ECONOMIC RECESSION AND MIGRATION: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

***[1] Oli, Nneka Perpetua.; *[1] Ibekwe, Christopher Chimaobi & *[2] Jack, Jackson T.C.B**
*[1] Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
*[2] Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
+2348034033930
nnekaoli@yahoo.com
+2348032664148
ibekwe4all@yahoo.com
+2348037598165
jackjt@fuotuoke.edu.ng

Abstract
The economic downturn of most developed economies appears to be taking some ugly tolls on weaker and dependent economies of developing societies. The paper examined the link between economic recession and migration in Nigeria. The theoretical thrust of the study is the push-pull theory. Secondary data from textbooks, journals, online and organizational publications were used. Although Nigeria is traditionally an important destination for migrants, especially in the West African sub-region, evidence has revealed that there are more people emigrating from than immigrating to Nigeria. It was found that about 1,041,284 Nigerian nationals live abroad. The factors influencing migration of Nigerians include, rising unemployment, poverty, lack of economic opportunities, dearth of basic socio-economic infrastructures, and insecurity. However, the propensity to emigrate is particularly high among the highly skilled, hence about 10.7% of them who were trained in Nigeria work abroad. The resultant effect is the human and capital exportation to foreign lands. Therefore, the study recommended that government should lessen dependence on oil and diversify, especially into agriculture as to create more jobs. The fight against terror should be intensified as to restore sense of safety and secured socio-economic environment. Lastly, social amenities should be continously made available and maintained to discourage mass emigration.

Keywords: Economic recession, emigration, migration, recession, unemployment.

Introduction
Globally, the economic downturn of most developed economies like the United States (U.S) and Western Europe appears to be taking some ugly tolls on weaker and dependent economies of developing societies since 2008. World Bank (2009) estimated that 130-155 million people experienced poverty amidst sharply rising food and fuel prices, and up to 53 million additional people were pushed into poverty due to weaker economic growth in most countries. Some of the factors influencing the current crisis have been associated with the increased lending with little regulatory oversight, particularly in the housing markets which spread financial risk to a range of instruments that lacked proper capital backing (Orozco, 2009). One result was the non-existence of leading investment banks which produced a severe credit crisis and prompted the U.S government to seize some financial institutions and introduced financial recovery schemes. As a result access to critical loans that many developing nations, consumers, businesses and even industries rely on declined. The impact of the liquidity crisis has global repercussions, strongly affecting real sector economies that are in need of credit in order to operate and has led to slow growth projections since 2009 (World Economic Outlook - WEO, 2012).

This brought in its wake enormous increase in the level of unemployment, resulting in millions of redundancies. In the U.S for instance, Tuttle (2017) reported that since the great recession began, hundreds of thousands of American workers lost their jobs each month before the eventful job recovery of the Obama administration. Statistics from Canada indicate that unemployment moved up from 0.6% to 7.2% in January 2009 marking the highest level of job loss in several decades. Japan is in its longest, deepest and most severe recession in the post-war period, as the economy has shrunk. The global slowdown crushed demand for Japanese exports, a key pillar of the world's number two economy. The situation is not different from Europe where many factories and companies are folding up, sending more employed citizens into the already swollen labour market (Tinuke, 2012).

Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) stated that Nigeria's economy has slipped into recession. Economic recession is a period of economic slowdown featuring low output, illiquidity and unemployment. It is characterized by its length, abnormal increases in unemployment, fall in the availability of credit, shrinking output and investment, numerous bankruptcies, reduced amount of trade and commerce, as well as highly volatile relative currency value fluctuations, mostly devaluations, financial crises and bank failure (Tinuke, 2012). The financial regulatory bodies asserted that the economy may not regain stability until early 2017 with low growth rate of 1.5%. The trend and seemingly ineffective approach of the Nigerian government in improving the economy has continued to create doubt in the minds of many and the suffering exacerbating migration crisis. As a result, the country is gradually loosing the bulk of its highly skilled workers to foreign lands.

Nigeria slipped into recession for the first time in more than 29 years and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 2.06% after shrinking by 0.36% in the first quarter of 2016 (British Broadcasting Corporation-BBC, 2016; National Bureau of Statistics-NBS, 2016). NBS argued that the non-oil sector declined due to a weaker currency while lower prices dragged the oil sector down. The slump in global oil price has hit Nigeria hard. The government depends on oil sales for about 70% of its revenues and the crash at stock market affected the economy (BBC, 2016). It reduced the ability of the economy to fight off the underlying sicknesses of unevenly distributed wealth, low productivity in agriculture and banking problems. It is therefore apparent that the Nigerian economy faces the crippling effects of global economic crises resulting to breakdown and decline in economic vigor. Opeyemi (2008) observed rising unemployment, retrenchments, downsizing and layoffs, which serves as indications to a troubled economy. She argued that individuals have nowhere to turn to, except indulging in misconduct and societal condemned activities such as militancy, armed robbery, advanced-fee-fraud, ritual practices for fetish money amongst other things.

Also, there appears to be loss of confidence and discomfort; thus leading to mass movement of Nigerians across borders in search of greener pastures. The resultant effect of this is the human and capital exportation to foreign lands. Although Nigeria is traditionally an important destination for migrants, especially in the West African sub-region, evidence has revealed that there are more people emigrating from than immigrating to Nigeria. It has been estimated that about 1,041,284 Nigerian nationals live abroad and as at 2009, 24% of them were in Sudan, United States (14%), and United Kingdom (9%) (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP, 2009). Others settled in neighbouring Cameroon (8%) or Ghana (5%) (Development

Research Centre-DRC, 2007) and a good proportion were resident in Benin Republic. Recent survey by NOIPolls (2016) revealed that about 67% of them are in the US and 43% in UK; thus making North America and Europe the two major continents most Nigerians abroad dwell in. While this finding may not be used to ascertain absolute figures on migration, it suggests a high level of emigration of Nigerians to foreign countries.

However, there are some indications that the propensity to emigrate is particularly high among the highly skilled (International Organization for Migration- IOM, 2009). Also, latest estimates in 2000 indicate that 10.7% of the highly skilled population who were trained in Nigeria work abroad, mostly in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In the United States and Europe, 83% and 46% respectively, of the Nigerian emigrant population are highly skilled. On average, 64% of the emigrant population has tertiary education (Docquier & Marfouk, 2006). In the medical field, 14% of its physicians work abroad, 90% live and work in the United States and United Kingdom (Clemens & Pettersson, 2007). According to Docquier, Marchiori and Shen (2010), the emigration of highly skilled labourers can be observed in the education and health sectors of small or developing countries that face severe shortages of workers in those areas. As a country that has insufficient qualified or competent manpower to drive its developmental quest, losing the little it has on the heat of recession would be adversarial to its sustainable developmental goals.

Nonetheless, the continued trend is an indication that many Nigerian workers are no longer comfortable at home, perhaps, due to the economic recession, non-increament of salary in a market economy that virtually prices of all commodities have increased, increase in job cuts, shutting down or bankruptcy of many global corporate organizations (Tinuke, 2012); thus, the emigration in skilled labour. In view of the aforementioned problems, this paper examines the link between economic recession and migration of Nigerians.

Conceptual Clarifications

Economic Recession

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) defines a recession as a significant decline in economic activity spread across an economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales. It is also a period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activities are reduced, generally identified by a fall in GDP in two successive quarters (Magaji, 2016). He described Economic Recession (ER) as a period of general economic decline and is usually accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment and a decline in the housing market. The blame for a recession generally falls on the federal leadership, often either the President, the Central Bank Governor, or the entire administration.

Economists officially define a recession as two consecutive quarters of negative growth in GDP. To Noko (2016), ER is a negative real GDP growth rate for two consecutive quarters (first and second quarters); and that Nigeria is currently experiencing economic recession since her first and second quarter growth in 2016 were -0.36% and -1.5%. However, ER was perceived by Fapohunda (2012) as a period of economic slowdown featuring low output, illiquidity and unemployment. It can also be described as a period of slow growth in GDP, increase in unemployment and prices of commodities, with adverse effect on the people.

Prior to recession, the Nigerian economy was swimming in a pond of false confidence in an imbalanced growth and disequilibrium in revenue generation. In other words, almost every other sector of the economy was neglected and the focus was on oil. At the beginning of Muhammadu Buhari’s administration, oil was sold at about $100 per barrel; then the price dropped sharply to 37 dollars, and now it is in the range of 40-45 dollars per barrel. The fall of oil prices, high inflation and the shortage of electricity, as well as the humanitarian crisis in the northern region are having negative impact on Nigeria's economy, and a country with a leading economy in the continent suddenly became poor, forcing its people to source for greener pastures in foreign lands (Obasanho, 2016).

Migration

Migration is the movement of people from one geographical location to another. It can be a search for employment, better living, or even reuniting with family members. Whatever reason it might be, the truth remains that migration removes one from his/her adapted environment to a newer place, with new culture, new people and possible difficulty in adaptation.

A migrant is described as a person who leaves his original home and moves to a new place where he settles and establishes new links (Labo, 2016). It can be put as someone who relocates from his place of stay to another in search of job, income, better living condition and even reunion with loved ones. Evidence has shown that males migrate more often than females, and different migration motives are found between them. As males migrate mainly on economic ground, their female counterparts predominantly do the same in order to join parents or (future) partners (European Communities Edition-ECE, 2000).

Migration can take two forms: emigration and immigration. While emigration is said to be the act of leaving one’s resident country with the intent to settle elsewhere (perhaps in search for job, better living condition, income etc); immigration on the other hand is described as the movement of persons into one country from another (Wikipedia, 2017). For the purpose of this study, emphasis will be on the former (emigration). Historically, patterns of emigration have been shaped by numerous economic, social, and political changes in the last few hundred years. Millions of individuals have fled poverty, violence, and political turmoil in Europe to settle in United States of America and Oceania during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

The emigration issue in Nigeria is exacerbated by the porous nature of its borders. The country has over 400,000 square kilometers’ land boundaries, which have been difficult to manage. This is because of their very porous nature and the high affinity of the Nigerian people with those in the neighbouring countries. To the east and north-east are the Republics of Cameroon and Chad; Niger Republic is to its north; while Benin Republic is to the south-west. Its southern border of 1,600 nautical kilometers long coastline begins from the border with Benin Republic in the West and extends eastwards to the border with Cameroon; including the oil-rich Bakassi Island that has been ceded to Cameroon (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum & Abejide, 2008). Afolayan *et al* argued that as a multi-ethnic federation, with more than 250 ethno-linguistic groups, the dominant Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba share similar cultural traits with ethnic groups in neighbouring countries. Making the situation for social interaction sustained between ethnic groups in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, and facilitates population mobility and invariably international migration.

Despite lots of benefits that may be associated with migration, studies have shown that it also presents a threat to migrants' health as certain jobs expose them to occupational hazards, such as tuberculosis, pneumoconiosis and workplace injury by mine workers (Kahn, Collison, Tollman, Wolff, Garenne & Clark, 2003). Increased mobility of workers has also contributed to a rapid spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Brummer 2002; Lurie 2000). In Senegal, Kahn *et al* found that 27% of the male Senegalese migrants were HIV positive compared to 1% of non-migrant males from the same area. Sexually transmitted infections are also more likely to spread among migrants themselves as well as their permanent partners residing in the sending communities.

Ndukwe (2016) looked at the impacts of migration in three areas – the labour market, economic growth and the public purse. In the labour market, he noted that migrants accounted for 47% of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe over the past ten years. They also fill important niches both in fast-growing and declining sectors of the economy. Since 2000, immigrants have represented 31% of the increase in the highly educated labour force in Canada, 21% in the United States and 14% in Europe, contributing significantly to labour-market flexibility. Many of them are Nigerians, and as they are doing great in those countries of abode, the home country is suffering the brain drain or human capital shortages.
Migration boosts the working-age population. Migrants arrive with skills and contribute to human capital development of receiving countries. Migrants also contribute to technological progress. International migration has both direct and indirect effects on economic growth. There is little doubt that where migration expands the workforce, aggregate GDP can be expected to grow. However, the situation is less clear when it comes to per capita GDP growth. First, migration has a demographic impact, not only by increasing the size of the population but also by changing the age pyramid of receiving countries. Migrants tend to be more concentrated in the younger and economically active age groups compared with natives and therefore contribute to reduce dependency ratios.

Secondly, migrants arrive with skills and abilities, and so supplement the stock of human capital of the host country. More specifically, evidence from the United States suggests that skilled immigrants contribute to boosting research and innovation, as well as technological progress. In Switzerland and Luxembourg, immigrants provide an estimated net benefit of about 2% of GDP to the public purse. Immigrants are thus neither a burden to the public purse nor a panacea for addressing fiscal challenges. In most countries, except in those with a large share of older migrants, they contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits (OECD, 2014; Ndukwe, 2016).

Causes of Economic Recession

Efforts have been made to identify the major factors influencing economic recession. In the views of Noko (2016), the major cause of economic recession in any economy may include;

- High inflation rate: This is a general rise in price of goods and services, leading to low purchasing power. Nigeria inflation rate currently stands at 18.63%, which is extremely the highest for the past decade. Government ban on the importation of certain essential agricultural products like rice without considering the gestation period is unacceptable (Noko, 2016). He stressed that the removal of subsidy should not be simultaneous with the banning of these essential agricultural products.

Ever since 20th June, 2016 the Central Bank refused to support the stability of the national currency with the help of rapidly melting dollar reserves, Nigerian Naira exchange rate fell by 40%. As a result, prices of imported goods and food increased drastically.

Table 1: Essential Commodities Prices Spike in Nigeria

Commodities	Prices		%	Price Elasticity
	May 2015	May 2016		
Tomato (Basket)	N12,000	N45,000	275%	Low
Pepper(Basket)	N6,000	N20,000	233%	Moderate
Yellow Garri (50kg)	N11,000	N18,000	63.6%	Moderate
Rice (50kg)	N9,000	N14,500	61.1%	Low
Beans (50kg)	N15,000	N16,000	6.7%	Low
Onion (Basket)	N4,000	N10,000	150%	Moderate

Source: FDC in Noko (2016)

- Accumulation of debt servicing, especially foreign debts.
- Poor economic policies or conflict: This is a pivotal issue that can plunge any economy into recession. When a nation's economic administrators are people with little or inadequate economic or financial management training, there is likely to be economic doom.

The conflict between economic policies gives no choice than to expect the continuance of economic recession. High-interest and tax rates are considered to be the tight monetary policy measures (Ibenegbu, 2017). Still, government keeps telling the public that it is the expansionary policy; thus the resultant effect has simply been; budget deficit. Ibenegbu, however, pointed to the Treasury Single Account (TSA) implementation as one of those poor policies.

This idea was created by the government to stop corruption and consolidate all funds of the Federal Government. Therefore, all departments, ministeries and agencies were mandated to transfer funds from all the commercial banks to the Central Bank of Nigeria. Any approach against this decision was treated as corrupt. The banks that delayed the instructions from the government were heavily fined. The Finance Minister, party leaders, government officials advertised the campaign as a huge success. The imminent withdrawal of deposits from banks gives them the ability to guarantee the loan programs to the customers. Any bank lends part of deposits to customers, but the balance of demands and deposits should be in the balance. Governments' deposits were a reliable source of deposits for commercial banks and their withdrawal was the extreme damage to the banks. It means that companies that relied on loans will sell less, produce less and sack more workers. Small companies will be forced to close their businesses. Almost all banks provided bad loans expectations in 2016 which resulted in the diminishing of profit. Therefore, banks were forced to sack many workers. Government officials might have acted with good intentions as high level of corruption needs to be stopped. Nevertheless, the speedy implementation of the policy resulted in major side effects.

- High-interest rate- that could discourage investors: The present lending interest rate in Nigeria is between 26.77-27%. This is extremely high for investors and can discourage them from coming into the country, but rather look for elsewhere. As a result, the poor or slow investment culminates into high rate of unemployment in the country.
- Fall in aggregate demand, fall in wages, income.
- Mass unemployment and general loss of confidence in the government due to economic indices.
- High taxation: Economic recession is usually a period when government should rethink its taxation policy and provide a better climate for investors, small businesses, and employers.

Nevertheless, the closure of many small businesses in Nigeria with high taxation and high-interest rate – leaves no choice to the aggregate demand. It is expected to be low and even lower (Noko, 2016).

Theoretical Orientation

The study is anchored on the theory of push-pull factors. The theory was introduced by Ernest Ravenstein (1889) in his '*Laws of Migration*' and later developed by Everett Lee (1966). The basic assumption of the push-pull model is hinged on the fact that there are push factors or repulsive forces, such as poverty, unemployment, dearth of basic socio-economic infrastructure and general lack of economic opportunities, which compel persons to move out of their locality or place of residence to another place or destination of higher opportunities.

Push and pull factors are forces that can either induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences. They can be economic, political, cultural and environmentally based. System-Administrator (2016) identified push factors as conditions that can forcefully drive people to leave their homes and relate to the country from which a person migrates. Example of push factors are: lack of sufficient jobs; few opportunities for survival; primitive conditions; desertification; famine/drought; hunger, political fear or persecution; poor medical care; loss of wealth; natural disasters, recession, insecurity etc. Conversely, pull factors are those factors that attract people to a certain location, which comprise and not limited to job opportunities; better living conditions; political and/or religious freedom; enjoyment; quality education; better medical care and security. The migrant is attracted (pulled) to destinations with those facilities and opportunities which the migrant lacks and wishes to have (Awaritefe, 2000; Udo, 1993 in Afolayan, Ikwuyatum & Abejide, 2008).

Studies by Nwajiuba (2005), Aboderin (2007), Obialo and Museckaite (2008) have shown that skilled workers and professional emigrants from Nigeria anchored their actions on socio-economic imbalance; lower salaries at home as against higher salaries abroad, lack of job satisfaction and low productivity. Other factors are under-utilization of resources in the country, lack of appropriate technology and equipment to work with, incessant power shortage (electricity outage), industrial strike actions and retrenchment (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum & Abejide, 2008).

In view of the recession that bedeviled the nation, Nigerians are pushed to other economies due to glaring hunger in the land, job retrenchment cum unemployment, poor and deplorable facilities, high cost of living, incessant violent killings (insecurity) - especially in the North-East region, poor educational system, poor medical care etc. On the other hand, perceived favourable or promising conditions of living, such as job opportunities, better income (wage), security, good medical facilities and care; standardized level of education, higher standard of living and many others keep pulling them out to developed countries of the Western World and some other stable developing economies.

Factors influencing Migration in Nigeria

The link between economic recession and migration cannot be overemphasized. Awulor (2016) has found it as a possible force to leave one's base to another in search of a better pay or living standard. However, major factors that could easily propel one to migrate comprise, but not limited to;

i. Rising Unemployment

The impact of the global financial crisis has sent chilly winds into corporate Nigeria. There is a season of job losses, as the manufacturing sector in the country is already affected by massive decline in capacity utilization resulting from high exchange rate of the Naira and congestion at the ports. The crisis has compounded the challenges faced by the manufacturing sector. In 2008, Dunlop Nigeria Plc., the only surviving tyre manufacturing company shut down its plants and laid off hundreds of its workers and put some others on half remuneration. In the textile industry, about 5,000 workers were forced out of job in late 2008. Recently, the Nigerian auto assembly company, Peugeot Automobile Nigeria (PAN), sacked 565 workers out of its 753 workforce and placed the remaining staff on half salary. Similarly, the confectionery maker, Cadbury Nigeria Plc., fired about 300 staff; while the banking sector which seems to be the most affected, has recorded massive sacks and it is still ongoing (Tinuke, 2012). According to Awulor (2016), the number of unemployed Nigerians has swollen as over 3,500 bank workers have been shown the way out within the first quarter of the year. The idea became necessary to management of the affected banks in order to cut cost, shore-up performance, and enhance efficient service delivery.

Unemployment is a very influential factor to migration. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2016) reported that the country's unemployment rate has risen from 13.3% in the second quarter to 13.9% in the third quarter of 2016. The report stated that the number of unemployed in the labour force increased by 555,311 persons. The unemployment index covered persons (aged 15–64) who during the reference period were available and actively seeking for work but were without work. This has been traced to the current economic recession that has bedeviled the nation. As most firms could not cope with the repercussion effect, the disengagement or retrenchment approach is now the only option for workers that are not committed.

ii. Poverty

In Nigeria, poverty is believed to have assumed a worrisome dimension since the end of civil war in 1970 (Eboreime & Njoku, 2015). Evidences have shown that the number of those in poverty has continued to increase in Nigeria. Ogwumike in Muktar (2011) noted that, poverty rose from 27% in 1980 to 46% in 1985 and to 66% in 1996; by 1999 it increased to almost 70%. However, by 2004 it moved from 54.4% to 69.0% in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics-NBS, 2012).

Moreso, a 2014 World Bank global poverty rating placed Nigeria among the five poorest countries in the world. The report emphasized that Nigeria has one of the largest concentration of poor people that live on less than one dollar per day. It further stressed that seven per cent of the world poor live in Nigeria, in spite of the rebasing of the country's GDP that ranked it as the largest economy in Africa (Vanguard, 2015). The hardship occasioned by poverty has continued to force many into the path of migration in search of better job, income and reasonable standard of living.

iii. Lack of Economic Opportunities

Lack of economic opportunities such as job or employment opportunities and high pay have pushed migrants to places they perceive easy access to these opportunities. These therefore become pull factors to the destination environment or country (Muniz, Li & Schleicher, 2015). Nigeria is known to have limited or below sufficient job opportunities, and do not pay enough to her workforce when compared with most developed and developing economies of Europe and America. As a result, and with the below standard of living in the country, many of its nationals relocate to other countries where they believe that their labour would be appreciated and rewarded meaningfully.

iv. Dearth of Basic Socio-Economic Infrastructures

Provision of basic socio-economic amenities creates a sense of belonging, and where it is lacking or the available few are situated in the urban centres or made accessibly easy in other climes, migration ensues. The provision of most impactful projects like good healthcare, educational facilities, banks, job opportunities, good roads, electricity etc in the cities has attracted movement of people to such places. People at the rural areas or nations where most of these infrastructures have been left dilapidated, un-rehabilitated or even non-existing tend to be attracted to where they are available. This implies that when these are provided and kept functional, there would be less migration. In many places in Nigeria, it is usually sights of abandoned projects, epileptic power supply, dilapidated school buildings, unequipped libraries, lack of social welfare packages, poor medical care (which has led to medical tourism of Nigerians to India, Germany, USA, UK etc, and the resultant huge bills).

v. Insecurity

This is a major factor that has influenced migration of Nigerians in recent times. The confrontational activities of the Niger Delta Militants and the recent outbreak of the Boko Haram insurgents in the North-East have forced over a million persons out of their residence to other locations, within and outside the country. According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Onuoha (2014), no fewer than six million residents of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States have been directly affected by Boko Haram attacks. They noted that the increasing violence perpetrated by Boko Haram has created a huge number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees and the number continues to increase with each passing attack.

Therefore, fear of the incessant attacks and its associated threat to other States, the possible loss of lives and properties have continued to make many to migrate to perceived safer environments.

Conclusion

Migration is a possible repercussion effect of economic recession. When those willing and ready to work cannot find a job, nor have access to basic needs of life, leaving to a perceived better economy becomes imperative. The present economic downturn in Nigeria has forced many of its citizens out of the country in search of better jobs, improved pay, better living conditions, safety and some may still leave if the economy is not adequately revamped.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for possible implementation:

i. Government should lessen dependence on oil and diversify, especially into agriculture as to create more jobs.

ii. The fight against terror should be intensified as to restore sense of safety and secured socio-economic environment.

iii. Social amenities should be continously made available and maintained to discourage mass emigration.

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