

A Manifestation of Intimate Partner Violence in Türkiye: Female Poverty and Gender-Based Income Inequality

Türkiye’de Eş/Partner Şiddetinin Bir Görünümü: Kadın Yoksulluğu ve Cinsiyete Dayalı Gelir Eşitsizliği

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Abstract

Poverty and violence emerge as social issues. Since poverty and violence also encompass concepts such as economic inadequacy, inequality, and discrimination, it is important to evaluate them from multiple perspectives. The fact that women, who are part of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, are also involved in poverty for various reasons has made it necessary to address the concepts of poverty and women together. In this context, focusing on the intersection of gender and poverty as a solution to women’s poverty, which is a form of intimate partner violence, will contribute to the field. This study aims to examine the concept of poverty, including income inequality, intimate partner violence, gender, and women's poverty from the perspective of social work, and will attempt to provide solutions to reduce poverty and address gender inequality.

Key Words: Feminization of poverty, income inequality, poverty, social work, violence

Özet

Yoksulluk ve şiddet toplumsal bir sorun olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Yoksulluk ve şiddet ekonomik yetersizlik, eşitsizlik, ayrımcılık gibi kavramları da bünyesinde barındırdığı için kavram değerlendirirken çoklu açıdan değerlendirilmesi de önemlidir. Dezavantajlı ve kırılgan grup içerisinde yer alan kadınların var olan yoksulluk içerisinde de çeşitli sebeplerle yer alıyor olması yoksulluk ve kadın kavramlarının birlikte ele alınmasını gerektirmiştir. Bu kapsamda eş/partner şiddetinin bir görünümü olarak kadın yoksulluğuna çözüm sunma noktasında da toplumsal cinsiyet temelinde kadın ve yoksulluk kavramlarının birlikteliği üzerinde durulması alana katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu çalışma ile birlikte yoksulluk kavramı ve bu kavram içerisinde yer alan gelir eşitsizliği, eş/partner şiddeti, toplumsal cinsiyet ve sosyal hizmet mesleği açısından kadın yoksulluğu temelinde irdelenerek yoksulluğun azaltılmasında ve toplumsal cinsiyet temelinde çözüm önerileri verilmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gelir eşitsizliği, kadın yoksulluğu, sosyal hizmet, şiddet, yoksulluk

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1. Introduction

The simultaneous consideration of violence, poverty, and gender is extremely important from the perspective of human rights and dignity. In this regard, it is essential not only to assess individuals who are victims of violence based on their current situations, but also to evaluate them within their environment. The empowerment approach should be adopted to help them realize their own strength. Intervention plans should be implemented by activating the social and family support networks of individuals and communities who are victims of poverty and violence, at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, while directly involving the individuals in the process. It is important to address these concepts together in order to ensure a life that is worthy of human dignity and to enable individuals to exercise this right by eliminating social injustice.

With the industrial revolution in the late 19th century, the concept of poverty shifted from an individual issue to a social one. Since then, especially after the 1980s, it has become a significant concept both worldwide and in Turkey, emerging as a key issue on the agendas of international organizations and civil society organizations, as well as playing an important role in the formulation of social policies (Yusufoğlu, 2010: 8-10; Sayar Özkan, 2016: 107). Poverty, being a concept that is continuously present and remains relevant, has a scope that can expand at any time. Due to its broad nature, poverty can take different shapes depending on time, place, and the needs of society, varying across cultures. Among the types of poverty, women's poverty stands out as an important area within poverty studies. Examining the details of women's poverty is significant in contributing to research on female poverty and, more generally, in finding solutions to poverty-related issues. Therefore, it is clear that addressing poverty from different disciplines will contribute to the field. This study will evaluate the interrelation of violence, gender, and women's poverty, as well as income inequality, through a multi-perspective approach.

2. Violence

Violence takes various forms, including economic violence, emotional (psychological) violence, physical violence, verbal violence, and sexual violence. Emotional (psychological) violence can manifest as ignoring a person's need for attention, love, and support, constantly degrading friends and family members, controlling and preventing communication with them, expelling from home, or threatening to leave the home. Verbal violence involves behaviors that undermine trust in important matters for the person, using unpleasant nicknames, insults, and offensive language (Coker et al., 2000; Çetiner, 2006). Economic violence refers to the use of financial resources and money as tools for coercion and threats against women. Sexual violence is understood as the use of sexuality as a threat, forcing women to comply with demands in this manner. One of the longstanding problems for women is being forced into sexual relations by their spouses within the marriage union without their consent. The sensitivity of this issue, as well as its lack of visibility, is another well-known fact. Women being treated as objects in this context can be incredibly damaging for them and may lead to health issues related to their well-being.

2.1 Violence in the Context of Gender

The concept of gender is not only related to the cultural values of society, but also concerns how individuals, as men and women, are positioned in society and the expectations regarding how they should behave according to their gender. It also reflects the negative effects of inequality, economic, educational, health, and social issues (Yelboğa & Varol, 2018). Violence refers to individual or collective actions that cause harm to individuals either physically or mentally, leading to injuries, disabilities, or even death. Domestic violence is a form of violence that occurs within the family (Tekeli, 1993). Domestic violence is most often directed towards women and children, and in general, the perpetrator is male. Violence is a multidimensional concept, which also includes the situation of aggression (İlkkaracan & Gülçür, 1996; Çetiner, 2006). Domestic violence is a social problem and is widespread across all groups and classes of women, regardless of social and economic factors, education, or other influences (Browne & Herbert, 1997; Çetiner, 2006).

Women's exposure to violence affects their access to resources and negatively impacts their mental health, causing psychological problems. As a result of the trauma they experience, they may attempt suicide, suffer from disabilities, experience unwanted pregnancies, or even end their lives. The perpetrator of violence against women can be a spouse, relative, partner, neighbor, or even strangers. Therefore, it is crucial to also consider the concept of dating violence, alongside domestic violence and violence against women. Many women may not have full knowledge of what could be considered violence in their relationships. Particularly, due to the lack of information about emotional and psychological violence, they may not even recognize the situation as violence. The concept of violence moves from the strong to the weak, creating a vicious cycle.

Violence against women manifests itself in physical, emotional, psychological, economic, and sexual forms. Poverty and violence feed into each other. Thus, interventions related to the concepts of poverty and violence will contribute to reducing both poverty and violence (Kesici, 2004). The continued presence of violence in life, especially the increase in domestic violence and violence against women, brings women's poverty to light. The rising number of women seeking medical attention at emergency rooms to get a report of assault, and the fact that these same women repeatedly report being subjected to violence for the same reasons, shows that women are caught in a vicious cycle. Their statements that the cause of the violence is economic difficulties, and their claims that they are unable to stand on their own, indicate that the concepts of poverty and violence go hand in hand. The association of these two concepts can lead to the exclusion of women from society.

3. Poverty

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, and although there is no clear definition, it is generally defined as the inability of a population or a segment of the population to meet its basic needs and the individuals living with substandard living conditions, comparable to a minimum survival level (Öztürk & Çetin, 2009: 2661). The absence of a single definition of poverty suggests that poverty draws from all psychosocial channels and affects these areas. Along with the existing forms of poverty, the concept of poverty,

influenced by time, has also included the poverty process related to COVID-19 due to the ongoing pandemic.

3.1. Types of Poverty

The multidimensional nature of poverty has led to various types of poverty. In order to fully understand the concept of poverty, it will be helpful to evaluate it alongside the different types of poverty, which will facilitate comprehension.

3.1.1. Types of Poverty

The other term for poverty at the first degree is the inability to meet basic needs such as nutrition, shelter, and clothing required for human life (Altan, 2004: 146; Sayar Özkan, 2016: 108). Therefore, the poverty line is determined based on whether food expenditures or basic needs can be met. In calculating food expenditures, the cost of a food basket or the amount of expenditure required for the daily calorie intake of an individual is taken into account. When assessing basic needs, necessary food expenditures are added to other essential expenses such as clothing and shelter, and the income required to meet these expenses is calculated. While the expenditure amount determined for food expenses alone is considered the hunger line, the definition that includes other basic needs is referred to as the poverty line (Tokol and Alper, 2015: 184). Poverty gap refers to calculating the income required for individuals below the poverty line to reach that threshold (Uzun, 2003: 157).

3.1.2. Relative Poverty

Relative poverty, also known as, defines the poverty experienced by individuals who can meet their basic needs but fall below the general standard of living in society, which hinders their social participation (İncedal, 2013: 21). With this definition, the comparative conditions of poverty and individuals classified as poor among countries will become clearer.

3.1.2. Urban Poverty

The urban poverty, one of the types of poverty that emerged with the Industrial Revolution, has become a social issue as it brings with it problems such as difficulty in finding a livelihood, struggling to adapt to city life, and migration from rural areas to urban areas. Along with individuals who live in cities but cannot fully benefit from employment opportunities, are economically disadvantaged, and unable to adapt, the concept of slum development has emerged. With the concept of slum development, the visibility of social problems has increased, and it has become associated with terms like discrimination, incompatibility, and the visible manifestation of poverty in cities. These issues are now defined alongside problems such as housing, security, healthcare, and access to social services.

4. Female Poverty

The feminization of poverty, despite women's significant involvement in poverty, was first used by Pierce in 1978 (Duyan, 2003: 360; Sayar Özkan, 2016: 117). Female poverty emphasizes both biological sex and gender. Therefore, the concept of female poverty encompasses a multidimensional experience of poverty arising from gender, poverty itself, and the roles and responsibilities assigned by society.

Research conducted since the second half of the 20th century has shown that women are more likely to experience poverty than men. In 1995, this issue was officially recognized as a significant social problem, and the emergence of this problem was attributed to various factors such as patriarchal structures and economic, social, and cultural perspectives (Kılıç and Eştürk, 2016: 145). Studies addressing different aspects of women's poverty suggest that policies should be redesigned to prioritize women's welfare and contribute to solving this issue.

The hidden nature of women's poverty, and its invisibility, introduces the concept of hidden poverty. This results in the unequal distribution of income and consumption within the family (Kaymak, 2011: 29).

4.1. Female Poverty in Terms of Employment

The goal of national economies is to achieve sustainable development, grow economically, and gain momentum. To reach this objective, it is important that the existing resources and labor are used effectively and sustainably. Women, who form an important part of the population, must contribute to economic growth, and there should be incentives to facilitate their contribution. Due to gender inequality, the social roles and responsibilities imposed by society often create pressure on women, causing them to be in a secondary position in social life. This is a well-known reality. Women who are neglected in their social lives often face similar situations in the economic sphere as well. This situation indicates that there is an inequality in income distribution within national economies, high levels of women's poverty, unemployment, and the disregard for women's labor. The main objective of this study is to examine women's poverty within the broader context of poverty, and to offer policy recommendations, measures, and legal actions to increase female employment. The findings in this study highlight that gender inequality and women's poverty are largely the result of a patriarchal social structure.

Among the factors influencing women's participation in the workforce are the perception of women as unpaid houseworkers, gender stereotypes, the inability to benefit from equal opportunities, limited access to education, unequal pay for equal work, exposure to workplace harassment, violence, the social roles and responsibilities imposed by gender perceptions, which take up almost all of women's living space, the lack of time for leisure activities, and negative societal views towards working women. Furthermore, there are insufficient social opportunities for women and inadequate regulations for encouraging women's participation in the workforce. Due to these reasons, women are excluded both from social participation and from the workforce. National and international projects should be created, and policies should be developed to support female employment. Actions should be taken to promote societal change, encouraging a positive outlook towards women's employment.

To ensure that women do not face the "glass ceiling syndrome," gender inequality should be eliminated in every aspect, and women's labor participation in the workforce should be supported to allow them to play an effective and significant role in the country's economic growth. Clear goals should be set to achieve this. This is crucial because women's poverty reflects the poverty of society, the level of development in a country, its education system, and the social issues faced by the community. For economic growth to be achieved, progress in education, and qualified human resources to be utilized,

women must be included in the workforce. Poverty, especially female poverty, is not just a women's issue; it is a societal problem, and solutions must be developed with this in mind.

In terms of employment, one of the most important steps to eliminate women's poverty is ensuring national unity and supporting this through policies and laws. Women's labor should not remain confined to domestic roles, as this leads to their exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination. Although it may seem that the social aspects of women's non-participation in employment are the primary issue, there are also individual negative consequences. On an individual level, women may fail to recognize their freedoms, become economically dependent, or face economic violence, which hinders their personal development and self-actualization. This reflects the individual negative impacts of women's poverty in the employment sphere.

4.2. Female Poverty from a Gender Perspective

Gender biologically determines whether individuals are male or female, while gender identity encompasses the roles and responsibilities that society assigns to each gender. The way society views women, the roles and responsibilities it imposes on them, and the stereotypes surrounding women can all contribute to women experiencing poverty from a gender perspective. The social perception of women based on their gender often leads to gender-based poverty, which in turn forms the foundation for other areas of female poverty. This is because the first experience of poverty women face is poverty due to their gender.

The perception of gender creates inequality in areas such as employment, education, health, and old age, leading to both deprivation and poverty for women. For example, due to gendered categorization of professions, women may be excluded from certain careers. Ensuring gender equality is crucial to prevent gender-based poverty, and implementing policies, sanctions, and political tools to address this is important. In this regard, politics can play a significant role. Political leadership, combined with the use of media, can help raise awareness and serve as an example for women who are victims of gender inequality. This could make it easier to develop projects and policies that increase women's visibility in society, ensuring their participation in both professional and educational fields.

4.3. Female Poverty in Terms of Health

Women's poverty in health is another area of female poverty. In this context, issues such as women who are victims of violence, women who have attempted suicide, women with psychiatric disorders, women with disabilities, women with chronic illnesses, homeless women, oncology patients, women receiving home care services, and those suffering from chronic illnesses should be evaluated. From this perspective, women's poverty should be addressed in a holistic way.

The denial of women's access to already scarce resources is also evident in the field of health. Women who remain in the private sphere at home are often unable to benefit from public services and lack information about the services available, and they often do not know how to use the information they have. For instance, a disabled woman may experience multiple layers of poverty due to being denied equal opportunities and being excluded from employment and education because of her disability. In another example, women with severe psychiatric disorders may gain weight due to medications, which

leads to their exclusion in a society that holds beauty and aesthetics in high regard, further isolating them.

Violence is a prevalent behavior in our society, often directed at women and occurring within the family, which indicates that women remain trapped in a cycle of violence. In addition to visible physical violence, women may also experience psychological, emotional, economic, and sexual violence. Furthermore, due to their lack of awareness about their rights, they may not know where to turn when they experience violence. From this perspective, the cycle of female poverty continues in relation to violence. In this context, women who are brought to hospitals after calling the police or requesting help from law enforcement through apps such as Kadess should be informed about existing services, made aware of available resources, and provided with psychosocial support services. These services must be conducted in a manner that respects confidentiality and ethical standards.

Gender-based violence, at its most severe, can push women to the point of contemplating suicide. In these cases, some women may not be able to endure the increasing violence and may attempt to take their own lives. As a result, deaths may occur, or in less fatal cases, disability may result. This situation leads to both poverty due to violence and the challenges of living with a disability, which contributes to health-related poverty. Female poverty stemming from violence can be further aggravated by disability, while disability-induced poverty can reinforce the cycle of violence-related poverty.

Women with chronic illnesses such as those requiring dialysis may experience additional stress and responsibilities due to gender-based societal roles and obligations, which continue to affect them despite their health issues. This can lead to further economic and health-related poverty. A woman who must undergo regular medical treatment, but who lacks economic freedom, may be unable to afford the necessary medications, leading to further deterioration of her health.

Women caring for disabled or dependent individuals at home often bear the full responsibility for their care. This added burden, on top of their regular roles and responsibilities, can cause stress and anxiety, negatively affecting their quality of life and lowering their living standards.

Women undergoing oncology treatment may experience depression due to the illness itself. The lack of social and family support during this process may prevent them from utilizing the treatment period productively, leading to feelings of deprivation and poverty. Similarly, women receiving home care due to chronic illness or being a caregiver themselves may feel like a burden and experience feelings of stagnation and a decline in quality of life.

Women who are abandoned for various reasons, without any support, and who need medical treatment, may face extreme isolation once their treatment ends, potentially leading to homelessness. These women should not be considered separately from the issue of women's poverty in health, as they experience poverty in multiple areas, including health, human rights, and education.

When evaluating female poverty from a health perspective, it can be observed that women experiencing poverty in health do so in varying degrees across different dimensions. A woman may experience several forms of health-related poverty simultaneously, and these areas of poverty may interact with

one another, potentially creating a cyclical pattern. What is crucial here is taking steps to ensure that women experiencing health-related poverty can access the health services they need.

4.4. Female Poverty in Terms of Old Age

Women, as is well known, face poverty in various areas, and they can also experience poverty in the area of aging. In this context, women's poverty due to aging is linked to women who are unable to fulfill the roles and responsibilities society assigns to them, causing them to remain in a passive position in society, feel useless, and, in some cases, face economic violence when they cannot participate in employment. Furthermore, it is considered important to assess women's poverty in terms of retirement and social security systems from an aging perspective. Women who are able to participate in employment at a young age may experience poverty in terms of employment later in life. If they do not participate in the workforce and are unable to invest in health insurance for their later years, their health may deteriorate over time, and the lack of coverage under social insurance could lead to another form of poverty—this time, in terms of health insurance—further exacerbating the poverty experienced by women in various areas of life.

From a social policy perspective, it is crucial to adopt inclusive, preventive, and protective measures within the framework of social security to prevent women's poverty. Since women experience poverty in many different ways across society, these measures would help reduce the number of poverty types that women face, taking important steps toward addressing this issue.

4.5. Female Poverty from a Human Rights Perspective

The fact that women have not been able to enjoy equal rights with men since the beginning of humanity, experiencing human rights violations and facing inequality, constitutes women's poverty from a human rights perspective. Although efforts have been made through laws to address gender inequality and human rights violations, and feminist movements have been promoted, the issue still persists in today's society.

The deprivation of women from basic rights such as the right to education, the right to work, and even the right to live demonstrates that women's poverty also exists from a human rights perspective. By adopting a rights-based approach, ensuring that women can benefit from equal opportunities in all areas with men, and supporting women to live a life that is worthy of their human rights and dignity, it is possible to help them overcome poverty.

4.6. Female Poverty in Terms of Education

The barriers preventing women from experiencing poverty in education include the lack of equal opportunities for women in education, their inability to benefit from equal opportunities in this regard, and societal stereotypes that create negative perceptions about women's ability to study and participate in education. The higher the education level in a society, the greater its support for economic growth and scientific advancement. From this perspective, it is believed that when women are removed from secondary positions in education and given equal opportunities with men, the dependency of societies and countries on external factors will decrease.

5. Income Inequality

It is important to identify the channels through which income inequality negatively affects economic growth, as well as the adverse consequences of income distribution injustice on social welfare.

In cases of high income inequality, issues such as political instability and imperfections in credit markets also express the relationship between economic growth and income inequality. In this context, it is known that income inequality varies from society to society and also differentiates by gender within those societies. Women suffer from income inequality, which negatively impacts their impoverishment.

Increasing employment opportunities, eliminating gender-biased practices in the workplace, ensuring a fair and equal distribution of income, and removing the barriers to poverty are all important steps to address women's poverty and ensure that women have a place in the economy, benefiting from the concept of equal pay for equal work. The concept of income inequality is not only related to fields such as economics but is also connected to areas like poverty, social issues, social policy, social services, and psychology. Therefore, studies conducted in the area of income inequality should adopt a holistic, humanistic approach.

There are various approaches regarding the impact of income inequality on economic growth, including neoclassical, classical, modern economic theories, credit markets, sociopolitical instability, political economy, and birth rate inequality. These approaches, which also cover women's poverty and gender-based income inequality, require the development of practices that eliminate inequality and social dissatisfaction, with laws that ensure the stability of institutions that maintain social peace.

6. Violence, Female Poverty, and Social Work

Poverty brings along exclusion and discrimination, and it is well-known that women are disproportionately affected by this exclusion. Discrimination, from a psychosocial perspective, is a concept used to describe prejudice towards individuals, groups, and communities. It is beneficial to consider discrimination from multiple angles. This is because discrimination not only expresses the limitation of access to resources but also refers to how specific groups—due to factors like age, gender, language, religion, race, and economic status—are subjected to this limitation. Psychological violence, sexual violence, economic violence, and physical violence, which are types of violence, are used as tools to perpetuate discrimination. Women are subjected to all forms of violence, such as being deprived of inheritance, being insulted, physically abused, receiving degrading and dismissive remarks, being coerced into sexual relations without consent, being forced to work, or being prevented from working, in their living environments. The discrimination women face due to their gender, causing them to be marginalized, also leads to social exclusion. Socially excluded women feel powerless, endure domestic bullying, fail to develop themselves, and cannot fully benefit from their human rights.

The fact that women do not have equal rights with men, and their inability to utilize existing rights, demonstrates the discrimination they experience. As a result of the poverty and discrimination they face, women may become even poorer. Social work is one of the most important professions aimed at

providing solutions to existing social problems in society. Social workers fulfill their professional roles and responsibilities justly, ensuring the fair distribution of resources, mediating, providing guidance, counseling, and educating, in areas such as poverty and female poverty, along with other social issues.

To support the high social participation and inclusion of women, who are among the disadvantaged, vulnerable, and fragile groups in society, social work professionals play a critical role in influencing policymakers, advocating for women's rights, identifying their strengths, and working to enhance women's social and familial support systems. These professionals also engage in practices that raise awareness of women's needs. Social work is essential in fighting poverty while ensuring the effective and efficient use of available resources. Therefore, working in the field of female poverty involves identifying gaps, proposing solutions, and mobilizing stakeholders. Social workers also conduct rights-based interventions in areas such as health, employment, education, aging, gender equality, and freedom.

Social workers provide psychosocial support to women who are financially struggling and in need of social support after the death of their spouses or following divorce. They help these women access social assistance and social security services, while also conducting comprehensive research to increase women's visibility and importance in society. Furthermore, social workers focus on integrating women into social life, removing gender-biased practices, addressing gender inequalities that trigger female poverty, and helping women develop their self-confidence. Efforts to share the experiences of women who have overcome the "glass ceiling" syndrome are also essential in tackling the issue of female poverty. Expanding the concept of female poverty to include family, social support, and community dimensions contributes to the broader field of poverty and women's studies.

7. Conclusion

Women's rights occupy an extremely important place in the literature. Based on the principle that every individual should be able to live with dignity, efforts should be made to advance women's rights, reduce cases of violence, enable women to gain economic independence, and encourage their participation in society. Adherence to the principle of equal pay for equal work, ensuring gender equality, and providing equal access to educational opportunities should be established within the framework of humanism.

The concept of nonviolence is one of the most effective ways to gain public support by focusing on the core issue and breaking the cycle of violence and counter-violence, allowing the media to shift away from irrelevant acts of violence. It is about producing constructive outcomes. While opposing violence, the efforts and projects aimed at not resorting to violence, as well as breaking the vicious cycle of violence, are crucial in offering inclusive solutions developed with a holistic approach to nonviolence. In this regard, campaigns against violence should use nonviolent language and approach the problem with a comprehensive perspective, making it possible to break the vicious cycle of violence. Supporting and conducting nonviolent campaigns, rather than violent ones, is essential in leading social change and transformation.

Social work, a profession that influences policymakers, advocates for the eradication of poverty, specifically focusing on combating female poverty, and plays the role of an agent of change, is vital in promoting women's rights. Social workers advocate for women by ensuring they exercise their right to self-determination and propose collaborative intervention plans. In the multidisciplinary field of poverty, reducing female poverty in terms of education, employment, social policy, human rights, and health, is crucial in providing services and addressing women's needs.

Supporting women to plan their time independently and alleviating the negative burdens of gender roles and responsibilities is essential. Local-level support should be provided through collaboration with organizations such as the Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Labor, Public Education Centers, municipalities, and other stakeholders to address the shared problem of female poverty in society. This collaborative approach is important due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Social justice, equality, and the principle of living a life that is worthy of human dignity are fundamental to social services, a rights-based discipline. In the area of women's poverty, raising awareness, sharing experiences, and conducting group work to help women access their rights and reintegrate into society are vital supportive activities.

Authors Contributions

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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