

PLAGIARISM IS A CRIME: TOWARDS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *Admittedly, students' academic plagiarism comes in different forms. Surprisingly, little is known about the most common form of student's plagiarism due to inadequate research. This study was aimed to fill this knowledge gap by empirically examined the most common forms of students' academic plagiarism in the Wa municipality of Ghana. The choice of the study sitting was influenced by the increasing educational activities in the area. The population of the study comprised of all tertiary students in the municipality. The positivist (quantitative) research design was deployed. Convenience sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents. Data for the study were elicited from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were the main instrument used in gathering primary data. The constructs for the questionnaires were adopted from Sentleng and King (2012) which was modified to address the objectives of the study. The data were analyzed with the aid of Predictive Analytics Software (PASW). The results were presented using Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), Relative Important Index (RII) and Chi-square Test. The study revealed the most frequent forms of students plagiarism as follows: Invented or altered data (M=4.16, SD= 0.9), Writing an assignment for your friend (M=4.10, SD=0.9), Copy a text without acknowledgement (M=4.05, SD=1.3), Submitted someone's work without their permission (M=3.41, SD=1.4), Paraphrased without acknowledging the source (M=2.41, SD=1.7), Summarizing a text without acknowledgement (M=2.73, SD=1.4). Chi-square Test revealed that there is a significant difference between Gender and age of students (χ^2 -value = 17.98, df =3, p-value<0.05). Moreover, there is significant difference between religion and age (χ^2 -value = 6.55, df =3, p-value=0.05). It is concluded that the most common forms of plagiarism among the students were paraphrased without acknowledging the source (Patchworks), Copy a text without acknowledgement, Invented or altered data (Sham), imitating friends work (Pastiches) and. Training on academic writings need to be intensified.*

KEYWORDS: Plagiarism, Forms, Prevalence, Students, Wa-Municipality, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism is difficult to define since it comes in numerous forms. Many authors (Appiah 2016; Collin, 2007; East, 2009; Howard, 1995; Pecorari, 2008; Sallen et al., 2012) believe plagiarism involve the act of stealing, poor referencing, no referencing, poor quotation, invented data, imitation, cheating and any other form of academic misconduct. Appiah (2016) asserted that patchy works, sham and pastiche are all forms of plagiarism but mostly ignored.

Bretag (2013) argued that academic integrity and consistency are both important in maintaining the status quo of an academic institution. The Author further reported that when people remained unpunished, this has the possibility to exert doom on the institutions and its reputation and its associated degrees and wards. Sentleng & King (2012) were among the earlier writers in Africa to have conducted an empirical study on plagiarism among undergraduate students in South Africa. The Authors reported on the most frequent and common form of plagiarism as follows: Paraphrased without acknowledging the source, Submitted someone's work without their permission, Summarizing a text without acknowledgement, Copy a text without acknowledgement, Invented or altered data, Writing an assignment for your friend, Using Submitted work as an individual while written by a group, quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, Invented references or bibliography and Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own. These Authors concluded that internet source is among the most frequent form of plagiarism among South African students.

Carroll (2013) postulated that Plagiarism is on the increase due to low publicity and policy attention. Although some countries have adopted fierce policy on plagiarism many more have not hence the global rate is still high. Culture therefore has a relationship with people inclination to engage in academic misconduct. Rowell (2013) asserted that the existence of policy and deployment of Turnitin has drastically reduced plagiarism to a barren minimum among most United Kingdom universities. It enforces that Turnitin can be adopted to prevent plagiarism indices in most developing economies where incidence are on the increase. Bahadori, et al. (2012) empirically reviewed concept related to plagiarism, its causes, prevalence, detection, and prevention. The Authors reported that the prevalence of plagiarism is high more especially among top class media personnel. Meanwhile high prevalence rate had also been recorded in different kinds of profession, e.g. Medical, Teaching, Engineering, Politics, Nursing among others.

Appiah (2016) asserted that in Ghana there is a policy on copy right but there is no such policy on plagiarism. Only few institutions have adopted by-laws to combat student's plagiarism. Most undergraduate students do not even understand the full meaning of the term. As a result of this it is quite difficult to distinguish between internal and non-intentional forms of academic plagiarism. Meanwhile, generally the prevalence rate is high and the most common form comes from the internet. And this is largely due to laziness and poor time management including procrastination. Most Ghanaian undergraduates do not consider pastiche, sham and patchy works a form of academic plagiarism.

Landau, Druen & Arcuri (2002) the various forms of plagiarism can be dealt with if student are adequately trained and assisted in the academic writings. This can take different forms. For instance, teaching students on appropriate referencing, quotation, in-text citation, phrasing and paraphrasing among others. This paper comes as a follow up to what Appiah (2016) earlier reported about the high incidence of plagiarism among undergraduate students. This paper answers the question which types of plagiarism are most common in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies had been conducted on plagiarism. These includes prevalence, forms, causes preventive measures and including national policy adoption. So many theories have then deployed in previous studies to help understand the issue better. For instance Appiah (2016) employed theory of planned behaviour, Batane (2010) employed social cognitive theory, Sentleng and King (2012) used self-efficacy theory, Sallen et al. (2012) adopted extended theory of planned behaviour. In almost all the cases the theories were feasible. This study presents empirical review on plagiarism among students

Sentleng & King (2012) were among the earlier writers in Africa to have conducted an empirical study on plagiarism among undergraduate students in South Africa. The Authors reported on the most frequent and common form of plagiarism as follows: Paraphrased without acknowledging the source, Submitted someone's work without their permission, Summarizing a text without acknowledgement, Copy a text without acknowledgement, Invented or altered data, Writing an assignment for your friend, Using Submitted work as an individual while written by a group, quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, Invented references or bibliography and Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own. These Authors concluded that internet source is among the most frequent form of plagiarism among South African students.

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Bretag (2013) argued that academic integrity and consistency are both important in maintaining the status quo of an academic institution. The Author further reported that when people remained unpunished, this has the possibility to exert doom on the institutions and its reputation and its associated degrees and wards.

Austin & Brown (1999) Indicated that policy on plagiarism had been geared towards one direction. The authors reported that lecturers need to be considered in any policy regarding plagiarism else they may end up thinking that the students are doing the right thing which at the very long run proves otherwise. Moreover some lectures themselves do not have adequate

knowledge on plagiarism which makes it quite difficult for them to assist students in times of need on how to avoid plagiarism.

Landau, Druen & Arcuri (2002) the various forms of plagiarism can be dealt with if students are adequately trained and assisted in the academic writings. This can take different forms. For instance, teaching students on appropriate referencing, quotation, in-text citation, phrasing and paraphrasing among others. The Authors believe that when individual students are empowered this help to reduce the misconducts that goes on in the academic world.

Compton & Pfau (2008) posited that inoculating against plagiarism among students take time to achieve better results. However, this also needs to be done in order to address the high prevalence of student's plagiarism. Burke (2005) conducted a study on plagiarism detection and the role of librarians and reported that universities need to be more proactive in handling students on how to deal with student's plagiarism.

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Batane (2010) had emphasized on the need to deploy more sophisticated intervention softwares in order to win the fight against plagiarism. Albeit, turning to Turnitin is not a bad idea at all. Bahadori, et al. (2012) empirically reviewed concept related to plagiarism, its causes, prevalence, detection, and prevention. The Authors reported that the prevalence of plagiarism is high more especially among top class media personnel. Meanwhile high prevalence rate had also been recorded in different kinds of professions, e.g Medical, Teaching, Engineering, Politics, Nursing among others.

Alsmadi et al. (2014) have also conducted empirical studies on accuracy and challenges in detecting possible plagiarism among students the authors indicated that there is a need to develop more critical detective softwares to help determine the seriousness of plagiarism at a different level of individual academic studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study was aimed to examine the most common forms of students' academic plagiarism in the Wa municipality of Ghana. The population of the study comprised of all tertiary students in the municipality. The positivist (quantitative) research design was used deployed. Convenience sampling technique was used to select 200 participants in the study. Preferably, stratified sampling would have been more appropriate however field data for this study came from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were the main instrument used in gathering primary data. The constructs on the questionnaires were adopted and from Sentleng and King (2012) modified for the study. These comprised of ten (10) questions carefully designed to cater for all forms of student cheating behaviour. The field data were analyzed with the aid of Predictive Analytics Software (PASW). The results were presented using means, standard deviations, relative important index and chi-square test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Demographics

Class Level	Age				P-value	X ²	D.F
	>20	20-24	30-34	35-39			
First year	15	25	0	0	0.000	453.984 ^a	15
Second year	12	15	0	0			
Third year	0	25	0	0			
Fourth year	0	53	0	0			
Masters	0	0	44	0			
PhD	0	0	0	11			
Religion	>20	20-24	30-34	35-39	0.088	6.550 ^a	3
Christian	27	106	43	11			
Muslim	0	12	1	0			
Gender	>20	20-24	30-34	35-39	0.000	17.977 ^a	3
Male	27	97	28	11			
Female	0	21	16	0			

Source: Field survey, 2016. D.F=Degree of freedom, X²= Chi-square

Table 1.1 shows the demographic characteristics of students on the issue of plagiarism. The study depicts relationship or difference that exists between class level, religion, gender and age of students. It was revealed there is a significant difference between class level and age with χ^2 - value = 453.98, $df=15$ and p-value = 0.000 less than the significant value 0.05 at 95% confidence interval. We deduce that, majority (25) students in first year were in age 20-24 category however; only 15 were in age 20-24 category. For the second year students, majority were in age 20-24 while as 12 were in age 20-24. Third year (25), and four (53) respectively were all in age

20-24. Conversely, at the Masters level 44 were in age 30-34 category and at PhD level 11 were in age 35-39 category.

Religiously, there is no significant difference between religion and age. As indicated, χ^2 -value = 6.55, $df = 3$ and p-value = 0.055 is greater than the significant value 0.05 at 90% confidence interval. Unexpectedly those below age 20, Majority (27) were Christians and none were Muslims. In age 20-24 majority (106) again were Christians meanwhile merely 12 were Muslims. Adding, in age 30-34, 43 were Christians and only 1 was a Muslim. Comparably, in age 35-39, Christians (11) were still dominating over the Muslims (0).

Gender wise, there is a significant difference between Gender and age of students. The study depicts a χ^2 -value = 17.98, $df = 3$ and the p-value = 0.00 is less than the significant value 0.05 at 99% confidence interval. For age below 20years, males (27) dominate over their females (0) counterpart. Also in age 20-24, 97 of the students were males and other (21) were females. In age 30-34 category, 28 were males and 16 were females. In conclusion, within 35-39, all (11) the respondents were males.

Table 2: Forms of Plagiarism

Items	Never	Once	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Total
Paraphrased without acknowledging the source	81(40.5)	42(21.0)	15(7.5)	37(18.5)	25(12.5)	200
Summarizing a text without acknowledgement	69(34.5)	16(8.0)	40(20.0)	50(25.0)	25(12.5)	200
Copy a text without acknowledgement	26(13.0)	1(.5)	15(7.5)	53(26.5)	105(52.5)	200
Submitted someone's work without their permission	26(13.0)	29(14.5)	50(25.0)	27(13.5)	68(34.0)	200
Invented or altered data	12(6.0)	0	13(6.5)	93(46.5)	82(41.0)	200
Writing an assignment for your friend	0	12(6.0)	38(19.0)	67(33.5)	83(41.5)	200
Using quotation marks without proper acknowledgement	0	25(12.5)	52(26.0)	80(40.0)	43(21.5)	200
Invented references or bibliography	27(13.5)	66(33.0)	50(25.0)	27(13.5)	30(15.0)	200
Submitted work as an individual while written by a group	12(6.0)	0	40(20)	93(46.5)	55(27.5)	200
Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own	0	52(26.0)	50(25.0)	45(22.5)	51(25.5)	200

Source: Field survey, 2016

The study reveals the various forms of plagiarism among students. It was discovered that, 40.5% have never paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source; astonishingly, 21% of the students for once have paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, Occasionally, 18.5% of the students paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, on a regular bases, 12.5% of the students paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, notwithstanding, merely 7.5% hardly paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source. There is no doubt that, student's attitudes towards in academic field is alarming. The study discovered a remarkably result as 34.5% of the students have never Summarize text without acknowledgement author, other 25% Occasionally Summarize text without acknowledgement author, also 12.5% of the students regularly Summarize text without acknowledgement author, 8% has for once Summarize a text without acknowledgement author, meanwhile, 20% of the students hardly Summarize a text without acknowledgement author. Interestingly, 52.5% of the students Copy text without acknowledgement the author. This exhibits a higher index of plagiarism, other 26.5% of the students occasionally practices plagiarism since they copy text without acknowledgement the author, also, 13 merely 0.5% of the students for once have Copy text without acknowledgement the author. Another, 7.5% of the students rarely Copy text without acknowledgement the author. Significantly, 13% of the students have never Copy text without acknowledgement the author.

In addition, majority (34%) of the students regularly submit other peoples work without their permission. Other 25% hardly submit other peoples work without their permission; also 13.5% of the students occasionally plagiarize by submitting someone's work without permission. However, 14.5% and 13% of the students have for once and never respectively submitted someone's work without permission. Coincidentally, 46.5% of the students occasionally Invent or alter data without referring to the source, other 41% regularly Invent or alter data without referring to the source. Another, 6.5% rarely Invent or alter data without referring to the source, however, merely 6% never Invent or alter data without referring to the source. Once again the study revealed that, majority (41.5%) of the students regularly plagiarize by writing an assignment for their friends, other 33.5% plagiarize occasionally by Writing an assignment for their friends, however, 19% and 6% hardly and once plagiarize respectively by writing for their friends. Majority (40%) of the students occasionally Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, other 25.5% regularly Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement. Also 12.5% of the students Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, considerably 26% hardly Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement.

Extensively, 33% for once plagiarize by inventing references or bibliography, other 25% hardly Invent references or bibliography, also 15% of the students regularly plagiarize by Inventing references or bibliography however, merely 13.5% occasionally and never Invent references or bibliography respectively. The study depicted that, 46.5% of the students Submit work as an individual while written by a group, other 27.5% regularly submit work as an individual while written by a group. However, 20% rarely submit work as an individual while written by a group; surprisingly merely 6% of the students never submit work as an individual while written by a group. To crown it all 26% of the students once Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own, other 25.5% regularly Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own, also

22.5% occasionally Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own meanwhile 25% rarely of the students Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own.

Table 3: Relative Important Index on forms of Plagiarism

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	RII	Rank	RII Index
Paraphrased without acknowledging the source	2.4150	1.47773	0.72	1 st	Medium important
Summarizing a text without acknowledgement	2.7300	1.46555	0.65	2 nd	Medium important
Copy a text without acknowledgement	4.0500	1.34033	0.39	8 th	Low important
Submitted someone's work without their permission	3.4100	1.41489	0.52	4 th	Low important
Invented or altered data	4.1650	.99636	0.37	10 th	Low important
Writing an assignment for your friend	4.1050	.91551	0.38	9 th	Low important
Using quotation marks without proper acknowledgement	3.7050	.94469	0.46	6 th	Low important
Invented references or bibliography	2.8350	1.25925	0.63	3 th	Low important
Submitted work as an individual while written by a group	3.8950	1.00450	0.42	7 th	Low important
Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own	3.4798	1.13866	0.49	5 th	Low important

Source: Field survey, 2016. To measure the relative importance of each factor or variable used, indices of range 0.85-1.00= High important; 0.65-0.84= Medium important; 0.00-0.64=Low important.

The Table 4.2 demonstrates the forms plagiarism among students their ranks in order of importance. The study discovered that, Paraphrasing other peoples work without acknowledging the source with (M= 2.4150, SD = 1.4773, RII= 0.72) and corresponding ranking of 1st position was relatively Medium important. Summarizing text without acknowledgement with (M= 2.7300, SD = 1.46555, RII= 0.65) and corresponding ranking of 2nd position was also relatively Medium important. Copying a text without acknowledgement with (M= 4.0500, SD = 1.34033, RII= 0.39) and corresponding ranking of 8th position was of low important. It was also discovered that Submitting someone's work without their permission with M= 3.4100, SD = 1.41489, RII= 0.52 and corresponding ranking of 4th position was of low important.

In addition, it was indicated from the study that, students Invention or altering of data without acknowledging the source ranked low important however, it exhibits M=4.1650, SD=0.99636, RII= 0.37 and a corresponding ranking position of 10th. Writing an assignment for a friend was other form of plagiarism which ranked 9th position with M=4.1050, SD=0.91551, RII= 0.38 and it was of low important. And also, using quotation marks without proper acknowledgement ranked

6th position with $M=3.7050$, $SD=0.94469$, $RII= 0.46$ meanwhile it was of low important. Invention of references or bibliography was ranked 3rd position with $M=2.8350$, $SD=1.25925$, $RII= 0.63$ however it was of low important. Again Submission work as an individual while written by a group was ranked 7th position with $M=3.8350$, $SD=1.00450$, $RII= 0.42$ conversely it was of low important. Finally, it was shown that students plagiarized by Copying work from the internet and submit as their own. This was ranked at the 5th position with $M=3.4798$, $SD=1.13866$, $RII= 0.49$ and it was of low important.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was aimed to determine the various forms of plagiarism practices among tertiary students. The study is poised to rank their degree of occurrence in order to decipher policy action. As previously reported by Appiah-karikari (2016) in his study the incidence of plagiarism among undergraduate students in Ghana, the Author asserted that majority of the students do not consider patch works as a form of plagiarism hence referencing are oftentimes ignored. This assertion supports the present study in diverse ways. For instance It was discovered that, 40.5% of the students have paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source; astonishingly, 21% of the students for once have paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, Occasionally, 18.5% of the students paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, on a regular bases, 12.5% of the students paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source, notwithstanding, 7.5% hardly paraphrased other peoples work without acknowledging the source. These explain the alarming rate of plagiarism among students. This finding further relates the works of Howard (1995) possible causes of this may be due to lack of adequate knowledge on paraphrasing and referencing as indicated by Appiah-karikari (2016). Howard (1995) as cited in Sentleng and King (2012) posited that *“Non-attribution of sources involves writing a paper including passages copied exactly from the work of another, regardless of whether the work is published or unpublished or whether it comes from a printed or electronic source, without providing firstly footnotes, endnotes, in-text-references or parenthetical notes that cite the source, and secondly quotation marks or block indentation to indicate precisely what is copied from the source”*(Howard 1995: 799).

The study discovered a remarkably result as 34.5% of the students have Summarize text without acknowledgement author, other 25% Occasionally Summarize text without acknowledgement author, also 12.5% of the students regularly Summarize text without acknowledgement author, 8% has for once Summarize a text without acknowledgement author, meanwhile, 20% of the students hardly Summarize a text without acknowledgement author. This result corroborates the findings of both Colin (2007: 29) and Howard (1995: 799). These authors maintained that it is sometimes the result of inexperience regarding referencing and academic writing skills by students. Many notable authors have previously revealed similar findings (Sousa Silva, 2013; Sentleng and King, 2012; Teodoreseu & Andrei, 2009; Wheeler, 2009; Pecorari, 2008; Rimer, 2003; Thompson, 2002)

Interestingly, 52.5% of the students Copy text without acknowledgement the author. This exhibits a higher index of plagiarism, other 26.5% of the students occasionally practices plagiarism since they copy text without acknowledgement the author, also, 13 merely 0.5% of the students for once have Copy text without acknowledgement the author. Another, 7.5% of the students rarely Copy text without acknowledgement the author. Significantly, 13% of the students have Copy text without acknowledgement the author. *Sentleng and King (2012) and Pecorari (2008) works support this present finding.*

In addition, majority (34%) of the students regularly submit other peoples work without their permission. Other 25% hardly submit other peoples work without their permission; also 13.5% of the students occasionally plagiarize by submitting someone's work without permission. However, 14.5% and 13% of the students have for once and never respectively submitted someone's work without permission. Colin, (2007) summarized all the above behaviour when He established that *cheating* is copying, borrowing, purchasing or obtaining another person's work, with or without their consent, and claiming or pretending it as your own work. This form of plagiarism is committed deliberately, which means the writer had the intention to deceive. There are various practices that constitute cheating such as paraphrasing an argument or wording without proper acknowledgement of the original source, submitting the same or very similar work more than once to gain academic credit, presenting group work as an individual effort, submitting bought re-written papers as original work, falsification of data or making up of statistical results.

As cited in stenleng and King (2012) Patch writing is “copying from a source presenting an argument that is the combination of your own and a significant percentage of copied words of the original author without acknowledging the source” (Colin 2007: 29). From the survey 46.5% of the students occasionally Invent or alter data without referring to the source, other 41% regularly Invent or alter data without referring to the source. Another, 6.5% rarely Invent or alter data without referring to the source, however, merely 6% never Invent or alter data without referring to the source. Once again the study revealed that, majority (41.5%) of the students regularly plagiarize by writing an assignment for their friends, other 33.5% plagiarize occasionally by Writing an assignment for their friends, however, 19% and 6% hardly and once plagiarize respectively by writing for their friends. Majority (40%) of the students occasionally Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, other 25.5% regularly Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement. Also 12.5% of the students Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, considerably 26% hardly Use quotation marks without proper acknowledgement.

Extensively, 33% for once plagiarize by inventing references or bibliography, other 25% hardly Invent references or bibliography, also 15% of the students regularly plagiarize by Inventing references or bibliography however, merely 13.5% occasionally and never Invent references or bibliography respectively. The study depicted that, 46.5% of the students Submit work as an individual while written by a group, other 27.5% regularly submit work as an individual while written by a group. Logue (2004) and Sisti (2007) argued that in addition to the above students do sometimes purchase assignment or invent the substantial parts of their academic assignments.

All these immoral behaviour in academics constitute plagiarism in one way or the other. Sentleng and King (2012) support these assertions.

However, 20% rarely submit work as an individual while written by a group; surprisingly only 6% of the students never submit work as an individual while written by a group. To crown it all 26% of the students once Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own, other 25.5% regularly Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own, also 22.5% occasionally Copy a work from the internet and submit as one's own meanwhile 25% rarely of the students Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own. Whether this is done intentionally or unintentionally many authors have previously established that such behavioral practices are common among students most especially first year undergraduate students (Coetzee, & Breytenbach, 2006; Cronin, 2003; Ellery, 2008)

In conclusion, the study had revealed the most common forms of plagiarism among students at the tertiary level as outlined by the study objective. The relative importance index was used to rank the various forms of plagiarism. It has been discovered that paraphrased without acknowledging the source and summarizing a text without acknowledgement were the most frequent forms of plagiarism among the study population. Other forms of plagiarism do occur but at a moderate frequency. These were also identified as follows: Copy a text without acknowledgement, Submitted someone's work without their permission, Invented or altered data Writing an assignment for your friend, Using quotation marks without proper acknowledgement, Invented references or bibliography, Submitted work as an individual while written by a group and Copy a work from the internet & submit as one's own. It is suggested that education on plagiarism must be intensified. Moreover, first year students need especial attention to avoid plagiarism since the root cause of it is traceable to their immediate changed environment (Senior High School) (Appiah, 2016; Sentleng and King, 2012).

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