

Pre-Service Teachers' Reading Tendencies: Implications for Promoting Reading

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine Turkish pre-service teachers' reading tendencies. It specifically focused on to identify pre-service teachers' reading backgrounds and also to put forward the relationships between the tendencies of them and their gender as well as program. Participants were 114 female and 72 male undergraduate students from a state university in Turkey; the data collection instrument was a self-report questionnaire that assessed reading tendencies of pre-service teachers. The results indicated that students' reading activities outside the school primarily consist of materials other than books. The difference between students' gender and genres of books they like to read most was at the significant level. In general, the results demonstrated that Turkish pre-service teachers were not satisfied with their current amount of time they allot for reading. Data obtained in this study were discussed in relation to promoting reading.

Key words: Pre-service teachers, reading tendency, gender differences, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

The reading habits of individuals have been a focus for academic research over more than fifty years since there is no more vital or basic skill in the whole educational process than reading as it is the foundation of learning and academic achievement^[1-20]. Yet, empirical evidence demonstrates that there is a decrease in reading habits among the youngsters and points TV, mobile phones, computer games, videos, DVDs and all other new and current distractions as the factors having roles in this decrease^[7].

It can be said that, there is an important relationship between acquiring and improving reading pleasure and reading tendency. It is obvious that forcing individual to read something not wanted or disliked would be harmful rather than beneficial. Therefore, we can express that monitoring youth's reading choices and acting according to that would be important and necessary to form reading habits-even if it is late-in them.

Numerous recent studies have documented that in order to create reading-promoting classroom environments, the teacher should be a reading model^[21]. However, research by Applegate and Applegate^[22] revealed that pre-service teachers were not avid readers. As educators in Teacher Education, we believe that teachers, who will teach and endear reading, first of all, should be good readers as well as good role models. With this belief, bringing about reading endearment and habit in teacher candidates should be the initial task of teacher educators.

There is a wealth of data supporting the gender differences related to reading habits. The literature clearly indicates that girls read more than boys. Moreover, females read for pleasure more often than males and they significantly differ in terms of the materials they read^[23]. Males show more negative attitudes towards reading than girls. Nevertheless, males read more for school when compared to females because it will help them get a job or because they have to, whereas females read because it is fun and provides them a break^[24].

Various self-reported survey studies were conducted in Turkey including elementary, high school and university students^[1,5,18]. The important role of teachers in a child's reading habit acquisition or motivating them to read have raised the question regarding amounts of teachers reading and their tendencies. To date, limited research has addressed reading tendencies of pre-service teachers in Turkey. In this study, Turkish pre-service teachers reading tendencies were examined. Moreover, Turkish pre-service teachers reading activities outside the school, their backgrounds regarding reading, what kind of books they like to read and the relationships between the tendencies of the teacher candidates and their genders and programs were investigated.

The factors that influence reading in Turkey: When the history of science is examined, it is seen that in the Greek Antique Age, Turks in the Middle Age and western people in the Modern Age made a lot of

contributions to science. The scientific developments are the indicators of societies interest in reading and books.

It is known that Turkish Language has existed since Hun Empire (B.C. 3rd C-A.D. 1st C.) and known that there have been written texts in Turkish since the Gok Turk period (A.D. 6th-8th C). Medressahs, still existing today, are the indicators of the importance that Seljuk Turks gave to science and education.

As for the Ottomans, essential educational developments were seen especially in the foundational and rising periods. First of all, Ottomans founded medressahs in İznik and Bursa and schools in the cities and towns for the children of common people to attend. The teachers coming from the medressahs in Damascus, Egypt, Baghdad and Iran to Ottoman land were protected and paid by the imperial.

Ottomans' good state in education started to change in a negative way with the decrease in its political power. Accepting Arabic as the language of science and Persian as the language of literature led to illiteracy among ordinary people. That even the grammar rules of Arabic language entered Turkish created a gap between the people and literary men. The attempts to purify Turkish language and change the alphabet increased with the foundation of the Republic and on November 1st, 1928, Arabic alphabet, used for nearly a thousand years, was replaced with the Latin alphabet. With this great change, the literacy activities in Turkey increased. There were important attempts to learn how to read and write in the new alphabet, to publish prior works in the new alphabet and translate and duplicate the classical literary works into Turkish.

That the economical situation of Turkey is not good (national income per body was \$ 4.172 at the end of 2006) can be accepted as one of the reasons that influence reading negatively in Turkey. In a research^[1] it was found out that the students with low familial income cared about the price of the books. If it is taken into consideration that the amount spent for books in a year is 45 cents per person^[4], this matter can be understood better. In a research conducted by Dokmen^[5], it has been found out that students find the book prices high. However, that primarily classical books have been published by a lot of publishers in Turkey and sold for low prices is an important factor for the students to buy them.

Watching TV is another factor that influence reading negatively in Turkey. In fact, this problem is not peculiar to Turkey. However, as Turkey is the country where the rate of watching TV is the highest in Europe, (average time for watching TV in a week: 20.2 hours) this problem concerns Turkey more.

It can be said that an important step that influenced reading in a positive way has been taken recently. That is, 100 Primary Books were determined for the high school students in the year 2004 and for the primary school students in 2005 by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry sent the list of the books chosen from the Turkish and world literature to all schools and wanted them to suggest students to read these books. However, there is no study revealing the results of this campaign.

Orhan Pamuk's having been awarded with the Nobel Literature Award in 2006 can be thought as a reason for the increase in the interest in reading. Even though Orhan Pamuk was thought to have been awarded not for his novels but for political reasons, he can be said to have caused an increase in reading.

Reading habits in Turkey: Recently, two important national and international assessment studies were carried out to investigate Turkish people's reading tendencies. The national one was conducted by Çocuk Vakfı^[4] and the following findings were reached: 88% of the population in Turkey is literate and this rate can be thought to be good when compared to those of some other countries. Yet, regular reading habit in Turkey is 1%. The group with the highest interest in reading consists of those who took pre-school education. The schools which have the least chance for giving pre-school education are the ones in villages. Elementary school students start losing interest in reading after the 6th class due to their preparations for high school entrance exams. Interest in reading varies depending on the cities and regions. Females read more than males. The rate of female students attending school is less than that of males. The children with a high economic status read novels, but the ones with a low economic status read stories. 63% of teachers sometimes read books. 56.2% of the academicians read 1 or 2 books a month. 40% of the population never goes to library throughout their lives. 70% of the young people never read at all. 95% of the adults only watch TV, 5% of them read books besides watching TV. The contribution of literacy to the development is very limited in Turkey.

The international one was carried out by Mullis *et al.*^[13]. This study was called PIRLS (The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), included 35 countries and it aimed at assessing students' reading achievement at fourth grade. According to results of this study, when compared to the 34 participating countries, the followings are the striking points for Turkey:

In the distribution of reading achievement, Turkey was the 28th out of 35 countries. The average achievement of the countries in reading was 500 while

Turkey's was 449. Internationally, on average, most of the students had more than 25 books in their houses, whereas only 19% of the students had more than 25 books in their houses in Turkey. It was reported that 22% of parents often, 53% of them sometimes and 25% of them never or always read books to their children before they start primary school.

At home, students read texts in many formats for different purposes. Reading stories, novels, or comic books for recreation, or reading books, magazines, newspapers, or other nonfiction materials for getting information are the examples for reading for various purposes.

Students were asked to indicate their reading habits and the frequency of reading different types of texts when they are away from school. Internationally, on average, 40% of students reported reading for fun every day or almost every day and 69% at least once a week. 38% of Turkish students stated that they read for fun every day or almost every day.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The participants of this study consisted of students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching and Elementary School Education, in Dumlupinar University, Kutahya (Turkey) in 2006-2007 academic year. Total size of the group is 365. The participants comprised of 186 pre-service teachers. This group forms approximately half of the total faculty students. There are four sections of specialization in faculty: Turkish Language Teaching, Elementary School Teaching, Social Studies Education and Pre-school Education. One hundred eighty six (114 females and 72 males) volunteer pre-service teachers participated in the study. The sample included 38.2% of the students of the Turkish Teaching Department, 27.4% of the students of the Elementary School Teaching Department, 23.1% of the students of the Social Studies Education Department and 11.3% of the students of the Pre-school Education Department.

The measurement tool was designed after reviewing literature and the existing forms that were proper for the purpose of the study^[1,5]. The data collection instrument was given to 3 experts who are interested in Reading Instruction. Each expert given the instrument was asked to evaluate the form critically in terms of its content and response format. They were also asked to indicate the items that should be revised. The participants were presented with total 13 questions with replies. With the permission granted from chairperson of Turkish Language Teaching Department and Elementary School Education Department, the

instruments were administered to the pre-service teachers during the class sessions by the researcher. During the data collection process, the purpose of the study was explained to all participants.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 for Windows. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe responses to the questionnaire items as well as demographic/background characteristics of participants. Inferential statistics was used including two-way contingency table analysis with chi-square. To guard against the interpretation of non-meaningful results, Cramer's V, a statistic in which values of 0.10, 0.30 and 0.50 represent small, medium and large effect sizes, was utilized^[25].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' rankings of reading outside school: Pre-service teachers were asked to indicate rankings of reading outside the school. Separate two way contingency table analyses with chi-square were conducted to evaluate whether pre-service teachers' rankings regarding reading outside the school vary with respect to gender and the program they attend. The results of two way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and male pre-service teachers rankings of reading outside the school are presented in Table 1. The difference between female and male pre-service teachers in terms of reading outside the school was at the significant level across three comparisons, for primary ranking, it was Pearson P^2 (5, N = 168) = 14.43, $p = 013$, Cramer's V = 0.29. However, results revealed no significant differences with respect to program across comparisons, for primary ranking, it was Pearson P^2 (15, N = 168) = 23.52, $p = 074$, Cramer's V = 0.21.

As shown in the table, both female (52.9%) and male (78.1%) pre-service teachers cited mainly newspaper in the first rank order. Scientific and other was reported lowest in the first rank order by both females and males. Furthermore, it was found that the majority of the females rated art (41.4%) and magazines (33.3%) in the second rank order. The majority of the males (42.9%) rated magazines in the second rank. It was followed by art, cultural, respectively.

Similarly, there are previous studies demonstrating that students' reading outside the school primarily consists of materials other than books^[5,7,8, 2,23,24, 26,27], but there were scholars who introduced different findings^[9,21] as well. These varying findings indicate a change from books to newspapers and magazines in

Table 1: The results of two-way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and male pre-service teachers' rankings of reading outside school

Reading outside school	#1				#2				#3			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Newspaper	55	52.9	50	78.1	0	.0	4	8.2	54	51.4	12	20.7
Magazines	32	30.8	8	12.5	29	33.3	21	42.9	26	24.8	20	34.5
Art	9	8.7	3	4.7	36	41.4	13	26.5	15	14.3	17	29.3
Cultural	7	6.7	1	1.6	17	19.5	9	18.4	6	5.7	6	5.7
Scientific	1	1.0	1	1.6	5	5.7	2	4.1	3	2.9	3	5.2
Other	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	.0	1	1.0	0	0.0
P ²	14.43				9.98				16.45			
p	0.013				0.041				0.006			
Cramer's V	0.29				0.27				0.31			

terms of students' reading materials over years. This finding can be explained in the light of the study conducted by Warrican^[28]. He found that although students reported reading as boring, magazines were ok to read because pictures make magazines more attractive and easier to read. Also girls' enjoying fashion and beauty topics and boys' mainly enjoying sport and car magazines could be one possible explanation for this result since those topics were mainly included in magazines. Another explanation for youth's choosing reading materials other than books (newspapers and magazines) could be due to the books' requiring more time to read compared to other materials-they may not want to spare lots of time for reading or may get bored while reading books.

Age for having the first book other than course book: Pre-service teachers were asked to report their age for having the first book (would not be a course book). Data revealed that both female (48.2%) and male (33.3%) pre-service teachers had their first book at the ages of 7-8. Moreover, separate two way contingency table analyses were conducted to examine whether pre-service teachers' age for having the first book other than course book differ with respect to their gender and the program they attend. Gender of pre-service teachers and age for having the first book other than the course book were found to be significantly related, Pearson P² (5, N = 186) = 19.55, p = 002, Cramer's V = 0.32, but no significant difference was found with respect to program, Pearson P² (15, N = 186) = 15.32, p = 428, Cramer's V = 0.16.

The findings of the study indicated that pre-service teachers had their first books generally around 7-8 years old, especially girls. Furthermore, it was found out that the majority of the girls had their first book at 6 and younger. This result was in line with literature that suggested that girls read more than boys^[1,4,5,7,8,12,13]. On

the other hand, students' having their first books around 7-8 years old might be thought as a late start for reading skills. Low level of pre-school education (approximately 11%) in Turkey might have led to this result. Lack of pre-school education might also influence the individuals' reading habits.

By whom first book was given: Pre-service teachers were asked to respond by whom their first book was given. Nearly same proportions were observed among female students' rankings of by whom their first book was given in teacher (30.1%) and father (31.0%) categories. The majority of the male students (41.7%) reported their fathers. Furthermore, separate two ways contingency table analyses were conducted to examine whether pre-service teachers' having been given the first book differ with respect to their gender and the program they attend. Gender of pre-service teachers and by whom first book given to them were found to be significantly related, Pearson P² (5, N = 186) = 17.82, p = 003, Cramer's V = 0.31, but there was no significant difference with respect to program Pearson P² (15, N = 185) = 23.02, p = 084, Cramer's V = 0.20.

One of the striking finding of this study was to observe that one of three pre-service teacher's first book was given by their teachers. This finding suggests the importance of creating an interest in reading in primary school years in Turkey. One possible explanation for prospective teachers' not having their first book mainly from their parents could be as a result of the economic state of Turkey (national income per body was \$ 4.172 at the end of 2006) and book prices (45 cent per body). Moreover, this result could be associated with parent's perspective for books and reading. Mullis *et al.*^[13], points out students with the highest reading achievement had parents who spent time on reading (p.7). In the same vein, they may not read, so do their children.

Table 2: The results of two-way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and male pre-service teachers' rankings of what genre of books like reading most

	#1		#2				#3					
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Most liked												
Romance	45	39.5	12	16.9	4	5.8	1	2.3	1	2.3	0	.0
Science-Fiction	5	4.4	13	18.3	2	2.9	5	11.6	1	2.3	2	7.4
Social	27	23.7	12	16.9	18	26.1	4	9.3	3	7.0	3	11.1
Nature	1	.9	2	2.8	3	4.3	3	7.0	2	4.7	2	7.4
Political	2	1.8	6	8.5	5	7.2	5	11.6	1	2.3	2	7.4
Adventure	10	8.8	7	9.9	23	33.3	5	11.6	11	25.6	8	29.6
Animal books	0	0.0	0	.0	1	1.4	1	2.3	2	4.7	0	0.0
Heroic	13	11.4	13	18.3	12	17.4	17	39.5	19	44.2	8	29.6
All of them	8	7.0	6	8.5					0	.0	1	3.7
Other	3	2.6	0	0.0	1	1.4	2	4.7	3	7.0	1	3.7
*Total	114		71						43		27	
P ²	25.98				19.79				7.34			
p	0.001				0.011				0.601			
Cramer's V	0.37				0.42				0.32			

Note.* total varies due to missing cases

How many books they read per a year: Pre-service teachers were asked to indicate how many books they read per a year. Separate two way contingency table analyses were conducted to examine whether how many books pre-service teachers differ with respect to their gender and the program they attend. Program of the pre-service teachers and reading book per year were found to be significantly related, Pearson P² (6, N = 179) = 20.30, p = .002, Cramer's V = 0.23. Follow-up pair wise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among these proportions. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the 0.05 across all comparisons. The pair wise differences that were significant were between Turkish-social, Turkish-pre-school and elementary-social education department students. However, no significant difference was found for gender, Pearson P² (2, N = 179) = 2.90, p = .235, Cramer's V = 0.12.

The results demonstrated that pre-service teachers cited that they read 6-20 books per year. UNESCO classified book readers as reading-highly-reader (21 and more books), intermediate reader (6-20 books), low reader (1-5 books) and not reading any book (non-reader)^[14]. According to this evaluation, more than half of the pre-service teachers in the present study were intermediate level readers. This finding was not consistent with the previous study findings that were conducted in Turkey^[4,5]. One possible explanation for this finding could be the study group of the present study. Teacher education programs might have increased the motivation of prospective teachers to read more than the other students in Turkey. The results also indicated that there were some significant differences in

terms of program. Turkish Language Teaching program students read more than those in the social studies education and pre-school education programs and ones in the elementary school education department read more than those in the social studies education program. The reason for higher reading rate among the Turkish department students than other students can be explained by the program curricula's being more close to language and literature topics and required high scores for the entry of the program. The literature clearly reveals that academic success influences reading in a positive way^[1,5]. Elementary school education program requires higher scores to enter that program than both the social studies education and pre-school education programs. This might be the reason for elementary school education program students' reading more compared to the social studies education and pre-school education program students'.

Which genre they like reading most: Preservice teachers were asked to report which genre they like reading most. Separate two way contingency table analyses were conducted to evaluate whether which genre preservice teachers like reading most differ with respect to gender and program they attend. Table 2 presents the results of two way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and male preservice teachers' rankings of which genre like reading most. The difference between female and male pre-service teachers in terms of which genre like reading most was at the significant level across two comparisons, for primary ranking, it was Pearson P² (8, N = 185) = 25.98, p = .001, Cramer's V = 0.37, but there was no significant difference with respect to

Table 3: The results of two-way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and male pre-service teachers' rankings of their reasons for not reading

Reasons for not reading	#1				#2				#3			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
No time	46	61.3	25	53.2	19	27.9	5	13.9	6	10.3	8	22.2
Tiredness	8	10.7	5	10.6	23	33.8	9	25.0	20	34.5	9	25.0
TV	10	13.3	8	17.0	14	20.6	8	22.2	8	13.8	3	8.3
Chat	7	9.3	4	8.5	8	11.8	11	30.6	8	13.8	4	11.1
Expensive prices	4	5.3	4	8.5	4	5.9	3	8.3	14	24.1	10	27.8
Other	0	0.0	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.4	2	5.6
P ²	2.65				7.39				3.78			
p	0.753				0.116				0.580			
Cramer's V	0.14				0.26				0.20			

program, Pearson P² (24, N = 185) = 22.00, p = 579, Cramer's V = 0.19.

As demonstrated in the table, the majority of the female pre-service teachers ranked romance (39.5%) as the most liked genre in the first rank. It was followed by social, heroic, adventure, respectively. The proportions of heroic and adventure were the same in the second rank order. Heroic was rated as the most liked in the third order by female pre-service teachers. Moreover, it was found out that nearly same proportions were observed among males regarding science-fiction (18.3%), heroic (18.3%), romance (16.9%) and social (16.9%) books in the first rank order. The majority of the males (39.5%) rated heroic in the second rank order. The proportions of male students regarding heroic and adventure were the same in the third rank.

There was a significant difference between pre-service teachers genders and the genres they like reading most. Consistent with the past studies gender differences were evident in the present study. This might have stemmed from emotional and developmental needs of them^[7].

Reasons for choosing a book: Pre-service teachers were asked to indicate their reasons for choosing a book. The majority of the pre-service teachers (39.8%) rated topic of the book in the first order. It was followed by author (23.1%) in the second order. Other rankings were as follows; all of them (19.4%), recommended by the teacher (8.1%), recommended by a friend (2.7%). And book prices (1.6%) were rated as the lowest category. No significant difference was observed with respect to gender, Pearson P² (7, N = 184) = 2.43, p = 932, Cramer's V = 0.11 and program Pearson P² (21, N = 184) = 22.71, p = 359, Cramer's V = 0.20.

In order to provide pre-service teachers' with an access to a range of texts we need to understand what they like to read or want. The most common reported reason for choosing a book was prior knowledge of

topic or the kind of the book (romance, science-fiction, social, heroic, adventure, political etc.). The second most common reported reason was knowledge about the author or enjoyment for a particular author's style. These findings seem to validate previous studies. Similarly, previous studies indicated that author and topic/title were the primary concerns while selecting a book^[7,21].

Satisfied with the amount of reading: In order to measure the satisfaction level of participants with their current amount of reading, pre-service teachers were asked to respond to the question of How satisfied are you with your current amount of reading? on a 3-point Likert scale ranged from dissatisfied (1) to satisfied(7). 53.8% of them reported that they somewhat satisfied, whereas 2.7% of them were satisfied with the amount of reading. No significant difference was found with respect to gender, Pearson P² (2, N = 183) = 4.54, p = 103, Cramer's V = 0.15 and program Pearson P² (6, N = 183) = 6.73, p = 346, Cramer's V = 0.13.

When the pre-service teachers' satisfaction level with their current amount of reading is examined, it is seen that they can be divided into two groups roughly. Nearly half of them were not satisfied with the amount of their reading, more than half of them were somewhat satisfied and few of them were satisfied with their reading amount. One could speculate from this finding that students accept the importance of reading, yet they do not read.

The reason for not reading enough: Pre-service teachers were asked to put forward the reasons for not reading enough. Separate two way contingency table analyses were conducted to evaluate whether the reason for not reading enough of pre-service teachers differ with respect to genders and the program they attend. Table 3 presents the results of two way contingency table analysis with chi-square regarding the female and

male pre-service teachers' reasons for not reading enough. No significant difference was observed between female and male pre-service teachers in terms of the reasons for not reading enough across three comparisons with respect to genders and the programs attended.

As shown in the table, both female (61.3%) and male (53.2%) pre-service teachers cited that they had no time for reading in the first rank order.

The findings yielded that more than half of the females and males reported that they did not enough time to read. The findings are not consistent with the previous findings. In a study conducted to find out possible reasons for not reading, it was revealed that expensive book prices were the main reason; however it was not observed in the present study. Although TV watching rate is high in Turkey, it was noteworthy that TV was ordered in lower ranks, this result could be the consequence of students' being away from their families. They live in dormitories where uncomfortable living conditions occur.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Given the growing importance of a teacher influence on a child's reading habit acquisition or for motivating them to read, pre-service teachers' having sufficient reading education becomes more necessary in order to better meet the individual needs of youngsters. To do so, it is pivotal to be aware of how can be an effective teacher of reading. As Blair, Rupley and Nichols^[29] stated, reading is an interactive process and greatly influenced by a variety of variables. For instance, the reader's background, the classroom context, reading materials, individuals' developmental level, teachers' instructional style and learning goals. Hence, teacher education courses should focus on reading education and educators must use various classroom teaching strategies, since one single method can not be applied to all students successfully. Moreover, to promote wider reading, more emphasis should be placed on reading enjoyment both at school and at home.

It should be noted that teacher educators' perceptions about reading as well as their reading habits might influence fostering pre-service teachers' motivation and engagement. Therefore, sharing their readings with their students or discussions about their reading could contribute to higher reading achievement of their students. They can help pre-service teachers to develop personal reading interests. Also, reading based conferences and discussions can be took place in education faculties.

To promote students' reading achievement, some reading campaigns were conducted in England Read On and in the USA Get Caught Reading. Likewise, in Turkey national reading campaigns called 100 Basic Literary Works for high school students and for elementary students were conducted. These campaigns can be extended for pre-service teachers.

It is also important to be cognizant of the role of parents. Early experiences regarding reading might have an impact on the attitudes held by pre-service teachers to reading. Parents have responsibilities for introducing their children with books as well as becoming explicit role models. Also, families can arrange daily reading times for every member of their families.

Furthermore, increased research findings can help researchers, teacher educators and education programs by encouraging pre-service teachers to be enthusiastic readers or engage more in reading. Finally, we can not assume that all the people in different educational majors are enthusiastic readers; education programs should be designed to pursue their engagement in reading. Hence, they can be appropriate role models for their future students.

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