

A Public Perception Study of The Prevalence of Drug Enterprises in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria

Bashir Aliyu^{1*} ORCID ID: 0009-0006-4230-9198

Christopher U. Ugwuoke²

1. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
2. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

*Email: aliyu.bashir.pg89246@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The proliferation of drug enterprises in the Kano metropolis has reached an alarming proportion with a significant surge in the number of drug shops in recent years. This phenomenon raises concern about the accessibility, misuse and abuse of drugs, especially the diversion of licit drugs to illicit use as well as the potential impact on public health. This study investigated the underlying factors driving the rapid growth of drug enterprises in Kano metropolis. This study is anchored on the Rational Choice theory. The paper uses a mixed-method research design approach, combining quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The research explored the role of economic, social, political, and regulatory factors in contributing to the drug proliferation trend. The major findings of the study suggest that factors such as poverty, lack of effective regulation, and high demand for drugs by youths are key drivers of this ugly situation. The findings of the study will hopefully contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and interventions that could address the challenges posed by the unchecked growth of drug enterprises in Kano metropolis.

Keywords: Crime; Drug abuse; Drug enterprises; Proliferation.

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1. Introduction

Drug abuse is becoming a global trend, representing significant and complex public health issues of global proportion (Akanna & Lucyanna, 2023), whose effects are visible on the social, economic, and mental health of the perpetrators and the community. The routes for the supply of drugs as controlled by the drug enterprises are increasingly compounding, connecting, and intersecting global crises thereby challenging universal well-being. Globally, over 296 million people used drugs in 2021, an increase of 23% above the previous decade (UNODC, 2023). The introduction of prescription drugs with the influence of drug enterprises in Africa, drastically increased the availability and use of psychoactive substances (Adejide 2006). In recent reports, Africa has accounted for more than half of the global quantity of pharmaceutical opioids seized between 2016 and 2020 (World Drug Report (UNODC), 2022).

In the Nigerian context, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Center for Research and Information on Substance Abuse, and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) reported that Nigeria's rate of drug use in 2018 was higher than the 5.3% global average (Owoseye, 2019). According to the UNODC report (2018), "*Drug Use in Nigeria*", the first large-scale, nationwide national drug survey in Nigeria, one in every seven persons (aged 15-64 years) had used a drug in the past year (UNODC, 2018), where Nigerian youths are the significant victims. This according to the source, has been a cause of many criminal offenses such as theft, burglary, sex work, and shoplifting. Younger people are increasingly being held hostage by the danger, and their susceptibility is expanding gradually where youths in Nigeria like many other countries in the world are increasingly developing addiction to psychoactive substances or engaging in drug abuse (Ubale, 2019).

Kano State as one of the epicenters of drug abuse with a 16.0% estimated prevalence of drug use in 2017 in the country (UNODC, 2018), is characterized by an increasing number of drug enterprises. This was attested to by a preliminary survey on the operations of the drug enterprises in Kano. In a survey conducted by the Foreign Commonwealth Department Office tagged FCDO-lafiya in Kano in September 2020, there were 169 pharmaceutical chemists and 6478 patent medicine shops (non-registered). This data excludes wholesalers, distributors, and importers that are mostly patronizing the open drug market (ODM) existing in the state. According to the data from the medicine dealers association (in the ODM), by 2018 there was an estimate of

about 350 drugstores. However, in 2021, there were over 1000 drugstores, which was almost a 300% increase. This is an alarming rate that may be assumed to be exposing the at-risk individuals rendering them more prone to abuse drugs. According to official data from the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN) Kano office, the number of patent medicine vendors registered in 2018 was 259, while in 2019 they registered 580 patent medicine shops (excluding the operators in the ODM), this is almost a 100% increase. Looking at both official and non-official data, the extent of the proliferation of drug enterprises from 2019 through 2020 is comparatively higher when compared to that of 2018. This might assume to guarantee availability and easy access to drugs which could be signaling a threat to the vulnerable and at-risk individuals and the society at large.

Drug enterprises continued to increase in many parts of the world despite the effect on social life and crime (Oshogwe, Aliyu, Hassan and Kabiru, 2022), The trends in Kano are perceived to be making the supply of drugs into the state abound which might ensure the availability of different categories of ethical and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Because availability and easy access to drugs influence youths to fall into drug use (Ubali, 2019), there might be greater anticipation of diversion, misuse, and abusing drugs that are meant for licit use and increase in crime. Arguing in the same vein, Borodo (2005) (cited in Musa, 2012), observed that, the consequences of drugs in our society today, particularly in the Kano metropolis, consist of an increasing number of youths becoming lunatics in the streets, increasing burden on families and Governments, as well as increased cases of crimes and other social ills. In another preliminary investigation in the metropolis, apparently, young individuals are every day involving in different forms of criminality; information from police revealed that, apart from phone snatching that is rampant in the metropolis, women are even been suspected of killing their biological sons and daughters due to the influence of drugs. These consequences might signal a blurred future, and as such, it generates a lot of concern that raised the need to find out the reasons for the increasing spate and growing occurrences of individuals engaging in drug use, especially the teaming youth, who are considered to be the leaders of tomorrow.

It is against the above background, that scholars have identified different factors responsible for the increasing number of drug users, among which are drug availability and easy access. The availability of drugs is identified as one of the risk factors of drug abuse (Ubali, 2019), and also ascribed to the prevalence and proliferation of drug enterprises that are assumed to be the major source of drug supply to the country (Hellandendu and Idakwo, 2012). The prevalence in the number of drug enterprises which is linked to drug availability and easy access, even though left unattended by most researchers on drug use in the Kano metropolis, poses the following questions:

1. Does the community perceive any increase on the number of drug enterprises from 2019-2024?
2. What is the reason for the prevalence?
3. What are the factors responsible?

The above questions clearly underscore a knowledge gap that necessitated this study. The study had the overall objective of identifying the perceived predisposing factors aiding the increase in the number of drug enterprises especially in Kano metropolis. This research is timely especially against the backdrop of increasing drug use and proliferation of drug enterprises. It dwells mostly on the licit drugs obtainable from pharmaceutical manufacturers/importers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers that are diverted to illicit use.

2. Literature Review

Drug enterprise is a controversial concept that is defined in several perspectives, as such there is no unanimously agreed definition of the concept in most disciplines including criminology (Ritter, 2006). United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) in most of its publications, tilted to identify the concept as organized criminal activities involved in the production, distribution, and trafficking of illicit drugs. However, in a much broader perspective, borrowing an economic tune, drug enterprises could be referred to as those entrepreneurs that invest in the drug business including manufacturers, importers, distributors, wholesalers (higher level and street level), pharmaceutical chemists, patent medicine vendors, and hawkers. This is to accommodate both the licit and illicit aspects of the business. Proliferation of drug enterprises thus refers to the rapid increase in the number of drug sellers - i.e. those that make drugs available and easily accessible.

According to UNODC report (2023), between 2010 and 2019, there was about a 22% rise in the global population of drug users with a prediction of about an 11% rise in 2030. The report also predicted rise of 40% in drug users in Africa in 2030. Drug enterprises contribute significantly to this figure being the only source for the societal drug supply. This is an alarming projection. In the research area, drug enterprises control the supply of drugs to the users at all levels. They could be found in almost every nook and cranny, an aspect that makes drugs available and easily accessible. Even though there is the absence of official statistics on drug entrepreneurs, preliminary investigation as stated in the background of the study, from 2018 to 2021, extended to the establishment of the new Coordinated Wholesale Centre, is enough signal indicating the significant rise in the number of drug enterprises. Hence, more research regarding the concept is needed to fill this academic gap, to furnish the field of criminology with adequate data for researchers and knowledge seekers as well as the policy makers on the reason behind the upsurge.

In a study conducted by Musa (2012) on the new pattern of substance abuse among females of Tarauni Local Government in Kano Metropolis, using simple survey methodology, a sample of 46 respondents were interviewed using a purposive and snow-ball sampling procedure; it was admitted that young people have tended to use drugs more than the adults with increasing frequency, and the more recent phenomenon of young ladies abusing Benylin cough syrup. This makes them unproductive and more prone to higher deviant and criminal activities. This reveals how problematic it used to be when dealing with drugs. Most importantly, the study identified that when the perpetrators were asked about their source of getting the drug, 75% of them argued that they used to buy from medicine vendors (i.e., the drug entrepreneurs) (Musa, 2012). The study further revealed that the ladies would buy the drug (Benylin) from the drug shop, pretending to be sick, and would finish the whole bottle content on the go! This study by analysis, revealed the danger associated with the youth especially females who are becoming more prone and vulnerable to abuse drugs due to availability and easy access, as they can easily work into Patent Medicine Shops within their environment to obtain the drug of their choice. This study though mentioned the source where the perpetrators obtained their drugs, did not pay much attention to that source which is the drug enterprises. On this note, more research is needed on that concept perhaps to find out why their number is increasing and if it aids the menace of drug use in the study area.

Moreover, on a different note, Ubale (2019) conducted a study on the effects of drug abuse among the youth in the Nassarawa Local Government Area in the Kano metropolis. He potentially adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research method with a multi-stage sampling method. The study based on the NDLEA report of 2015, posited that Kano is the most affected by drug abuse in Nigeria, where 50%-60% of its youth abuse drugs orally or through injections which push them to engage in various social crimes. Not only the youth, but everyone in Kano can be at risk of abusing one drug or the other considering the cost and availability of the drugs (Ubale, 2019). This translates to how cheap and easily accessible the drugs are due to the large number of drugstores that could be found almost everywhere in the study area. The study further suggested that the government should provide policies that would address the wider availability of drugs in the state and develop strategies for attacking the causative factors of drug abuse like supply points and purchasing areas. The researcher tried to link the drug availability to the drug entrepreneurs that stock and supply the drugs but he was not very explicit. As such, a more explicit study is needed to explore why the supply and purchasing areas are increasing to advise policymakers in making viable policies that would keenly address the problem.

It is vital to understand that, from the above literature reviewed on the issue of drug abuse in the Kano metropolis, much has been said by the scholars on the availability and easy access to drugs as the contributing factor that make young people prone and vulnerable to use drugs. However, less attention has been given to the drug enterprises that are assumed to be the major sources of the supply of drugs for licit and illicit users.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted rational choice theory because of its premise that individuals are rational, self-calculating, self-maximizing, and self-interested. Individuals rationalize situations to maximize pleasure and reduce pain. The premise of rationality according to Ogu (2013), is driving every person to choose to follow paths that they likely believe to be the greatest ones and ones that will greatly benefit them personally. Drive by the fear of

poverty and loss regulations, individuals in the study area are motivated to rationalize investing in the drug business to make quick money with less stress and hardship. Individuals especially in the research area, are assumed to be self-calculating by leaving their businesses to venture into the drug business, maybe because it is assumed to have higher demand and turnover that might result in huge profits. This can be attested to, looking at the way more and more drug outlets are been opened in the research area as was vividly seen in 2011 when the then-state government chased the drug entrepreneurs out of the Sabon Gari open drug market to a new location where their activities would be fully monitored (Aliyu, ND). The then operators of other businesses in the area were witnessed to have dropped their businesses to embrace the drug business. Those individuals might have considered the rules and regulations guiding the drug business as soft and enabling, though this is proving to be individualistic and rationalistic as opined by Abell (2000).

3. Method

This research work employs a mixed-method approach, combining a simple survey and interview. It has a sample size of 400 respondents using Yamane's (1963) formula for determining sample size. The target population was the general public drawn from the eight metropolitan local governments in kano using multistage cluster sampling technique. The study uses questionnaire and in-depth interview to collect the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The qualitative data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistics which include frequency counts and percentages using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data recovered from the in-depth interview were thematically analyzed to complement the quantitative findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

Table 1: Frequency of the Response Rate

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Questionnaire Distributed	400	100%
Returned Questionnaire	365	91.3
Rejected Questionnaire	2	0.5
Retained Questionnaire	363	90.8

Source: Field Survey (2024)

As shown in Table 1, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, which is considered suitable for this study. A total of 365 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher out of the 400 distributed, yielding a response rate of 91.3%. Of these, 2 questionnaires representing 0.5% were rejected, leaving a total of 363 representing 90.8% that were used for analysis. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2016), a response rate of 50% is adequate for a study, 60% is good and 70% and above is excellent. Thus, a response rate of 90.8% was fit and reliable for the study.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This section summarizes the general frequency distribution of respondents on different demographic and economic items. The survey questionnaire requires respondents to answer seven demographic questions reflecting their sex, age, marital status, highest level of educational qualifications, religion, occupation and monthly average income as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic and Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Sample (n = 400)	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	199	54.9
	Female	164	45.1
	Total	363	100.0
Age	Below 20 years	46	12.7
	20 – 29 years	75	20.6
	30 – 39 years	102	28.2
	40 – 49 years	89	24.6
	50 years – Above	51	13.9
	Total	363	100
Marital Status	Single	110	30.3
	Married	181	49.8
	Separated	41	11.2
	Divorce	15	4.2
	Widowed	16	4.5
	Total	363	100
Educational Qualification	Non-Formal Education	44	12.0
	Primary certificate	69	18.9
	Secondary certificate	90	24.7
	University	149	41.1
	Others, specify	11	3.3
	Total	363	100
Religion	Islam	244	67.1
	Christianity	97	26.8
	Traditional Religion	19	5.2
	Total	363	100
Occupation /Working Experience	Less than 5 years	70	19.2
	1-5 years	111	30.6
	6-10 years	107	29.5
	11-15 years	50	13.8
	16 years and above	25	6.9
	Total	363	100
Monthly Income	Below 20,000	42	11.7
	20,000-40,000	70	19.3
	40,001-60,000	84	23.1
	60,001-80,000	85	23.2
	80,001 and above	82	22.6
	Total	363	100

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents provide a broad overview of the population surveyed across various variables, including gender, age, marital status, educational qualifications, religion, occupation, and monthly income. These factors offer insights into the composition of the population under study. The table

reveals that the majority of the respondents are male, accounting for 54.9% (199 out of 363), while females represent 45.1% (164 out of 363). This indicates a slight male dominance in the sample size but with a relatively balanced gender distribution overall.

The age distribution shows a diverse range of respondents across different age groups. The largest age group falls between 30 and 39 years, comprising 28.2% of the respondents. This is followed by the 40-49 age group (24.6%) and the 20-29 group (20.6%). Those below 20 years represent 12.7%, while respondents aged 50 years and above makeup 13.9%. The data suggests that most respondents are within their working age, particularly in the 30 to 49 years range, which makes up more than half of the respondents.

In terms of marital status, nearly half of the respondents (49.8%) are married, making them the largest group. Single individuals constitute 30.3%, while a smaller percentage is separated (11.2%), divorced (4.2%), or widowed (4.5%). This shows that the majority of the respondents are in a stable marital relationship, either married or single.

Regarding education, the majority of respondents have attained a university degree (41.1%), indicating a highly educated sample. This is followed by those with secondary school certificates (24.7%) and primary certificates (18.9%). Non-formal education was reported by 12.0% of the respondents, while 3.3% have other forms of education. This indicates that a significant portion of the population has formal education, with a higher emphasis on university-level education.

Religious affiliation among respondents shows that the majority practice Islam (67.1%), followed by Christianity (26.8%). A smaller fraction (5.2%) adheres to traditional religions. This distribution reflects the religious composition of the region being surveyed, where Islam is the dominant religion.

In terms of work experience, respondents vary significantly. The highest percentage (30.6%) falls in the category of having 1-5 years of experience. Those with 6-10 years make up 29.5%, and respondents with less than 5 years represent 19.2%. Those with 11-15 years and more than 16 years of experience constitute 13.8% and 6.9%, respectively. The data suggests that the sample has a mix of early-career and mid-career professionals.

Monthly income distribution shows that a substantial proportion of respondents (23.2%) earn between 60,001-80,000, with similar percentages earning between 40,001-60,000 (23.1%) and above 80,001 (22.6%). Those earning 20,000-40,000 make up 19.3%, while the lowest income bracket, below 20,000, accounts for 11.7%. The income data indicates that the respondents are relatively well-distributed across middle to higher income levels, with a smaller percentage earning below the 20,000 thresholds.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents show a balanced gender representation, a predominance of working-age individuals, a mix of educational backgrounds with a significant proportion having higher education, and a diverse income range. The population is also predominantly Muslim, with a notable representation of Christians.

4.3 Substantive Questions

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents on the presence of so many drug enterprises in the community from 2019-2024

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	303	83
No	60	17
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

Table 3 presents data on the presence of drug enterprises over the past five years, showing that a significant majority, 303 respondents (83%), reported the presence of drug enterprises, while only 60 respondents (17%)

indicated otherwise. This suggests a widespread prevalence of drug enterprises in the area of study, indicating a potentially entrenched issue within the area of study. The overwhelming percentage of affirmative responses underscores the need for targeted interventions and policies to address the factors contributing to the proliferation of drug enterprises over the given period.

According to one person interviewed, over the past five years (2019-2024), there has been a notable increase in the presence of drug enterprises within the Kano metropolis. As observed by the interviewees, each respondent highlighted a significant proliferation of these establishments, reflecting a broader trend that has manifested in various aspects of the community's daily life. One interviewee, a health official, remarked that the rise in drug enterprises has been particularly striking. He indicated that the influx of these establishments has created a more visible and pervasive issue, with an increasing number of both licensed and unlicensed drug vendors operating across different neighborhoods in the Kano metropolis. According to his observations, the expansion of these businesses has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in drug abuse cases, which he attributed to the availability and easier accessibility of illicit substances.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents showing Unemployment as a major factor driving individual to engage in Drug Business

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	344	94.8
No	19	5.2
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

Table 4 highlights that unemployment is perceived as a significant factor driving individuals to engage in the drug business. A vast majority, 344 respondents (94.8%), identified unemployment as a major motivator, while only 19 respondents (5.2%) disagreed. This overwhelming agreement indicates that joblessness is a critical issue contributing to the rise in drug-related activities within the research area. The data underscores the potential for addressing unemployment as a key strategy in curbing the involvement of individuals in drug enterprises.

In an in-depth interview examining the reasons behind the proliferation of drug entrepreneurs in the Kano metropolis, interviewees provided insightful perspectives that highlight a range of socio-economic, regulatory, and community factors. One of them attributed the proliferation primarily to socio-economic factors and the inadequacy of regulatory frameworks. He explained that high unemployment rates and economic hardships have driven many individuals to seek alternative sources of income, leading some to engage in drug-related businesses.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents showing Contribution of poverty to individuals participating in the drug trade

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	328	90.4
No	35	9.6
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

Table 5 reveals that poverty is widely regarded as a contributing factor to individuals participating in the drug trade, with 328 respondents (90.3%) affirming this view, while only 35 respondents (9.6%) disagreed. The high percentage of affirmative responses suggests that economic hardship plays a significant role in driving people towards illicit activities as in the drug trade. This highlights the need for poverty alleviation programs and economic support systems as part of broader efforts to reduce involvement in drug-related activities within the community.

Table 6: Lack of Educational Opportunities as significant push of individual towards drug trade

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	328	90.4
No	35	9.6
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

Table 6 demonstrates that the lack of educational opportunities is perceived as a significant factor pushing individuals towards the drug trade. A majority of 328 respondents (90.4%) agreed with this statement, while 35 respondents (9.6%) disagreed. This suggests that limited access to education is seen as a key driver behind the involvement in drug-related activities, indicating that improving educational opportunities could serve as a crucial intervention in reducing drug trade participation.

Table 7. Distribution of the respondent indicating Higher demand for drugs as a factor pushing individual towards drug trade

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	303	83.4
No	60	16.6
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

It appears that Table 7 indicates that 303 respondents (83.4%) view a higher demand for drugs as a significant factor pushing individuals towards the drug trade, while 60 respondents (16.6%) do not. This finding underscores the critical need for drug as a result of increase in population as a driving factor that push individuals to venture into drug business. Addressing the pharmaceutical needs of the citizens may be an essential strategy in mitigating this issue, highlighting the importance of drug revolving fund in the government health facilities as a vital factor that would bridge the need for drugs that push individuals into drug trade.

In an in-depth interview conducted, a question was raised on the demand for drugs as a factor influencing an increase in the number of drug enterprises, one of the participants emphasized the influence of demand and accessibility. He explained that the rising demand for drugs, driven by factors such as stress, peer pressure, and addiction, has encouraged the growth of drug enterprises. A social worker interviewed also mentioned that the relative need for drug as a result different forms of sicknesses, in which government hospitals could not meet such demand, individuals were forced to look for the drugs outside the hospitals, this contributes to the expansion of the source of supply that bridge this gap. This creates a continuous cycle of supply and demand.

Table 8: Distribution of the respondents indicating how weak Law Enforcement contributes to the rise in the number of Drug Enterprises

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	325	89.4
No	38	10.6
Total	363	100

Source: Researcher's Survey (2024)

Table 8 indicates that weak law enforcement is considered a significant factor contributing to the rise in the number of drug enterprises. A substantial majority of 325 respondents (89.4%) agreed that ineffective law enforcement plays a role in this issue, while 38 respondents (10.6%) disagreed. This overwhelming consensus suggests that strengthening law enforcement mechanisms could be crucial in curbing the proliferation of drug enterprises. The data highlights the need for more effective and robust enforcement strategies to address the rise in drug-related activities within the research area.

To buttress the above data, an in-depth-oral interview, an interviewee provided a broader perspective, discussing systemic and structural factors. He pointed out that the proliferation of drug entrepreneurs is linked to weaknesses in governance and law enforcement, which allow these enterprises to operate with minimal intervention. An official respondent pointed out that the lack of stringent enforcement and regulatory oversight has created an environment where drug enterprises can thrive with relative impunity. Another interviewee echoed similar sentiments, adding that the ease of entry into the drug trade is a significant factor. He noted that the low barrier to entry for drug enterprises, combined with the lucrative nature of the drug trade, incentivizes individuals to start and maintain these businesses. Additionally, the officer highlighted that organized crime syndicates and local networks play a role in facilitating the growth of drug enterprises, as they provide support and resources that enable these businesses to operate more effectively.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study was conducted to find out the public perception on the proliferation of drug enterprises, it established notable increase in the number of drug enterprises in the Kano metropolis from 2019-2024. It further disclosed the perceived factors responsible for the proliferation. Thus, confirming that poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, higher demand for drugs and ineffective regulations are the major causes of the prevalence of drug enterprises in the research area. It concludes that, the number of drug enterprises is on the rise in the kano metropolis, unless it is well checked by the authority, a remedy to drug availability and easy access which is related to drug abuse, remained a mirage. It finally recommends as follows:

1. Government should provide ample opportunities to the youth so that they will think less of getting involved in drug businesses.
2. Effective regulations shall be put in place to control the rapid growth in the number of drug enterprise.
3. Licensing shall strictly be under strict compliance measures to trim down the number of the drug enterprises.
4. Regulatory agencies shall not work as revenue generating bodies, thus shall be well funded by the authorities in carryout their statutory functions.

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