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Knowledge Acquisition among Faculty Members Involved in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the sources of knowledge acquisition by faculty members/instructors in Nepalese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) concerning two constituent and two community campuses of the hilly region under Tribhuvan University, Koshi Province. Using purposive sampling technique 115 questionnaires were distributed graded on five-point Likert scales and, only 101 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 87.83 percent. To analyze the final net count collected data, basically descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient, multiple regression analysis were used. The relationships between knowledge acquisition (KA) and variables such as books, research journals, training and workshops, information and communication technology (ICT), cultural awareness, experience, and interactive learning were examined through the correlation coefficient. Moreover, multiple regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses. Additionally, the reliability of the items was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The major findings of the study reveal that books, research journals etc., training and workshop, ICT, experience, and interactive learning significantly contribute to knowledge acquisition. The key contribution of this study could significantly influence policy-making related to the effective management of personnel, finances, and materials (particularly the updated use of information technology) within higher education institutions in Nepal.

Keywords: Knowledge, knowledge acquisition, faculty members, institutions

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge can enhance a firm's value when it is appropriately produced and disseminated throughout the organization (Choi et al., 2006). Knowledge is a vital asset for firms, leading to better performance when properly utilized (Yosof & Bakar, 2012). In a firm, sustainable and ambitious advantage can be achieved through efficiently identification, dissemination, and application of knowledge (Sorkindaji et al., 2014). The management of knowledge has become important in education systems and operations due to the advent of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). By integrating latest and modern tools like AI, educational institution can optimize the production of knowledge and sharing, fostering continuous learning culture and

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teamwork among educators/academia to achieve sustainable benefits in educational efficient and effectiveness. In the context of education sector, knowledge management is built on gracious and teamwork of professional body by energetically engaging individuals in producing and sharing of knowledge, including both what they know and learning (Petrides & Nodine, 2003). Similarly, Katiyar (2015) explains knowledge management as a process of acquiring, sharing, and using organizational knowledge effectively. It means, for institutional success the effective knowledge management is essential, in this sense higher education institutions always ready to produce huge amounts of knowledge, which must be acquired, processed, and shared to enhance performance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Among the different dimensions of knowledge management mentioned above, only knowledge acquisition is considered for the present study. Acquisition of knowledge is a process of generating future knowledge by building on existing knowledge through collaborative effort (Gold et al., 2001). This means in the context of higher education institutions, collaboration between faculty members/instructors and administrators will ease the process of tacit and explicit knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, knowledge can also be acquired through various sources such as books, journals, and job manuals. However, research on knowledge acquisition among faculty members in the context of Nepalese higher education institutions remains limited. Thus, this study focuses on examining the sources of knowledge acquisition among faculty members involved in higher education institutions concerning two constituent and two community campuses in the hilly region under Tribhuvan University, Koshi Province.

The rest of the present study is structured as follows: section two provides a literature review with empirical evidence and the theoretical framework along with research hypotheses, three sections outline the data and materials, section four offers the results and discussion, section five includes the discussion, and finally, section six presents the conclusions and implications.

Obtaining knowledge is a prerequisite for innovation and intellectual growth. In this context, the study seeks to address key research questions: to what extent do the sources of knowledge explain knowledge acquisition in Nepalese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and what are the effective sources of knowledge acquisition in these institutions? Aligned with these questions, the objectives of the study are to examine the sources of knowledge acquisition employed by faculty members and instructors in Nepalese HEIs and to explore the most effective sources of knowledge acquisition within these institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the words of Mathew (1985) knowledge acquisition meant as learning by conducting experiments and holding experience. It is about acquiring, combining, adjusting, and verifying knowledge for the conceptualization of questions, understanding and solving problems that arise, or reaching conclusions. Huber (1991), acquisition of knowledge one of the procedure through which knowledge is acquired. It involves complex cognitive processes perception, learning, communication, association and reasoning. Stollberg et al (2004) states that KA is an activity which deals with finding and acquiring knowledge in knowledge based resources.

Regarding knowledge acquisition processes highlighted by O'Dell and Grayson (1998) are collaboration and benchmarking. They indicated that applying benchmarking, an organization is able to identify the outstanding practices developed by other organizations and then able to reach

the current state of gaps and problems. Leonard (1995) remarked that core capabilities of knowledge acquisition are going up in increasing way based on an organization's capability to find and create knowledge.

So far concerned with empirical evidences, the focus group interview conducted by Belefant Miller and King (2000) to know the reading habits of science and non-science faculty staffs, they discovered that most faculty staffs regularly read newspapers and books, and often applied the knowledge gained to their research and teaching.

On "Information searching habits of internet users" Asemi (2005) gathered data from participants across five colleges through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that faculty members utilized various sources for research, teaching, staying informed, and accessing electronic information. In a study conducted by Khongtim (2006) on information-seeking behavior online, it was concluded that most users regarded the internet as the best source for obtaining information.

Likewise, a study by Hussin (2007) in Malaysia on knowledge acquisition among faculty members revealed that they obtain knowledge from various sources. Being a sources of current and authentic information to researchers and academicians, Umbur (2008) disclosed that journals were the most used sources of information.

Smolle and Reibnegger (2007) confirmed the effectiveness of computer-based training in facilitating the acquisition of explicit knowledge. Likewise, Carlock and Anli (2008) conducted a focus group study and their findings reveals that for research and and teaching purpose, faculty members/staffs use e-books

Rafiq and Ameen (2009) carried out a research to examine the information-seeking behavior of teachers of the National Textile University, Pakistan and their findings revealed that books are the most preferred sources of information followed by communication with colleagues and use of journal articles. The Internet and email are highly used electronic services. It indicates that while acquiring knowledge, they preferred books, research journals, internet etc. as sources of knowledge.

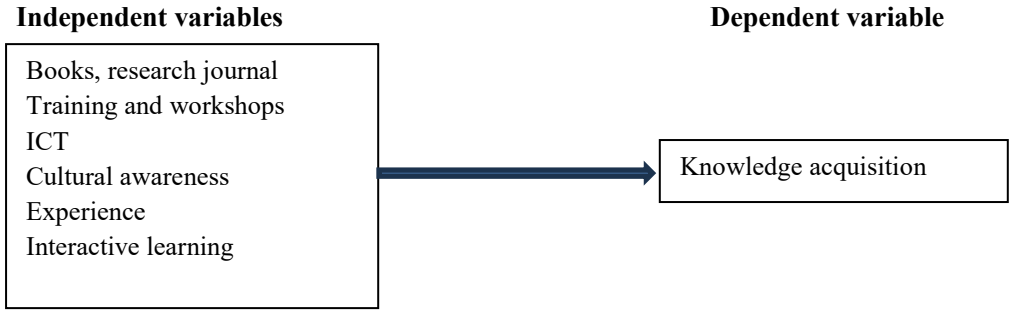
Similarly, a study performed by Thanuskodi (2009) to explore the information needs and information seeking behavior of law faculty at Law College. Findings disclosed that faculty used various sources of information such as books, law reports etc. for teaching and research purposes.

Kim and Lee (2010) studied relating to utilization of IT in acquisition of knowledge and capabilities of employees, they found that IT application positively associated with public employee's knowledge acquisition and capabilities.

Bellary (2011) noted that periodicals, newspapers, and books are the most frequently used information resources to meet the needs of faculty members. Faculty members primarily seek information for preparing lectures and staying up-to-date. Similarly, Shuva and Taisir (2016) found that most faculty members at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, primarily use journals for teaching and research purposes. It means, according to their findings, it is concluded that the faculty members acquired knowledge mainly through numerous journals. In the same way, Ahmed and Kurshid (2016) discovered demographic differences among faculty staffs in Pakistan regarding their use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for learning.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of the Study



The variables used in this study have been operationalized as under:

Books and journal. Most of the faculty staffs read books and newspapers, and are most likely to apply them in their teaching and research activities (Belefant-Miller & King, 2000). It means, reading books, research journals etc. is one of the important means of acquiring knowledge.

Training and workshops. Knowledge can be acquired through various learning activities such as formal education, training, imitation, experimentation, and own directed learning task (Reio & Wiswell, 2000). It means, it can be used to provide additional information to existing employees, helping them develop new skills and integrate new knowledge into their work.

Information and communication technology (ICT). Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011) suggested that teacher's use of ICT tools is correlated with teaching experience and computer anxiety. In this context, teachers can use or acquire knowledge of ICT not only for teaching and learning purpose but also sharing too. It includes internet, trusted websites, visualization, expert systems etc.

Cultural awareness. Culture refers to ethics and is based on shared knowledge, experience, and value in an organizations (Solomon, 2004). It means, it encompasses the complex whole as a cultural awareness, including knowledge, art, morals, beliefs, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of society.

Experience. Sunassee and Sewry (2002) suggests that the knowledge that developed or acquired from experience and direct action, and usually transferred via shared experience and interactive dialogue It means the events or activities from which an individual or group may acquire knowledge, opinions and skills or the accumulation of knowledge, skills that results from direct participation in events or activities becomes experience.

Interactive learning. The greatest amount of knowledge is acquired and transferred in relational channels (Jones & Jordan, 1998). It means interactive learning deals on developing and designing of the activities of the different classes along with international teaching trends and learning methodology.

Research Hypothesis Development

Bellary (2011) suggested that periodicals, books, and newspapers are the most frequently used information resources to meet the needs of faculty member. Similarly, journals were the most sources of obtaining information and knowledge (Umber, 2008). The focus group interview

conducted by Belefant-Miller and King (2000) found that a majority teaching members read books and newspapers and apply that in their teaching and research purpose. It means while acquiring knowledge, books, journals, periodicals plays important role. Based on the above discussions, the given below hypothesis was developed.

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between books, research journal, etc. and knowledge acquisition.

In the organization, knowledge can be acquired through various learning activities such as formal education, training, imitation, experimentation, and own directed learning task (Reio & Wiswell, 2000). For preparing lectures note and staying up-to-date, faculty members primarily seek information from various sources (Bellary, 2011). It means they need training and workshops too at regular interval for acquiring knowledge, information and staying up-to-date. On the basis of above discussion, the given below hypothesis was identified

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between training and workshop and KA.

Information technology (IT) application includes databases, groupware systems, knowledge management systems, intranets, internet based network systems (Davis & Riggs, 1999). In this case, Kim and Lee (2010) found that usage of IT application system is positively correlated with employee knowledge acquisition. Ahmed and Kurshid (2016) found that demographic differences among faculty members in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Based on the above discussion, the hypothesis was developed as given below.

H_3: There is significant positive relationship between ICT and KA.

Leonard (1995) suggests that based on institution or firm capabilities to acquire and create knowledge brings core capabilities of knowledge acquisition and so are increasingly. Grant (1996) suggested that collaboration with other firm or institution is critical to knowledge acquisition. Thus, it can be concluded that institutions or firm must have culture of obtaining and creating knowledge. Based on these discussion, the hypothesis was identified.

H_4: There is a significant positive relationship between cultural awareness and KA.

Soltero et al. (2006) suggests that knowledge is embedded in the individual's experience and it has own quality, thus that makes it hard to formalize. The knowledge that developed or acquired from direct action and experience and usually transferred via shared experience and interactive dialogue (Sunassee & Sewry,2002). Hence, based on above discussion, hypothesis was identified as below.

H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between experience and KA.

Leonard and Sensiper (1998) announced that social networks itself involve dialogue, communications, and group or individuals' interactions that helps, promote, and encourage knowledge related activities of employees. Similarly, the greatest amount of knowledge is acquired and transferred in relational channels (Jones & Jordan, 1998). It means, interactive learning facilitate communication in the form of face-to-face which allows for acquiring knowledge. Hence, based on the above discussion, the hypothesis was drawn as given below.

H_6: The greater the interactive learning, the greater KA.

3. METHODS

The present study methodology needed to be more or less empirical in nature. Basically, descriptive and causal research designs were applied to ensure the efficient way to examine the sources of knowledge acquisition. To describe the research related aspect of numerous knowledge

attributes, descriptive research design was used whereas to show the relationship between the dependent variable i.e, KA and independent variables i.e, sources of KA, causal research design was used. The faculty members of two government/constituent and two community campuses of hilly region under Tribhuvan University of Koshi Province were target population of the study

Data were collected through structured questionnaire. For the purposes of questionnaire dissemination, researcher himself visited the colleges over a time for more than 3 weeks and it was distributed to the respondent/faculty members of concerned colleges in their own campus premises. Faculty members, as respondents, indicated their level of agreement with each item across all six constructs using a scale (5-point Likert scale) ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The average time (on the spot) allowed for a questionnaire fill-up was 30 minutes. The respondents were assured that their responses would be kept highly confidential. Regarding the sampling, Sekaran and Boggie (2013) confined about purposive sampling as that related to specific peoples who can give desired information, either such people only ones who have belongs to such information. Based on it, this study used purposive sampling to obtain information from the specific target group i.e, faculty members who can provide related and desired information to achieve the objective of this study and thus, foremost 115 questionnaire were distributed and only 101 were returned completely filled form and used for the analysis. The response rate was 87.83 percent.

The descriptive analysis, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson's coefficient of correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

The regression model for the study of relationship between independent variables and KA is:

$Y=\beta o + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots + e_t$

Where,

βo , $\beta 1$ = Regression coefficient, e_t = Error term

Y= Knowledge Acquisition (KA)

X_1= Books & Journals

X_2= Training & Workshops

X_3= Information and Communication Technology

X_4= Cultural Awareness

X_5= Experience

X_6= Interactive Learning

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis related to knowledge acquisition among faculty member includes gender, qualification, faculty, and working experience. Demographic data were collected through a structured questionnaire and were systematically recorded and analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

Table 1

Descriptive Table of Research Variables and Constructs

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	96	95.0
	Female	5	5.0
Qualification	Master Degree	97	96.0
	M.Phil.	2	2.0
	Ph. D. or equivalent	2	2.0
Faculty	Management	14	13.9
	Humanities	51	50.5
	Education	36	35.6
Working experience	Below 5 years	23	22.8
	5-10 years	36	35.6
	11-20 years	39	38.6
	Above 20 years	3	3.0
	Total (n)	101	100

Note. Survey questionnaire and authors' calculation.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of 101 respondents, 96 were male and only 5 were female, indicating a significant gender disparity, with 95 percent of the respondents being male and only 5 percent female faculty members. This suggests that male faculty members dominate knowledge acquisition and sharing in higher education institutions. Regarding educational qualifications, 97 respondents held a master's degree, while 2 each had completed M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. This indicates that 96 percent of respondents possessed a master's degree, and only 2 percent each had advanced qualifications such as M.Phil. or Ph.D. This highlights that the majority of faculty members engaged in knowledge acquisition and dissemination in higher education institutions possess only a master's degree as their highest qualification.

Faculty-wise, 51 respondents (50.5%) were from the humanities, followed by 35.6 percent from education and 13.9 percent from management faculties, illustrating the dominance of humanities faculty in the sample. In terms of work experience, the largest group of respondents (38.6%) reported having up to 20 years of experience, followed by 35.6 percent with a maximum of 10 years, 22.8 percent with less than 5 years, and only 3 percent with more than 20 years of experience. These findings reveal that most respondents had substantial experience of up to 20 years, while only a small proportion (3%) had over 20 years of professional experience..

Table 2 presented the correlation coefficients results with the positive relationship between knowledge acquisition -dependent variable and all other independent variables. The coefficients indicate that interactive learning has a significant relation with knowledge acquisition (r=0.433). Similarly, there is significant relationship between knowledge acquisition and books, research journal(r= 0.635), which indicate that these two variables have moderate linear correlation. In the same way, the coefficient between knowledge acquisition and training & workshop is 0.195 (r=0.195), which depicts poor correlated factors. The correlation coefficient between knowledge acquisition and information and communication technology is 0.666 (r=0.666), which means moderate linear correlation existed between these two variables.

Table 2

Results of Correlation analysis and Reliability Test

Constructs	Character	Knowledge Acquisition	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Acquisition		1	.844
Books, Research Journal	Correlation	.635**	.842
Training and Workshop	Correlation	.195**	.888
Information & Communication Technology	Correlation	.666**	.836
Cultural awareness	Correlation	.505**	.849
Experience	Correlation	.695**	.824
Interactive Learning	Correlation	.433**	.842

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Note. Survey questionnaire and authors' calculation.

The variables knowledge acquisition and cultural awareness have correlation value 0.505 (r=0.505), which implies moderate relationships. Similarly, bearing correlation value 0.695 (r=0.695), the variable knowledge acquisition and experience have highest correlation value. It can be concluded that all factors have positive and significant relations with knowledge acquisition. Moreover, the degree of correlation found that the highest correlation value is experience, followed by information and communication technology and books, research journal and the recorded p-value was 0.00, indicating ,statistical significance at the 1 percent level.

To check internal consistency of each constructs, Cronbach's Alpha reliability were computed. In this regards, Nunnally (1978) suggested that over 0.7 is considered to a good acceptable level of reliability. In Table 2 shows the overall alpha value for each constructs is more than 0.7 and therefore, which indicates fair degree of reliability.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	6.098	1.190		5.124	.000		
Books, Research Journal	.237	.081	.284	2.913	.004	.497	2.012
Training and Workshop	.113	.051	.169	2.220	.029	.811	1.233
Information & Communication Technology	.158	.078	.210	2.025	.046	.440	2.272
Cultural Awareness	-.051	.077	-.063	-.666	.507	.532	1.879
Experience	.406	.093	.512	4.356	.000	.341	2.930
Interactive Learning	-.221	.100	-.245	-2.199	.030	.382	2.618
R^2	0.556						
F-test	19.620						
p-value (F-test)	0.000						

Note. Survey questionnaire and authors' calculation.

Table 3 shows that the constant value of model was 6.098 which indicate the expected knowledge acquisition when other six independent variables are zero. The coefficient of books, research journal was 0.237 and provided the evidence that increase in one unit of books, research journal, leads to influence on knowledge acquisition by 0.237 units. For this, the recorded p-value was 0.004, which depicts this relationship is statistically significant. The coefficient of training & workshop was 0.113 which shows holding other variables constant, increase one unit of training & workshop leads to increase on knowledge acquisition by 0.113 units. For this, the p-value was 0.029, which depicts that the relationship is statistically significant. Similarly, the coefficient for information and communication technology was 0.158, which indicates one unit increase in information and communication technology, leads to influence on knowledge acquisition by 0.158 units. Its recorded p-value was 0.046, which shows statistically significant. The coefficient of cultural awareness shows that one unit decrease in cultural awareness leads to influence knowledge acquisition negatively by 0.051 units. This relationship was statistically insignificant, since its p-value recorded 0.507. The coefficient for experience was 0.406 and provided the evidence that one unit increase in experience, leads to influence knowledge acquisition by 0.406 units. This relationship was highly significant, since the p-value was recorded 0.000. The coefficient for interactive learning shows one unit decrease in interactive learning, leads to influence knowledge acquisition negatively by 0.221 units. But this relationship was statistically significant, since the p-value was recorded 0.030. Furthermore, the R^2 value depicts the goodness-of-fit of model's, suggesting that the independent variables i.e, books, research journals, training and workshops, information and communication technology (ICT), cultural awareness, experience, and interactive learning explain 55.6 percent of the variability in dependent variable i.e, knowledge acquisition. The F-test value of 19.620 and associated significance level of the p-value was 0.000 indicates that the model of regression predicts knowledge acquisition and statistically significant. Also, considering VIF, every constructs have the value of variance influence factor (VIF) lesser than 5 which indicates no existence of multicollinearity.

Table 4

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	p-value	Decision
H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between books, research journal etc., and knowledge acquisition.	.004	Fail to rejected
H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between training & workshop, and KA.	.029	Fail to rejected
H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between ICT and KA.	.046	Fail to rejected
H_4: There is a significant positive relationship between cultural awareness and KA.	.507	Rejected
H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between experience and KA.	.000	Fail to rejected
H_6: The greater the interactive learning, the greater KA.	.030	Fail to rejected

This study examined the sources of knowledge acquisition by faculty members/instructors of four campuses of the hilly region under Tribhuvan University, Koshi Province. The numerous literature related with factors influencing knowledge acquisition have performed and contributions of literature included empirical evidence for the study. This study highly supported the five research hypotheses i.e, hypothesis 1,2,3,5 and 6 indicating that the books, research journal etc., training & workshop, ICT, experience, and interactive learning significantly contribute to the knowledge acquisition. Regarding the books, research journal and knowledge acquisition, the findings is also supported the study conducted by Belefant Miller and King (2000), their findings were most faculty members regularly read newspapers and books, often incorporating them into their teaching and research purpose. Findings of the study reveals that training & workshop significantly contribute to knowledge acquisition by faculty members and this findings is also supported by Reio and Wiswell (2000), they suggested that numerous learning activities such as formal education, training, imitation, and own directed learning plays significant role while acquiring knowledge. Regarding the information & communication technology (ICT), the findings reveals that significantly contribute to knowledge acquisition and this findings also supported by the study conducted by Kim and Lee (2010), they found that IT application positively associated with public employee's knowledge acquisition and capabilities. Similarly, the findings regarding experience and interactive learning shows significant contribution to knowledge acquisition in higher education institution. This result is also supported by Leonard and Sensiper (1998), who agreed that knowledge related activities of employees can be promoted and encouraged through various social networks such as dialogue, communications, and group or individuals' interactions. But contrary, cultural awareness provides insignificant evidence against KA and this finding contradicted Leonard (1995) suggestion as based on institution capabilities to acquire and create knowledge brings core capabilities of knowledge acquisition.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In focusing, the result of relationship between KA as dependent variable and other six independent variables and how these attributes assist to acquire the knowledge in higher education institution, perspective has been presented as conclusion. The study concluded that, the correlation result depicts that the highest correlation value is experience, followed by ICT and books, research journal and least value remains with training & workshop. Furthermore, regression result also depicted that the coefficient of books, research journal, training & workshop, information & communication technology, and experience and depicted positive relationship with knowledge acquisition. Cultural awareness and interactive learning have negative relationship with knowledge acquisition. Findings of the study become strong evidence to practical understanding of KA by the faculty members. Overall, the key managerial implications of this study could influence internal policy-making related to the effective management of resources such as personnel, materials, and finances within higher education institutions in Nepal.

From the perspective of future research implications, the contributions of this study can be outlined as follows: The factors considered by the researcher could be further validated, and additional factors could be incorporated to enhance the predictive accuracy of the model. Similarly, conducting surveys in different parts of the province or country with a broader population and larger sample size would improve the generalizability of the findings. Given the limited research on

knowledge acquisition in higher education institutions in Nepal, this empirical study contributes not only to future empirical evidence but also to theoretical knowledge in this field. Moreover, further exploration of various statistical tools could offer a more reliable explanation of the relationships among the studied attributes by expanding the scope of the analysis.

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