

## Study of the Psychometric Properties of Interpersonal Dependency Questionnaire and its Relationship with Social Intimacy

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**ABSTRACT:** The present investigation was aimed to study the psychometric properties of interpersonal dependency questionnaire and its relationship with social intimacy in Islamic Azad University students of Central Tehran Branch. The method of investigation was practical in terms of objective and descriptive-correlation in terms of method of data collection. The population consisted of all students in Islamic Azad University students of Central Tehran Branch in the academic year of 2012-2013. The statistical sample of the research consisted of 300 individuals, who were chosen using stage cluster sampling method. The data collection was based on interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield and social intimacy scale of The analysis of data obtained from the implementation of the questionnaire was carried out through SPSS software in two parts of descriptive (average, mean, variance, standard deviation) and inferential (Cronbach's alpha, factor analysis, converting raw scores to T and Z norm scores and Pearson correlation). Using Cronbach's alpha method, the reliability of the interpersonal dependency questionnaire for the whole test was 0.732 and the value for the sub-scales of emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independency were 0.756, 0.63 and 0.637, respectively. No significant correlation was demonstrated in the study of the relationship of interpersonal dependency and its sub-scales with social intimacy. Therefore, based on the results, the interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield had good reliability and validity in Iranian case.

**Key words:** Interpersonal Dependency, Social Intimacy, Psychometric Properties of Hirschfield's Questionnaire, Normalization of Dependency scale

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### INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal dependency is of psychological concepts, which is related to the way people communicate with each other. In addition, it is abstract, complex and ambiguous like many other psychological constructs. Interpersonal dependency is usually referred to the amount of interpersonal support and comfort which one gains from others. According to Birtchnell (1988), dependent individuals are constantly plays the role of excessive dependence on others, which this causes damage to the interpersonal relations. Moreover, it is a threat to personal well-being. Bornstein (1993) indicated in summarizing the definitions provided from interpersonal dependency that they mostly emphasize on four main components: A) Motivational (Including the clear need for guidance, support, and approval of others), B) Cognitive (Including the individual's perception of himself as someone poor and barren, with strength and competence of others), C) Emotional (Including the anxiety and fear that is created in the case of self-reliance, especially when one's attempt is assessed by a symbol of power) and Behavioral (Including willingness to seek help, support, guidance, ensuring others and capitulating in interpersonal exchanges).

Despite the existence of breadth and vagueness in the concept of dependence, you cannot ignore its importance in clinical and treatment assessment. According to the investigation of Bartel (1995) and Bornstein and Johnson (1990), dependency (personality trait) has a high prevalence in clinical populations and can exacerbate clinical problems or

difficulty and complexity of the treatment process. Interest to investigate the concept of interpersonal dependency has been increased during the last two decades due to its importance in communicational dynamism and personal health (Alonso et al., 2003). Huprich et al. (2004) demonstrated in an investigation on the relationship of social skills and dependency with depression that the level of social skill and interpersonal relationship predicts the possibility of depression. According to Sanathara et al. (2003), interpersonal dependency is associated with long-term risk of major depression disorder. Pritchard and Yalch (2009) demonstrated in an investigation on the relationship between loneliness, interpersonal dependency and eating disorder that loneliness plays a mediating role in the relationship between interpersonal dependency and physical dissatisfaction. On the other hand, interpersonal dependency is related to physical dissatisfaction through loneliness. Wang et al. (2014) indicated in an investigation entitled "interpersonal dependency and emotion in everyday life" that there is a strong relationship between high interpersonal dependency and unfriendly perception of social relationships and eventually, negative excitements. In this regard, they concluded that dependency plays a significant role in social perception, friendly relationships and emotion regulation.

Hence, it seems that there is a close relationship between interpersonal dependency and mental and emotional aspects of one's relations with others. Social intimacy is one of the most important dimensions in the meantime. Erikson (1975, quoted from Schultz and Schultz, 1990, translated by Mohammadi, 2002)

defined "intimacy" as sense of loyalty, frankly expression of oneself and fear of losing the sense of identity. Ten Houten (2007) defined "intimacy" as the extension of thoughts, feelings and personal actions to something beyond in order to get closer to one another. Social intimacy refers to the amount of intimacy that one perceives with one another in the society. Amidon et al (1983) found in their investigation that there is negative relationship between tendency to intimate relationships and comprehensive anxiety, nihilism, lack of empathy, purposelessness and fragmentation of personality. Shultz and Shultz (1990; translated by Seied Mohammadi, 2002) demonstrated that satisfaction of any of the requirements of safety, sense of belonging and respect in men and women students has a negative relationship with neuroticism and depression. According to Moradi et al. (2007), there is a negative relationship between the intimate attitudes and mental health. Considering the above description, it can be stated that assessment of the relationship between interpersonal dependency and social intimacy can enhance our knowledge on factors affecting psychological health within a society and provide the possibility of health improvement in the society.

On the other hand, Mitchell (2008) stated that dependency is one of the common features in individuals who get psychological treatment. Therefore, providing tools that are adapted to Iranian norms and can evaluate interpersonal dependency precisely leads to increase in the quality of psychological services. Interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield et al. (1977) is one of the most applicable structured assessments of dependency. Although the research findings have demonstrated that the scale has correlation with other self-report assessments of dependency (Hirschfield et al., 1983), the psychometric characteristics and normalization of such instruments have not been studied in Iran. Therefore, since such instruments have not been developed or translated in Iran in order to investigate interpersonal dependency and its psychometric properties have not been studied yet and according to the need of the domestic researchers to use a suitable tool to measure interpersonal dependency, the purpose of the present investigation is studying the psychometric properties of interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield et al. (1977) and its relationship with social intimacy among Islamic Azad University students of Central Tehran Branch.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Since the present investigation is aimed to study the relationship between interpersonal dependency

and social intimacy, it is of correlation type. The population consisted of all students in Islamic Azad University students of Central Tehran Branch in the academic year of 2012-2013. The academic unit consisted of 11 faculties and about 40 thousands students in variety of majors. The participants (300 individuals; 176 men and 124 women) were chosen using stage cluster sampling method.

The data collection instruments were interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield et al. (1977) and social intimacy scale of Miller (1982). The interpersonal dependency questionnaire was developed with the purpose of evaluation of thoughts, feelings and behaviors related to having intimate relationships with important individuals. Moreover, the questionnaire was developed based on the theories of psychological analysis, social learning and dependencies that emphasize on the role of extreme dependency in appearing a broad spectrum of emotional and behavioral disorders. The test consisted of 48 items and 3 sub-scales including emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and declaration of independence. The questionnaire is based on a 4-point Likert scale and the grading is as 1=never, 2=a little, 3= moderate and 4= very much.

Hirschfield et al. (1977) calculated the reliability of the questionnaire using split-half method between 0.72 and 0.91 and Bornstein (1997) calculated the reliability using pre-test method after 84 weeks equal to 0.71. Pritchard and Yalch (2008) calculated the reliability using the split-half method equal to 0.86, 0.76 and 0.84 for the three factors of emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and declaration of independence, respectively. Moreover, they calculated the values equal to 0.66, 0.62 and 0.58 using Cronbach's alpha method.

The social intimacy scale of Miller (1982) was developed in order to evaluate the level of one's closeness and intimacy with others. The scale consisted of 22 questions, which are based on 5-point Likert scale. Miller and Lefcourt (198) reported the related Cronbach's coefficient in different implementation from 0.86 to 0.91. They also calculated the reliability coefficient equal to 0.84 and 0.96 in a period of more than two month and in a period of one month, respectively. Daneshvarpour et al. (2006) found the value for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient in an Iranian sample equal to 0.79. Moreover, content validity was used in order to check the validity of the questionnaires. In this regard, the two questionnaires were given to 10 of the related specialists (psychometric, psychologist and professor) and the content validity was detected.

The data analysis was carried out using Cronbach's method (to calculate the internal consistency of the test's subscales), factor analysis (to

determine the factors and components), Pearson correlation coefficient (to determine the reliability of the test), t-test (to find the differences between the two groups and compare them) and converting raw scores to standard scores Z and then converting them to T scores (to determine the norms and standards).

**RESULT**

The Cronbach's alpha method was employed in order to assess the reliability of the test. The calculated values for the whole test and sub-scales are presented in Table 1. According to Table 1, the test validity is equal to 0.732, which is acceptable. In order to determine the construct validity, the assumptions of factor analysis was studied using Kaiser-Meyer Olkin test. According to Table 2, since the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin test for adequacy of the sample size is equal to 0.686 (more than 0.5), the correlation matrix is appropriate for the factor analysis. In addition, the

Bartlett's test is significant at 99% confidence level (3.625) and this indicates that there is correlation between the variables.

**Table 1.** Study of validity of the interpersonal dependency test

No. of questions	Cronbach's alpha	
30	0.732	Total test
13	0.756	Emotional reliance on others
10	0.63	Lack of self-confidence
7	0.637	Lack of independence

**Table 2.** Study of adequacy of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin sample size

Bartlett's test			adequacy of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin sample size
Sig.	DOF	Chi-square	
0.0001	1128	3.625e3	0.686

**Table 3.** Questions and loads of the rotated component obtained from the principle component analysis with Varimax rotation

Component load				Share	Principle subscale	Scale origin	No.	Row
3	2	1						
0.108	0.262	0.607	0.530		I need someone who give high priority to me	Emotional reliance on other	29	1
0.062	0.306	0.578	0.455		I always have this terrible fear that I lose the love and support of one I need		45	2
-0.275	-0.014	0.563	0.456		It is very painful for me not to be approved by someone who I care about		9	3
0.092	-0.039	0.542	0.297		I think most people do not realize how easily they can hurt me.		43	4
0.092	0.092	0.532	0.317		I would like to have high expectations of others.		35	5
0.154	0.018	0.489	0.294		If a person who I love does not meet me on time, then I visualize the worst scenarios in my mind		33	6
0.184	0.384	0.475	0.391		When I meet new people, I am worried that I do not behave properly.		39	7
-0.091	-0.337	0.444	0.372		I must have someone who is very special to me.		22	8
-0.160	-0.030	0.440	0.298		If someone who I care about leave me, I feel helpless		47	9
0.356	-0.125	0.423	0.275		I feel like I do not get to what I really want from others.		38	10
-0.037	0.069	0.418	0.262		If I don't have any particular person in my life, I would be completely lost		15	11
0.098	0.054	0.394	0.182		I believe that people can do much more for me if they want		6	12
-0.008	0.138	0.330	0.117		When I know the work will be appreciated, I'll do it in the best way		3	13
0.065	0.549	0.083	0.376		I do not have the characteristics of a good leader.	Lack of self-confidence	46	14
0.118	0.449	0.089	0.288		I immediately agree with the opinions expressed by others		13	15
-0.159	0.489	0.297	0.364		It is very difficult for me to decide singly.		32	16
0.081	0.469	-0.003	0.296		I feel better when I know someone else is the boss.		24	17
0.097	0.462	0.018	0.319		I give up easily in a discussion.		20	18
-0.002	0.417	0.145	0.134		I'm confident in my ability in dealing with most of the interpersonal problems that I would be encountered in my life		10	19
-0.100	0.410	0.015	0.292		I would rather to be a follower than a leader.		5	20
-0.163	0.352	0.234	0.198		I do not like to buy clothes for myself alone.		36	21
0.206	0.328	0.173	0.151		Words of others do not bother me.		48	22
-0.286	0.309	-0.56	0.155		I am very confident of my judgments.		44	23
0.574	-0.333	-0.055	0.471		I am on my own.	14	24	
0.56	0.105	0.219	0.415		I would like to be alone.	37	25	
0.540	-0.071	0.042	0.394		I do not need anyone.	31	26	
0.533	-0.078	0.128	0.311		I am ready to ignore the feelings of others in order to get to something that is important to me	28	27	
0.525	0.130	0.055	0.381		I just want to make myself happy.	11	28	
0.369	0.073	0.052	0.129		I hate to get sympathy from others.	18	29	
0.335	0.09	0.279	0.185		I prefer to be alone with myself.	1	30	

0.187	0.205	-0.517	I expect to be loved by others when I go to a party	23	31
0.146	0.185	0.267	I would be upset when someone realizes my mistake	16	32
0.252	0.27	0.12	I find it hard to ask for help from someone	17	33
0.269	0.213	0.269	I would be easily frustrated when I do not get to something I ask for	19	34
0.006	0.226	0.291	It is hard for me to decide about a TV show or a movie when I do not know others' opinion about them	27	35
0.223	0.078	0.26	I prefer to be free from conflicts to accept the risk of disappointment	41	36
0.26	0.179	-0.003	What others think about me does not affect me	42	37
0.087	-0.408	0.214	I would like to be self-conscious in social situations	30	38
0.27	-0.488	-0.087	I can encounter the situation even when things are not going well	34	39
-0.017	-0.339	0.173	I can keep continuing when I have someone who loves me by my side, even when most of the people are against me	40	40
-0.316	-0.117	0.217	Imagine of the loss of a close friend is terrible to me	12	41
-0.315	-0.16	0.295	Pleasing my parents was very important to me in my childhood.	7	42
-0.311	0.237	0.135	I would like to get some advice in the case I am going to make a decision	2	43
3.957	2.855	2.284	Eigenvalue		
9.009	9.815	11.496	Percentage of variance		

As it is obvious from Table 3, questions number 23-16-17-19-27-41-42-30-34-40-12-7 and 2 are not suitable for the three components of factor loadings (0.3 and more) and should be eliminated.

Therefore, the questions are: 1) Subscale of emotional reliance on others: they are located in rows 1 to 13, respectively (13 questions); 2) Subscale of dependency: they are located in rows 14 to 23, respectively (10 questions); 3) Subscale of closeness: they are located in rows 24 to 30, respectively (7 questions); 4) Questions in rows 19 to 23 are scored reversely.

Test norm based on the components was calculated as the following. According to the 4-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=a little, 3= moderate and 4= very much), the component of emotional reliance on others has 13 questions, therefore, the variability of scores is between 1 and 52, the component of lack of self-confidence has 10 questions, therefore, the

variability of scores is between 1 and 42 and the component of closeness has 7 questions, therefore, the variability of scores is between 1 and 28. Thus, the distance class 4 was employed to develop the table.

As it is obvious from Table 4, the calculated average for emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence are equal to 33.04, 22.25 and 14.49, respectively. Test norm in three scales of emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence are presented in tables 5 to 9.

**Table 4.** Descriptive data related to the subscales of interpersonal dependency

Standard deviation	Average	
6.56	33.04	Emotional reliance on others
4.04	22.25	Lack of self-confidence
3.27	14.49	Lack of independence

**Table 5.** Norm of subscales of interpersonal dependency in emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence

lack of independence		lack of self-confidence		Emotional reliance on others		Mean	Score domain
T	Z	T	Z	T	Z		
13.33	-3.96	1.11	-4.89	5.48	-4.45	2.5	1-4
25.57	-2.44	11.01	-3.9	11.31	-3.87	6.5	5-8
37.8	-1.22	20.92	-2.91	17.14	-3.29	10.5	9-12
50.3	0	30.82	-1.92	22.96	-2.7	14.5	13-16
62.26	1.23	40.72	-0.93	28.8	-2.12	18.5	17-20
74.5	2.45	50.62	0.06	34.64	-1.54	22.5	21-24
86.73	3.67	60.52	1.05	40.47	-0.95	26.5	28-25
-	-	70.42	2.04	46.3	-0.37	30.5	29-32
-	-	80.32	3.03	52.13	0.21	34.5	36-33
-	-	90.22	4.02	57.96	0.8	38.5	37-40
-	-	-	-	63.79	1.38	42.5	41-44
-	-	-	-	69.62	1.96	46.5	45-48
-	-	-	-	75.45	2.55	50.5	48-52

**Table 6.** Descriptive data related to the subscale of emotional reliance on others based on age

Standard deviation		Average	
6.65		34.25	Under 30 years
7.2		31.5	Between 30 and 40 years
4.48		30.5	Above 40 years
6.83		33.13	General case

**Table 7.** Norm of the subscale of emotional reliance on others

General case		Above 40 years		Between 30 and 40 years		Under 30 years		Mean	Score domain
T	Z	T	Z	T	Z	T	Z		
5.15	-4.48	-	-6.25	9.72	-4.03	2.27	-4.47	2.5	1-4
11.01	-3.9	-	-5.36	15.28	-3.47	8.29	-4.17	6.5	5-8
16.87	-3.31	5.36	-4.46	20.83	-2.92	14.3	-3.57	10.5	9-12
22.72	-2.73	14.29	-3.57	26.39	-2.36	20.32	-2.97	14.5	13-16
28.58	-2.14	23.21	-2.68	31.94	-1.81	26.33	-2.37	18.5	17-20
34.44	-1.56	32.14	-1.79	37.5	-1.25	32.35	-1.77	22.5	21-24
40.29	-0.97	41.07	-0.89	43.06	-0.69	38.36	-1.16	26.5	25-28
46.15	-0.39	50	0	48.61	-0.14	44.38	-0.56	30.5	29-32
52.01	0.2	53.93	0.89	54.17	0.42	50.39	0.04	34.5	33-36
57.86	0.79	67.86	1.79	59.72	0.97	56.41	0.64	38.5	37-40
63.72	1.37	76.79	2.68	65.28	1.53	62.42	1.24	42.5	41-44
69.58	1.96	85.71	3.57	70.83	2.08	68.44	1.84	46.5	45-48
75.43	2.54	94.64	4.46	76.39	2.64	74.45	2.45	50.5	48-52

**Table 8.** Descriptive data related to the subscale of lack of self-confidence based on age

Standard deviation		Average	
4.15		22.81	Under 30 years
3.54		20.85	Between 30 and 40 years
3.49		22.85	Above 40 years
4.01		22.21	General case

**Table 8.** Norm of the subscale of lack of self-confidence

General case		Between 30 and 40 years		Under 30 years		Mean	Score domain
T	Z	T	Z	T	Z		
-	-5.83	-	-5.18	1.06	-4.89	2.5	1-4
3.15	-4.68	9.46	-4.05	10.7	-3.93	6.5	5-8
14.61	-3.54	20.76	-2.92	20.34	-2.97	10.5	9-12
26.07	-2.39	32.06	-1.79	30	-2	14.5	13-16
37.54	-1.25	43.36	-0.66	39.61	-1.04	18.5	17-20
49	-0.1	54.66	0.47	49.25	-0.07	22.5	21-24
60.46	1.05	65.96	1.6	58.89	0.89	26.5	25-28
71.92	2.19	77.26	2.73	68.53	1.85	30.5	29-32
83.38	3.34	88.56	3.86	78.17	2.82	34.5	33-36
94.84	4.48	99.86	4.99	87.81	3.78	38.5	37-40

Pearson correlation test was used in order to check the research hypotheses, which the results are listed in Table 10. According to the following table, there is no significant relationship between social intimacy of individuals and each of the interpersonal

dependency scale scores (-0.44), emotional reliance on others (-0.05), lack of self-confidence (-0.08) and lack of independence (-0.03) at all. Therefore, the research hypotheses are declined.

**Table 10.** Correlation between the scores of interpersonal dependency test and its subscales (emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence) and the scores of Miller's social intimacy test

Interpersonal dependency scale	Subscale						Variable	
	Lack of independence		Lack of self-confidence		Emotional dependence on others			
Sig.	Correlation	Sig.	correlation	Sig.	correlation	Sig.	correlation	Social intimacy
<b>0.455</b>	-0.44	0.398	-0.05	0.886	-0.08	0.603	-0.03	

## CONCLUSION

The present investigation was aimed to study the psychometric properties of interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield et al. (1977) and its relationship with social intimacy in Islamic Azad University students of Central Tehran Branch. The obtained results of Cronbach's alpha test demonstrated the high reliability of the test (the total Cronbach's alpha of the test were 0.732 and the value for the sub-scales of emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence were 0.756, 0.63 and 0.637, respectively), which the results are in line with the findings of other researches such as Hirschfield et al. (1977), Bornstein (1997) and Pritchard and Yalch (2008). Factor analysis was employed in order to check the construct validity of the interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield. The correlation between the questions was of initial hypotheses of the factor analysis, which Bartlett's test approved the hypothesis at 99% confidence level. Referring to the analysis of the main component, desirable subscription rate were obtained between items (except questions number 4, 8, 21, 25 and 26). The confirmatory factor analysis was carried out after approving the hypotheses. Analysis of principal components with Varimax rotation confirmed the three main factors (the three dimensions of the Hirschfield's interpersonal dependency questionnaire). The results demonstrated that some of the questions were set in other factors, which are mentioned in the following. Question number 23, which originally belongs to the factor of lack of self-confidence, took a negative loading in the factor of emotional reliance on others. Question number 34, which originally belongs to the factor of lack of independence, took a negative loading in the factor of lack of self-confidence. Question number 40, which originally belongs to the factor of emotional reliance on others, took a negative loading in the factor of lack of self-confidence. Questions number 7 and 12, which originally belong to the factor of emotional reliance on others, took a negative loading in the factor of lack of independence. Question number 2, which originally belongs to the factor of lack of self-confidence, took a negative loading in the factor of lack of independence. It should be mentioned that negative "factor loading" means being converse and opposite of the question with content factor. Therefore, most of the questions had appropriate factor loading according to the previous studies (Hirschfield et al., 1977), which this shows the desired construct validity.

Studying the relationship between interpersonal dependency and social intimacy in Islamic Azad

University students of Central Tehran Branch was another purpose of this investigation. Statistical correlation analysis indicated that there was no significant correlation between interpersonal dependency and its subscales (emotional reliance on others, lack of self-confidence and lack of independence) and social intimacy. The relationship between interpersonal dependency and social intimacy was not directly studied in previous researches, but results of the present investigation are not generally in line with other researches such as Wang et al. (2014), Pritchard and Yalch (2009), Sanathara et al. (2003), Huprich et al. (2004), Bartel (1995) and Bornstein and Johnson (1990).

According to Hirschfield et al. (1977), dependency is a set of thoughts and beliefs, emotions and behaviors that affects close communication and interaction between people specifically, but Bornstein (1994) believes that we should stay away from conducting to dependency as a defect, because this view is too simplistic, and detection of adaptive aspects of dependency should be considered as an important way in improving our assessment of dependence. Considering the adaptive aspects of dependency enhances our ability in providing treatment for dependent persons in addition to increasing our knowledge about the etiology and dynamics of dependency, while Hirschfield's model is based on maladaptive and pathological aspects of interpersonal dependency. Therefore, mainly concentration of the questionnaire on maladaptive aspects of dependency could be one reason for the lack of a significant relationship between interpersonal dependency and intimacy.

As it was mentioned before, dependency has relationship with the reduction of social skills and depression according to the findings of Huprich et al. (2004) and Sanathara et al. (2003). Moreover, Pritchard and Yalch (2009) demonstrated the relationship between loneliness and interpersonal dependency. In addition, Wang et al. (2014) demonstrated in an investigation entitled "Interpersonal dependency and emotion in everyday life" that there is a strong relationship between high interpersonal dependency and unfriendly perception of social relationships and eventually, negative excitements. In this regard, they concluded that dependency plays a significant role in social perception, friendly relationships and emotion regulation. Therefore, it is expected according to the results that there is a negative relationship between interpersonal dependency and social intimacy, which this was not mentioned in the present investigation. Since the sample size was limited to the students, conducting a more comprehensive research could be useful in clarifying the dimensions of the issue.

However, Bartel (1995) and Bornstein and Johnson (1990) believe that dependency (as a personality trait) has a high prevalence in clinical populations and can exacerbate clinical problems or difficulty and complexity of the treatment process. Hence, comprehensive understanding of the factors could be helpful in enhancing cognitive, diagnosis and treatment strategies and reducing personal damages in social relations. In the meantime, the interpersonal dependency questionnaire of Hirschfield et al. (1977) could be used by other researchers and practitioners as a convenient instrument.

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