that respondents with 36.2% are within the age bracket of 35 years which according to National Youth Development Policy (2009-2014) refers young people as those falling within the ages of 14 to 35 years; with this, the highest respondent fall within the youth age, it also revealed the sex distribution of cooperative society members as result showed that majority of the respondent (56.6%) were male. Also, it was showed in education that all went through primary school but 69% respondent had secondary education, meanwhile most of the respondent at 36.2% have had 10 years of experience as a cooperative member, it also implies that most of the cooperative societies are not new in the field. Finally, 42.2% in terms of occupation respondent are farmers.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

The test of hypotheses was conducted to ascertain the factors influencing cooperative performance on youth development in Awka south Anambra state.

4.2.1 Test of Hypothesis I

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between youth participation and skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South.

Table 4.6 Correlation Result for Hypothesis I

		Skill development in cooperative societies
Youth Participation	Correlation Coefficient	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	268

Source: Field Survey; August 2024

The first hypothesis tested whether there is a significant relationship between youth participation and skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South. The correlation coefficient between youth participation and skill development was found to be **0.593**, with a significance level (p-value) of **0.000**. The positive correlation coefficient indicates a moderate positive relationship, meaning that as youth participation increases, skill development in cooperative societies also tends to improve. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (which stated that there is no significant relationship) is rejected. This implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between youth participation and skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South.

4.2.2 Test of Hypothesis II

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth in cooperative societies in Awka South.

Table 4.7 Correlation Result for Hypothesis II

		Provision of skill development
Management competence	Correlation Coefficient	.743**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	268

Source: Field Survey; August 2024

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth in cooperative societies in Awka South. The correlation coefficient between management competence and the provision of

skill development was found to be **0.743**, with a significance level (p-value) of **0.000**. The strong positive correlation coefficient suggests that higher management competence is strongly associated with better provision of skill development for the youth. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth in cooperative societies in Awka South.

4.2.3 Test of Hypothesis III

H₀: There is no significant relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South.

Table 4.8 Correlation Result for Hypothesis III

		Promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth
Strategic planning	Correlation Coefficient	.615**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	268

Source: Field Survey; August, 2024

The third hypothesis explored the relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South. The correlation coefficient between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income was found to be **0.615**, with a significance level (p-value) of **0.000**. The positive correlation coefficient suggests a moderate positive relationship, meaning that effective strategic planning is associated with improved livelihoods and income for the youth. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The finding that youth participation is positively related to skill development in cooperative societies in Awka South is supported by Okoli (2018), who found a significant positive relationship between the activities of cooperative societies and youth development in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study emphasized that membership in cooperative societies exposed youths to development activities that enhanced their skill sets. This finding aligns with the current study, suggesting that active participation in cooperative activities provides youths with practical learning opportunities, thereby improving their skill development.

The strong positive relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for youth in cooperative societies in Awka South is consistent with the findings of Pham (2022), who identified management competency as a critical factor influencing the performance of agricultural cooperatives in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta. Pham's study highlighted that higher management competence leads to better performance and responsiveness to members' needs, including job generation and skill development. This supports the notion that competent management in cooperative societies is essential for effectively organizing and delivering skill development programs for youth.

The study's finding that strategic planning is significantly related to the promotion of livelihoods and income of youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South is corroborated by Mahazril et al. (2012), who identified strategic planning as a key factor influencing cooperative performance in Malaysia. Their study showed that strategic planning, coupled with member participation, enhances cooperative performance, leading to better outcomes for members, including improved livelihoods. Similarly, Haryono et al. (2020) found that cooperative management competency, closely tied to strategic planning, plays a vital role in increasing members' welfare, which includes their income and overall well-being. These studies collectively support the idea that effective strategic planning within cooperative societies is crucial for promoting the economic empowerment of youth.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Youth development within cooperative societies plays a crucial role in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of young individuals, especially in regions like Awka South, Anambra State. This study explored various factors influencing cooperative

performance on youth development, focusing on the relationships between youth participation, management competence, strategic planning, and their respective impacts on skill development and income promotion among the youth. The findings from the study provide insights into the significant correlations between these variables, helping to explain why cooperative societies can be effective vehicles for youth empowerment. This finding suggests that increased youth participation is significantly associated with enhanced skill development within these cooperative societies. The result can be attributed to the active involvement of youths in cooperative activities, which likely provides them with practical opportunities to learn and apply new skills. Cooperative societies often serve as platforms for peer learning, mentorship, and hands-on training, which collectively contribute to skill acquisition and development among the youth. The statistically significant relationship implies that encouraging greater youth participation in cooperative societies can directly improve the skill sets of young individuals, thereby preparing them for better employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The second finding of the study showed a strong positive relationship between management competence and the provision of skill development for the youth. This result indicates that higher management competence within cooperative societies leads to more effective provision of skill development programs for the youth. The strength of this relationship can be explained by the critical role that competent management plays in organizing, implementing, and sustaining skill development initiatives. Competent management is likely to have better planning and resource allocation abilities, ensuring that skill development programs are well-structured, relevant, and aligned with the needs of the youth. The third finding highlighted a moderate positive relationship between strategic planning and the promotion of livelihoods and income of the youth in cooperative societies in Anambra South. This finding suggests that effective strategic planning is significantly associated with improved livelihoods and income for the youth. By aligning the cooperative's activities with strategic objectives, societies can create more opportunities for the youth to improve their income levels and overall livelihoods. The significant relationship found in this study indicates that cooperative societies with robust strategic planning processes are better positioned to empower the youth economically.

The findings of this study highlight the critical factors that influence the performance of cooperative societies in promoting youth development in Awka South, Anambra State. The significant relationships between youth participation, management competence, strategic planning, and their respective outcomes demonstrate that cooperative societies can be powerful tools for youth empowerment when these factors are effectively managed. In conclusion, enhancing youth participation, building management competence, and implementing strategic planning within cooperative societies are essential steps towards fostering skill development, improving livelihoods, and ensuring sustainable economic growth for the youth. Thus, we recommend that:

- 1) Cooperative societies in Awka South should actively engage youth members in decision-making processes and cooperative activities to enhance their skill development.
- 2) The management boards of cooperative societies in Awka South should prioritize ongoing training and professional development for their managers to ensure that they are equipped to effectively provide skill development opportunities for youth members.
- 3) The Anambra State Cooperative Federation should support cooperative societies in Anambra South by providing resources and guidance on strategic planning, ensuring these societies can better promote the livelihoods and income of their youth members.

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