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PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY PLANNING AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN OVIA SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study assessed rural women attitude towards family planning in Ovia South West local government area of Edo state Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research and was guided by five research questions. The population of the study comprised 200 rural women of reproductive age in Ovia South West Local Government Area. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed structured questionnaire divided into two sections of A and B which cover demographic information of the respondents and research items respectively of a two-point Likert scale of Yes and No. Simple percentage and frequency distribution was used to analyse data related to the research questions. The results showed that the perception of rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State was relatively high but not satisfactory. On the basis of the foregoing, the study recommended, among others, that more family planning facilities be built in Ovia South West Local Government Area as this will increase the level of awareness of the issue and motivate residents to use family planning more frequently and that the government should provide free family planning services, especially to women in rural areas, to help address the issue of financial hardship.

Keywords: Perception, Rural, Women, Attitude, Family, Planning and Edo State

Introduction

Until recently, one of the foremost challenges facing third-world countries, notably Nigeria, has been the prevalent reluctance towards embracing family planning. The absence of effective family planning initiatives within these nations has contributed to a substantial global population increase, particularly in the case of Nigeria. This population surge can be attributed to a variety of factors, including poverty, low literacy rates, limited awareness, deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs, among other determinants.

Family planning lacks a universally accepted definition, permitting its interpretation across various contexts. Nevertheless, it is imperative to thoroughly consider the economic, social, cultural, psychological, and health-related aspects integral to this concept. In accordance with a resolution passed during the twenty-first World Health Assembly, (2011) many member states acknowledge family planning as a pivotal component of fundamental health services, particularly in the realms of maternal and child health care. However, family planning plays a significant role in the promotion of family well-being, thereby contributing to social and economic development. Consequently, it is essential that every family be afforded the opportunity to access the requisite information and guidance concerning family planning matters, including issues pertaining to fertility and sterility. According to United Nations Population Fund UNFPA (2016), family planning is a comprehensive and crucial public health and socio-economic strategy aimed at helping individuals and couples make informed decisions regarding the timing and spacing of their children. It encompasses a range of practices, services, and information that empower individuals to manage their reproductive health effectively. According to the foregoing definition, the primary goals of family planning to promote maternal and child health, reduce unintended pregnancies, mitigate the spread of sexually transmitted infections, enhance women's rights and gender equality, and contribute to overall socio-economic development.

Family planning is defined as the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and achieve their desired number and spacing of children, and to have the information and means to do so (World Health Organization, 2023). This definition emphasizes the individual's right to make informed choices about their reproductive health and to access the necessary resources to achieve those choices. Furthermore, Family planning is "a fundamental human right that empowers individuals and couples to make informed choices about their reproductive health, including whether, when and how many children to have (UNFPA, 2022).

According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), family planning is one of the 10 great public health achievements of the twentieth century. The ability of individuals to determine their family size and the timing and spacing of their children has resulted in significant improvements in health and in social and economic well-being. According to International Organization for Migration, (2020)**.** Smaller families and increased child spacing have helped decrease rates of infant and child mortality, improve the social and economic conditions of women and their families, and improve maternal health.

According to the World Health Organization (2020), about 82% of Nigeria's population have limited access to health care services both public and private, especially in rural areas where 52% of its population resides. The country lags behind on almost all development indicators particularly with regard to maternal mortality and child health. It has been estimated that approximately 814 deaths per 100,000 live births is the maternal mortality ratio in Nigeria. In addition to maternal mortality, infant mortality rate stands at 65 per 1000 live births Azuh, Azuh, Iweala, Adeloye, Akanbi, Mordi (2017). Although there have been efforts to foster the growing knowledge of family planning in the rural areas in Nigeria, these efforts have been partly because of the population growth in the rural areas**.** According to Adeokun & Lion cited in Usman and Ojogbede (2016), the increasing awareness of the role of population control as a strategy for economic development has led to increase in family planning research. However, Kant; Anand & Yadav, cited in Blackstone and Iwelunmor (2017) affirmed that the acceptance of family planning methods varies within

societies. The attitude of rural women towards family planning is an issue influenced by various socio-cultural, economic, educational background and geographical factors. In many rural communities, traditional norms and values shape the attitudes of family planning, often emphasizing the importance of large families for agricultural labour, social status, and support in old age.

It has also been discovered that limited access to education and healthcare services in rural areas contribute to the misconceptions and lack of awareness about contraceptive methods and their benefits in rural area. The most evident influence of family planning use amongst rural women in Nigeria is culture and religion. Religion is used as an instrument of stereotype against women who want to adopt family planning (Udom; Onwuka & Badey, 2019). Studies also revealed that every family planning in male dominated areas presents a barrier to use for women who are observing Pudah (Udom et al, 2019; Ogbole, 2015). According to them, rural women's attitudes towards family planning are influenced by their husbands, families, and community leaders, further complicating decision-making processes. For example, a study conducted in rural Nigeria found that women's decisions regarding family planning were often influenced by their husbands' preferences and societal expectations, with many women expressing concerns about potential conflict within the family if they were to use contraceptives without their husband's approval (Ochako, Mbondo, Aloo, Kaimenyi, Thompson, Temmerman and Kays (2015). However, socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of autonomy, and gender inequality can also affect rural women's ability to make informed choices about family planning.

Recently, a study carried out by the World Health Organization (2018), concluded that women in the rural areas do not practice family planning or use family planning methods even when they have a good knowledge of it. This is due to the fact that women in the rural areas desire more children as a source of economic and labour power. Therefore, addressing the attitudes of rural women towards family planning requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account socio-

cultural norms, access to healthcare services, education, and empowerment initiatives aimed at enhancing women's agency and decision-making power within their families and communities. It is against this background that this study will examine the attitudes of rural women towards family planning in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State

Statement of the Problem

Because of the diverse perspectives and beliefs among people from different civilizations, the issue of family planning has been overlooked for a significant amount of time especially in rural areas. This is primarily due to the prevailing notion that children are blessings from God, and no child is born by mistake. Most rural communities have a population of women with low incomes whose only means of survival and livelihood is farming. Some of these women are the only ones who provide for their children invariably the women are at the receiving end of the very negative consequences of too many frequent births either health wise, socio-economically and otherwise. The World Health Organization reported that approximately 810 women die every day from preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth globally. Therefore, the research seeks to determine the factors influencing their perceptions, acceptance, and utilization of family planning methods, including cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and access-related determinants. The study will also explore the role of traditional values, community norms, and religious beliefs in shaping attitudes towards family planning, as well as the impact of education, awareness campaigns, and access to healthcare services. And lastly, the research will examine the influence of demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, and parity on rural dwellers' attitudes and practices concerning family planning. It is therefore against this background that this study is carrying out this research to investigate the attitudes of rural dwellers towards family planning in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the attitudes of rural women towards family planning in Ovia South West Local Government in Edo state. However, the specific objectives of the study include to:

1. Assess the level of awareness on family planning methods amongst rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State
2. Determine the attitudes of rural women towards family planning methods in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State
3. Identify the factors affecting the utilization of family planning methods in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State
4. Ascertain the extent in which family planning methods are acceptable among women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State
5. Identify the preferred methods of family planning among rural dwellers, and what factors influence their choice.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness on family planning methods amongst rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo state?
2. What are the attitudes of rural women towards family planning methods in Ovia south west Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. What are the factors affecting the utilization of family planning methods in Ovia south west local government area of Edo state?
4. To what extent are family planning methods acceptable among women in Ovia south west local government area of Edo state?

5. What are the preferred methods of family planning among rural dwellers, and what factors influence their choice?

Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The choice of this design stems from its strength as a functional means of fact finding and an acknowledged means of obtaining social facts and opinion for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions (Nwankwo, 2016). This chosen research design method is appropriate, especially for seeking individuals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting and it enables the researcher to make generalization concerning this population of study.

The population of the study consist of six hundred (600) women of reproductive age across the 10 wards that makes up the local government which includes: Siluku, Usen, Iguobazuwa East Iguobazuwa West, Nikorogha, Ofunama, Ora, Ugbogui Umaza and Udo. Samples were drawn from the study population, which comprises of women across all the 10 wards that makes up the local government. A sample size of 60 women were selected for the study across the 10 wards who voluntarily participated in the study. The Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. The questionnaire was a twenty (20) items instrument designed along the line of the modified Likert scale made up of four (4) levels of assessment namely Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly disagreed. The levels were weighted or assigned 4 points 3points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. In validating the instruments, expert's opinion was adopted. Two experts in the area of psychometrics from the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education Faculty of Education, University of Benin helped to determine the face validity of the instrument. To determine the reliability level of the instrument in generating the required data, copies were pilot-tested through single test giving at a single sitting to thirty (30) respondents selected from the target population. The scores obtained for odd and even number items were correlated using Pearson Product Moment

Correlation Statistics. A correlation index of 0.85 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics comprising frequency counts and percentage to ease understanding by all a-sundry

Results

The result emanating from the data collected and analysed were presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness on family planning methods amongst rural women in Ovia south west local government area of Edo state?

Table 4.1 Data on the level of awareness on family planning methods among rural women in Ovia South West local government of Edo State

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES (Freq.)	%	NO (Freq.)	%	TOTAL
1	Have you ever heard of family planning before now?	152	76%	48	24%	100%
2	Is there any family planning Centre in your area?	127	63.5%	73	36.5%	100%
3	Do you think more family planning Centre should be provided in your area?	49	24.5%	151	75.5%	100%
4	Have you ever received any enlightenment on family planning before now?	149	74.5%	51	25.5%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data on Table 4.1 above clearly shows that 152(76%) of the respondents affirmed that they have heard of family planning before now while 48(24%) of the respondents stated that they have never heard of family planning before now. Item 2 shows that 127(63.5%) of the respondents agreed that there are family planning Centre in their area while 73(36.5%) of the respondents opined that there are no family planning Centre in their area. The next item, which is item 3 clearly shows that 49(24.5%) of the respondents are of the view that more family planning Centre should be provided in their area while a striking percent 151(75.5%) of the respondents do not see the need for more family planning Centre in their area. Lastly, item 4 clearly shows that 149(74.5%) of the respondents have received enlightenment on family planning before now while 51(25.5%) of the respondents have not.

Table 4.2 Data on the attitudes of rural women towards family planning methods in Ovia South West local government area of Edo State

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES (Freq.)	%	NO (Freq.)	%	TOTAL
5	Do you think cultural or religious beliefs influence family planning practices in your community?	166	83%	34	17%	100%
6	Do you believe family planning methods are important for managing family size.	176	88%	24	12%	100%
7	Does your husband permit your choice of family planning methods?	169	84.5%	31	15.5%	100%
8	Do you think family planning methods are effective in preventing pregnancies?	148	74%	52	26%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data on Table 4.2 above clearly shows that 166(83%) of the respondents are of the view that cultural and religious beliefs influences family planning practices in their various communities while 34(17%) of the respondent do not believe that cultural and religious beliefs influence family planning practices in their various communities. Item 6 shows that 176(88%) of the respondents believes that family planning methods are important for managing family size while 24(12%) do not believe family methods has a role to play in managing the size of a family. Item 7 shows that 169(84.5%) of the respondents are of the view that their husbands permit their choice of family planning methods while 31(15.5%) of the respondents opined that their husbands do not permit their choice of family planning methods. Item 8 of the same table shows that 148(74%) affirmed that family planning methods are effective in preventing pregnancies while 52(26%) of the respondents not believe this view.

Research Question 3: What are the factors affecting the utilization of family planning methods in Ovia south west local government area of Edo state?

Data on Table 4.3 above reveals the factors affecting the utilization of family planning methods in Ovia South West local government of Edo state

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES (Freq)	%	NO (Freq)	%	TOTAL
9	Does your religion affect your choice of family planning methods	132	66%	68	34%	100%
10	Does your cultural beliefs affect your choice of family planning methods	134	67%	66	33%	100%
11	Does your level of education have a role to play in your choice of family planning methods?	128	64%	72	36%	100%
12	Are you abstaining from family planning because of the cost?	168	84%	32	16%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data analysis of Table 4.3 reveals that item 9 shows that 132(66%) of the respondents affirmed that their religion beliefs affect their choices of family planning methods while 68(34%) of the respondents do not agree that their religion beliefs affect their choice of family planning methods. Item 10 of the same table shows that 134(67%) of the respondents affirmed that their cultural beliefs affect their choice of family planning methods while 66(33%) do not agree that cultural beliefs affect choice of family planning methods. Item 11 of the table shows that 128(64%) of the respondents agreed that their level of education have a role to play in their choice of family planning methods while 72(36%) do not agreed that their level of education have a role to play in their choice of family planning methods. Lastly, item 12 clearly shows that a striking number of percentages 168(84%) of the respondents are avoiding family planning methods because of the cost while about 32(16%) of the respondents do not avoid family planning because of the cost.

Research Question 4: To what extent are family planning methods acceptable among women in Ovia south west local government area of Edo state?

Data analysis of Table 4.4 on the extent is family planning methods acceptable amongst rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area in Edo State

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
13	Do you personally find family planning methods acceptable?	163	81.5%	37	18.5%	100%

14	Do you think family planning methods are beneficial for women's health?	178	89%	22	11%	100%
15	Do you think cultural or religious beliefs affect the acceptance of family planning methods in your community?	70	35%	130	65%	100%
16	Do you agree that family planning methods can empower women to make informed decision about their reproductive health?	186	93%	14	7%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data analysis of Table 4.4 shows that 163(81.5%) of the respondents personally find family planning methods acceptable while 37(18.5%) do not personally find family planning methods acceptable. Item 14 of the same table shows that 178(89%) of the of respondents do believe that family planning methods are beneficial for women's health while 22(11%) of the respondents believes that family planning methods are not beneficial for women's health. Furthermore, item 15 clearly shows that 70(35%) of the respondent believes that cultural or religious beliefs affect the acceptance of family planning methods in their various community while 130(65%) of the respondents do not believe this. Lastly, item 16 shows that 186(93%) of the respondent agree that family planning methods can empower women to make informed decision about their reproductive health while 14(7%) of the respondent do not believe this assertion.

Research Question 5: What are the preferred methods of family planning among rural dwellers, and what factors influence their choice?

Data analysis of Table 4.5 on the preferred methods of family planning in Ovia South West local government of Edo state

S/N	QUESTIONS	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
17.	Are rural dwellers more likely to prefer traditional methods of family planning over modern methods?	34	17%	166	83%	100%
18.	Have you ever used any family planning before now?	163	81.5%	37	18.5%	100%
19.	If yes, which family planning method(s) have you used					
	A. Condom	101	50.5%			
	B. Birth control pills	42	21%			

	C.	Withdrawal	21	10.5%
	D.	Natural method	15	7.5%
	E.	Contraceptive implant	21	10.5%
20.	Which family planning method(s) do you currently use or prefer?			
	Condom		29	14.5%
	Birth control pills		109	54.5%
	Withdrawal		32	16%
	Natural method		18	9%
	Contraceptive implant		12	6%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data analysis of Table 4.5 shows that 34(17%) of the respondents are of the opinion that rural dwellers are more likely to prefer traditional methods of family planning over modern methods while a striking a striking percentage 166(83%) of the respondent opined to this view that rural women are more likely to prefer traditional methods over the modern methods. furthermore, analysis of item 18 clearly shows that 163(81.5%) of the respondents have used family methods before now while approximately 37(18.5%) of the respondents are yet to use family planning. Analysis of item 19 of the same research question clearly states that a about 101(50.5%) of the respondents uses condom as their family planning methods while 42(21%) of the respondents adopt birth control as their family planning methods, furthermore, 21(10.5%) of the respondents adopt withdrawal as their choice of family planning while 15(7.5%) of the respondents makes use of natural methods and lastly, about 21(10.5%) of the respondents uses contraceptive implant as their desired choice of family planning. Analysis of item 20 of the same research question clearly revealed that 29(14.5%) of the respondents currently uses condom as their preferred family planning method while 109(54%) of the respondents currently uses birth control pills as their preferred family planning method. However, about 32(16%) of the respondents currently rely on withdrawal as their preferred choice of family planning while 18(9%) of the respondents currently sticks to natural method as their most preferred method of family planning. Lastly, approximately

12(6%) of the respondents currently uses contraceptive implant as their preferred choice of family planning.

Discussion of Findings

This aspect of the Study discusses the results presented and analysed according to each research question.

The analysis of responses to items under research question 1 under item 1 in table 4.6 clearly shows that the level of awareness on family planning methods among rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State is relatively high as majority152(76%) of the respondents agreed to have heard of family planning before now. This finding correlates with the study of Omokhagbor (2022) "Examining the perception of rural dwellers towards family planning methods in Etsako East Local Government Area in Edo State". Finding from item 2 revealed that a large percentage of the respondents affirmed that there are family planning centres in their area which has led to the increased of awareness of family planning among rural women in area under study. Furthermore, findings from item 3 clearly reveals that a striking percentage of the respondents stated that they do not see the need for the provision of family planning centres in the area under study. This shows that there are more family planning centres in the area. And lastly, item 4 in the same research question shows that about 149(74.5%) of the respondents agreed to have been enlighten on family planning methods before now. This finding corresponds with the study of Omokhagbor (2022) "Examining the Perception of Rural Dwellers Towards Family Planning Methods in Etsako East Local Government Area in Edo State". In summary, there is a high level of awareness among rural women in Ovia North West local government area of Edo State.

Findings from research question 2. Item 5 reveals that a striking percentage of the respondents believed that cultural beliefs influence family planning practices in their community. These findings correlate with the finding of Yakubu & Mohammed (2017). "Exploring Cultural Influences on Family Planning Attitudes among Rural Communities. This shows that cultural has its role in

shaping the beliefs of people towards family planning. Finding of item 6 reveals that about 178(88%) of the respondents believes that family planning methods are important for managing family size. Item 7 of the same research question 2 clearly shows that majority of their husbands are clearly in support of their choice of family planning methods. The findings of this study are in line with the study Jones and Brown (2017) "Examining the preferred methods of family planning among couple". In summary, it is clear that the attitudes of rural women towards family planning in Ovia South West local government area is relatively high as majority of the respondents are strongly aware and practice family planning.

Findings from research question 3 in item 9 clearly reveals that a striking percentage 132(66%) of the respondents are of the view that religion affect that choice of family planning methods. This finding aligns with the study of Adefalu, Ladipo, Akinyemi, Popoola, Latunji and Iyanda (2019). A qualitative exploration of factors affecting uptake and demand for contraception and other family planning services in northwest Nigeria" Findings from item 10 shows that cultural beliefs affect respondent's choice of family planning methods as majority of the respondents opined that their culture influence that decision on family planning attitudes. Findings from item 11 clearly showed that the level of education contribute immensely to the choice of family planning methods. These findings correlate with the study This finding also corroborates previous observations in Bagal, Pakistan (Sharma, 2012) and Jos (Utoo, 2010). This observation may also be linked with the educational status of most of the respondents. Education tends to create more avenues for individuals to interact and possibly receive information on several issues.

Lastly, item 12 shows that majority of the respondents avoid family planning or sticks to traditional methods because of the cost. According to this item, a striking population 168(84%) of the respondents affirmed that they are avoiding family planning because of how expensive it is.

Findings from research question 4 under item 13-16 shows that the extent in which family planning methods are acceptable in Ovia South West local government area in Edo state is encouraging as

majority of the respondents knows the importance and effectiveness of family planning as well as how family planning can empower women to make informed decision about their reproductive health. These findings correspond with the study of Omosede A. (2020) "Factors influencing the acceptance of family planning among rural women: a cross-sectional study in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. In summary, level acceptance of family planning among rural women is high.

Lastly, findings from research question 5 under item 17-20 clearly revealed that about average of the respondents preferred condom as their most desired family planning method. This shows that majority of the respondents uses condom as their form of family planning methods against other methods. Although, some of the respondents confirmed that, they adopted condom as their choice of family planning as a result of the cost associated with other family planning methods such as contraceptive implant, birth control pills and so forth. These findings correlate with the study of Smith and Nguyem, (2020). Factors influencing the preferences for condom as a family planning method among rural women. In summary, from the findings of this study, it is clear that condom is the most used family planning methods among rural women in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State

Conclusion

Based on the findings made from data collected and analysed, it was concluded that that the attitude of rural women towards family planning methods is relatively high and encouraging as majority of the respondents are well informed about family planning. Family planning reveals insights into their perceptions, knowledge, and preferences regarding contraceptive methods. Findings highlight the importance of tailored educational interventions to address misconceptions and increase awareness among rural women. The implications underscore the need for improved access to family planning services and culturally sensitive healthcare initiatives in rural areas. Recommendations

include enhancing community-based outreach programs and integrating family planning services into existing healthcare infrastructure

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Enhanced access to family planning services in rural areas entails the implementation of multifaceted strategies to overcome geographical and logistical barriers. Mobile clinics can serve as flexible platforms, reaching remote communities and providing on-site consultations, contraceptive supplies, and education. Community health workers play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between healthcare facilities and rural populations by offering counseling, distributing contraceptives, and conducting outreach activities.

2. Tailored education initiatives are essential for addressing the specific needs and beliefs of rural women regarding family planning. These campaigns should be designed with cultural sensitivity in mind, acknowledging diverse beliefs, traditions, and values within rural communities. By employing local languages, customs, and communication channels, such as community gatherings and radio programs, educational materials can effectively reach and resonate with rural women. These campaigns aim to debunk common myths and misconceptions surrounding family planning methods, addressing concerns about safety, effectiveness, and religious or cultural acceptability.

3. Integration of family planning services with existing healthcare initiatives is crucial for providing comprehensive reproductive healthcare to rural women. By incorporating family planning into routine services such as antenatal care and postpartum services, healthcare providers can ensure that women receive contraceptive counseling and access to methods during key reproductive health visits. This approach capitalizes on existing healthcare infrastructure and appointments, maximizing opportunities for education and access to contraception.

4. Ensuring the affordability of contraceptives is vital for enabling access to family planning services, especially for low-income rural women. This can be achieved through various means, such as government subsidies, discounts, or even providing contraceptives free of charge through public health programs. Subsidizing costs reduces the financial burden on individuals and families, making contraceptives more accessible and affordable. Additionally, targeted initiatives specifically aimed at low-income rural women can help address disparities in access to family planning resources. By removing financial barriers, individuals are more likely to utilize contraceptive methods consistently, leading to improved reproductive health outcomes and greater control over family planning decisions.

5. Encouraging male involvement in family planning decisions is crucial for promoting gender equality and improving reproductive health outcomes within rural communities. This initiative aims to shift traditional gender norms and empower men to take an active role in family planning discussions and decisions. By engaging male partners in conversations about contraception, education, and contraceptive methods, we can foster a supportive environment where both partners share responsibility for family planning. This involvement not only enhances communication and mutual understanding within relationships but also increases the likelihood of contraceptive use and adherence.

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