

# Analysis of Determinant Factors in Student Decision Making in Choosing a Study Program in a Pesantren-based College

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Received: 06-05-2025

Revised: 18-06-2025

Accepted: 23-07-2025

## Article Info

### Keywords:

Decision Making, Study Program Selection, Pesantren-Based College, Parental Influence.

## Abstract

*Pesantren-based universities present a unique educational environment where religious and cultural values strongly influence students' academic choices. This study analyzes the factors influencing students' decision-making in selecting study programs within this context. Using a quantitative survey approach, data were collected through questionnaires from 22 prospective students of STIT Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan for the 2024–2025 academic year. The Guttman scale measured responses across 18 decision factors, including parental direction, talent development, career, cost, peers, etc. The results show that talent development (mean = 0.91) and parental direction (mean = 0.86) were the most influential factors, followed by career considerations (mean = 0.81) and program reputation (mean = 0.73). Personal choice (0.77) and potential program advancement (0.77) also contributed significantly. In contrast, cost (0.41) and peer influence (0.55) were found to have a limited impact. The findings underscore the predominance of internal motivations and family influence over socioeconomic or peer-related variables. This study recommends that pesantren-based institutions tailor their curricula to align with students' talents and career aspirations while fostering family involvement in academic decision-making. Future research should expand the sample size and include multiple pesantren-based institutions to ensure broader generalizability. Additionally, qualitative approaches could enrich understanding of the nuanced influence of pesantren culture on educational choices.*

### Kata Kunci:

Pengambilan keputusan, pemilihan program studi, perguruan tinggi berbasis pesantren, pengaruh orang tua.

### Abstrak

*Perguruan tinggi berbasis pesantren menawarkan lingkungan pendidikan yang unik, di mana nilai-nilai religius dan budaya memiliki pengaruh kuat terhadap pilihan akademik mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor penentu dalam pengambilan keputusan mahasiswa dalam memilih program studi dalam konteks tersebut. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan survei kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dari 22 calon mahasiswa STIT Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan untuk tahun akademik 2024–2025. Skala Guttman digunakan untuk mengukur respons terhadap 18 faktor penentu, termasuk arahan orang tua, pengembangan bakat, karier, biaya, pengaruh teman sebaya, dan lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan bakat (rata-rata = 0,91) dan arahan orang tua (rata-rata = 0,86) merupakan faktor yang paling berpengaruh, diikuti oleh pertimbangan karier (rata-rata = 0,81) dan reputasi program studi (rata-rata = 0,73). Faktor lain seperti pilihan pribadi (0,77) dan potensi kemajuan program studi (0,77) juga memberikan kontribusi signifikan. Sebaliknya, biaya (0,41) dan pengaruh teman sebaya (0,55) menunjukkan pengaruh yang lebih rendah. Temuan ini menegaskan dominasi motivasi internal dan pengaruh keluarga dibandingkan dengan variabel sosial ekonomi atau teman sebaya. Studi ini merekomendasikan agar perguruan tinggi berbasis pesantren menyesuaikan kurikulumnya dengan minat dan bakat mahasiswa serta prospek karier mereka, sambil memperkuat keterlibatan keluarga dalam proses pengambilan keputusan akademik. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas jumlah responden dan melibatkan berbagai institusi pesantren guna meningkatkan generalisasi temuan. Pendekatan kualitatif juga dapat memperkaya pemahaman terhadap pengaruh budaya pesantren dalam pilihan pendidikan.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The decision-making process of students in choosing a study program in higher education is one of the important aspects that requires more attention, especially in the context of pesantren-based universities. Many factors influence the decision, ranging from personal factors such as interest and motivation to external factors such as the influence of family and the surrounding community. The concept of decision-making theory shows that individuals tend to make decisions based on rational and emotional considerations influenced by internal and external factors. (Bahri & Wasiman, 2025) . In this case, pesantren-based universities provide a unique background where religious, cultural, and community influences shape student preferences for study programs. Research conducted by Aydın & Bayır (2016) shows that institutional reputation, faculty quality, and tuition fees significantly influence study program selection. (Aydın & Bayır, 2016) .

This study's crucial issue is understanding the factors influencing students in choosing programs at pesantren-based universities. Along with the increasing choice of study programs and competition between educational institutions, students are faced with various choices that require wise and well-considered decisions. However, research examining the determining factors in decision making in the pesantren environment is still minimal, even though understanding these factors is crucial to support more effective education policies (Azizan et al., 2017). Research conducted by Varol also revealed that trust and safety factors can influence students' decisions in choosing a COVID-19 vaccine, which can be linked to the educational context in choosing a safe study program and in line with their expectations (Varol et al., 2021).

Previous studies relevant to this research show that many factors influence students' decisions about education, such as cost, quality, institutional reputation, and family influence. (Salimah & Ruski, 2024) However, most of these studies do not examine the factors that specifically apply to Pesantren students, where religious values and the influence of the Pesantren community also play a significant role. Research conducted by Gurung provides insights related to institutional factors that influence students' decisions in choosing universities, such as institutional reputation and the quality of educational facilities. (Gurung et al., 2022). The existing research gap lies in the limited research examining the determining factors in decision-making in pesantren-based universities, especially in the context of the culture and religious values. This study analyzes factors such as religious values, family influence, and institutional reputation on students' choice of study programs. The hypothesis to be tested in this study is that students from pesantren will be more influenced by factors related to religion and family influence than students from secular education. (Sastro et al., 2024) Behr's research, which analyzes the influence of financial situation and previous education on students' decision to drop out of college, is also relevant in this context, as these factors influence the selection of study programs that have the potential to reduce the risk of decreasing student participation. (Behr et al., 2020) .

Through this research, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of how these factors play a role in determining students' educational choices at pesantren-based universities can be obtained. This research is also expected to contribute to the development of educational policies that are more inclusive and meet the needs and characteristics of students in pesantren. (Mandra & Ismail, 2022) . Research by Arguello Guadalupe, which explores the factors that influence students' decisions in choosing a university, shows the importance of a deeper understanding of the various criteria students consider in choosing higher education. (Arguello Guadalupe et al., 2023) .

## METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to analyze the factors determining student decision-making when choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities, STIT Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to prospective students for the 2024-2025 academic year using Google Forms. This questionnaire consists of various questions designed to measure the influence of various factors on student decisions. The factors analyzed in this study include gender factors, socio-economic factors, parental education factors, direction factors from parents, personal choice factors, professional desire factors, specific expertise or talent factors, peer factors, study program assessment factors, cost factors, location factors, study program reputation factors, convenience factors, emotional factors, career factors, study program advancement potential factors, actualization factors in the study program, and talent development factors.

The questionnaire used in this study uses a Guttman scale, which requires respondents to choose between two opposite options (yes or no) for each statement. This scale was chosen for its ability to measure a single dimension (unidimensionality) and provide a numerical value that reflects the cumulative order of the factors under study. Respondents in this study were students who were studying at pesantren-based universities. A total of 22 respondents participated in this study. The collected data were then analyzed using SPSS 27 statistical tools to calculate frequencies, percentages, and test the data distribution associated with each determinant factor. The results of this analysis provide an overview of the relative influence of each factor in student decision-making when choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities. This analysis also includes testing data diversity to understand further trends in data distribution. Previous studies have shown the importance of using Guttman scales in measuring equality of order and accumulation of dimensions in social and educational decisions. (Abdi, 2022) , as well as applying this scale technique in the context of measuring decisions in educational studies (Weldon et al., 1969; Robinson, 1973).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

In the analysis stage of the results of this study, data processing was carried out using descriptive statistics to identify factors that influence student decision-making in choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities. Based on data obtained from 22 respondents, this study evaluates various factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, parental education, parental direction, and several other factors that can potentially influence students' educational decisions. Descriptive analysis shows the variation in the influence of each factor on course selection decisions, with some factors, such as parental direction and talent development, having a greater influence than other factors, such as cost and peers.

The statistical data used includes the mean, standard deviation, and measurement of data distribution through skewness and kurtosis, which provide deeper insights into how these factors influence students' decision-making process in Pesantren-based universities.

**Table 1. Mean Analysis of Factors Influencing Students' Decision-Making in Choosing Study Programs at Pesantren-Based Universities**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Gender Factor Majority	22	1	0	1	5	.23
Socio-economic factors	22	1	0	1	5	.23
Parental education factor	22	1	0	1	6	.27
Direction factor from parents	22	1	0	1	19	.86
Personal choice factor	22	1	0	1	17	.77
Professional desire factor	22	1	0	1	15	.68
A specific skill or talent factor	22	1	0	1	15	.68
Peer Factor	22	1	0	1	12	.55
Program assessment factors	22	1	0	1	15	.68
Cost Factor	22	1	0	1	9	.41
Location Factor	22	1	0	1	14	.64
Reputation Factor of Study Program	22	1	0	1	16	.73
Comfort Factor	22	1	0	1	15	.68
Emotional Factors	22	1	0	1	13	.59
Career Factors	21	1	0	1	17	.81
Potential Progress Factor of the Study Program	22	1	0	1	17	.77
Actualization Factor in the Study Program	22	1	0	1	15	.68
Talent Development Factor	22	1	0	1	20	.91
Valid N (listwise)	21					

Source: Survey data analysis using SPSS version 27

Based on the descriptive analysis of student decision-making data in choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities, it can be seen that the majority of gender and socio-economic factors have a relatively small influence, with a mean of 0.23, which indicates that although most students are male and come from families with low socio-economic backgrounds, these factors are not very decisive in choosing study programs. In contrast, the parental direction factor showed a massive influence with a mean of 0.86, where almost 86% of students chose their study program based on their parents' direction, indicating the important role of parents in students' educational decisions.

The talent development factor had the highest mean of 0.91, indicating that 90.9% of students chose a study program to develop their talents or interests, underlining the importance of choosing an education that matches personal potential. Career factors also showed significant influence, with a mean of 0.81, indicating that most students considered career prospects when choosing their study program. Although cost has a lower mean of 0.41, indicating less influence

than other factors, it is still an important consideration. Meanwhile, peers with a mean of 0.55 show a relatively small influence on students' decisions, although some students still consider the influence of peers in choosing their education.

**Table 2. Analysis of Variation in the Influence of Factors that Influence Student Decisions In Choosing Study Programs at Pesantren-Based Universities**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis
	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Majority Gender Factor	.091	.429	.184	1.399	.491	-.057
Socio-economic factors	.091	.429	.184	1.399	.491	-.057
Parental education factor	.097	.456	.208	1.097	.491	-.887
Direction factor from parents	.075	.351	.123	-2.278	.491	3.498
Personal choice factor	.091	.429	.184	-1.399	.491	-.057
Professional Desire Factor	.102	.477	.227	-.839	.491	-1.436
A specific skill or talent factor	.102	.477	.227	-.839	.491	-1.436
Peer Factor	.109	.510	.260	-.196	.491	-2.168
Program assessment factor	.102	.477	.227	-.839	.491	-1.436
Cost Factor	.107	.503	.253	.397	.491	-2.037
Location Factor	.105	.492	.242	-.609	.491	-1.802
Study Program Reputation Factor	.097	.456	.208	-1.097	.491	-.887
Comfort Factor	.102	.477	.227	-.839	.491	-1.436
Emotional Factor	.107	.503	.253	-.397	.491	-2.037
Career Factors	.088	.402	.162	-1.700	.501	.975
Potential Progress Factor of the Study Program	.091	.429	.184	-1.399	.491	-.057
Actualization Factor in the Study Program	.102	.477	.227	-.839	.491	-1.436
Talent Development Factor	.063	.294	.087	-3.059	.491	8.085
Valid N (listwise)						

Source: Survey data analysis using SPSS version 27

The factors that influence students' decisions in choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities show significant variations in influence. The majority of gender and socio-economic factors have a low mean of 0.091, with a data distribution that is more skewed towards men and low socio-economic backgrounds. However, their influence on choosing a study program is not very large. The parental education factor shows a slightly right-skewed distribution, indicating less influence on students with lower parental education levels. The parental direction factor shows a highly centered distribution and dominant influence on student decisions, with a mean of 0.075. Personal choice, professional desire, and specific skills or talents also show significant influence, with a mean of around 0.091 to 0.102.

However, the factors of peers and cost have less influence, as indicated by lower skewness values. The career and talent development factor shows that students choose study programs that offer career development opportunities or match their talents, with a dominant influence of talent development reflected in the very high kurtosis (8.085). The study program's reputation and location factors also show a fairly important role, although not as big as the other factors.

**Table 3. Kurtosis Analysis of Factors Influencing Student Decisions In Choosing Study Programs at Pesantren-Based Universities**

	<b>Kurtosis</b>
	<b>Std. Error</b>
Gender Factor Majority	.953
Socio-economic factor	.953
Parental education factor	.953
Parental direction factor	.953
Personal choice factor	.953
Professional desire factor	.953
Specific skill or talent factor	.953
Peer Factor	.953
Program assessment factor	.953
Cost Factor	.953
Location factor	.953
Study Program Reputation Factor	.953
Convenience Factor	.953
Emotional Factor	.953
Career Factors	.972
Potential Study Program Advancement Factor	.953
Actualization Factor in the Study Program	.953
Talent Development Factor	.953
Valid N (listwise)	

Source: Survey Data Analysis SPSS Version 27

Kurtosis Analysis From the statistical table presented, the kurtosis value for most of the factors analyzed is 0.953, which indicates a relatively normal or close to normal distribution of data for the following factors: majority gender, socio-economics, parents' education, direction from parents, personal choice, professional desire, specific skills or talents, peers, assessment of the study program, cost, location, reputation of the study program, comfort, emotional, potential for advancement in the study program, and actualization in the study program. This indicates that respondents tended to have a uniform distribution regarding these factors, with no extreme or exceptional skewing of the data. However, one factor, career, has a kurtosis of 0.972, slightly higher than the other factors. While still close to a normal distribution, this slightly higher kurtosis value indicates that the data related to the career factor is more centered around specific values, with slightly more values at the top of the distribution.

The implications of these results indicate that most factors influencing student decision-making in choosing study programs tend to be well distributed without extreme values distorting the data. This illustrates that students with a relatively uniform perspective face parental direction, personal choice, and developing professional talents and desires. However, for the career factor, with a slightly higher kurtosis, this suggests that career is more often the focal point for some students in choosing a study program, and that this factor may be more relevant for most students.

Based on these findings, pesantren-based colleges need to consider career development an important part of their course promotion. As the distribution is more centralized, this suggests that students see a specific career path as part of their decision. Other factors, such as parental education and peers, show a normal distribution, which means that educational interventions in shaping this decision can be more evenly distributed and further developed through better communication and information approaches to students and their families.

**Table 4. Summary of Research Results**

Aspect	Results	Interpretation
<b>Gender and Socio-Economic Factors</b>	The mean is low (0.23), with most male students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds.	Gender and socioeconomics have a minimal influence on the decision to choose a study program, although there are trends in certain groups.
<b>Parental Direction Factor</b>	The mean is very high (0.86), indicating that almost 86% of students choose based on parental direction.	Parents play a dominant role in determining students' educational choices, confirming the importance of family involvement in educational decisions.
<b>Talent Development Factor</b>	The highest mean (0.91) indicates that 90.9% of students chose a study program based on their interests or talents.	Student decisions are influenced by the choice of education based on interests and talents, signaling the importance of education that matches individual potential.
<b>Career Factors</b>	Mean 0.81, indicating that most students consider career prospects when choosing a study program.	Universities should link study programs with career opportunities, as students are more likely to choose programs that offer better job opportunities in the future.
<b>Cost Factor</b>	The mean is low (0.41), indicating that although cost is a consideration, its influence is smaller than that of other factors.	Cost is not a significant factor in decision-making, but pesantren-based colleges need to consider student scholarships or financial aid.
<b>Peer Factor</b>	Mean 0.55, indicating the influence of peers is relatively small.	Peers have little influence on student education decisions, indicating that internal and family factors more influence decisions.
<b>Study Program Reputation Factor</b>	Mean 0.73, indicating that the reputation of the study program is quite influential.	The reputation of the study program is an important consideration in the choice of higher education, although its influence is not as strong as parental direction or personal talent.
<b>Location and Convenience Factor</b>	The mean is 0.64 for location and 0.68 for convenience, which play a fairly important role.	Location and convenience also influence student decisions, but their influence is smaller than career and talent development factors.
<b>Parental Education Factor</b>	The mean was 0.27, with slightly more distribution in the group with lower parental education.	The influence of parental education on students' decisions is not very significant, although it still contributes to the choice of education.

<b>Personal Choice and Professional Desire Factor</b>	The mean is about 0.77 for personal choice and 0.68 for professional desire.	Personal choice and professional desire are crucial in determining the study program, illustrating that students prefer majors that match personal preferences and job prospects.
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Source: Primary Data Analysis, 2025

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, this study provides a clear picture of the factors that influence students' decision-making when choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities. Parental direction emerged as the dominant factor, with almost 86% of students choosing study programs based on their parents' direction. This suggests that family factors, particularly parents' role, significantly influence students' educational decisions. This is in line with research. (Pinaraswati & Saibat, 2020) This shows the importance of family support in determining their children's higher education pathways (Pinaraswati & Saibat, 2020). This study also confirms the findings of (Azizan et al., 2017). This emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in their child's educational decision-making process, a key differentiating factor in selecting academic pathways. Therefore, pesantren-based universities must develop programs involving families in supporting students' educational decisions.

The talent development factor was also noted as significant, with the highest mean of 0.91, indicating that 90.9% of students chose study programs that match their interests or talents. This reflects the importance of self-development in education based on personal interests, which can enrich students' academic life in pesantren-based universities. This finding is supported by (Basri et al., 2024) This emphasizes the importance of interest in determining the direction of one's higher education, as well as (Do Musa & Hasan, 2024) This shows that students who choose based on personal aptitude are more likely to achieve satisfaction in their studies. In this context, pesantren-based colleges need to tailor the curriculum to the development of students' talents and interests to encourage their active participation.

Meanwhile, career factors also play an important role with a mean of 0.81, which indicates that most students consider better job prospects when choosing a study program. This career factor is relevant in the modern era, prioritizing competence and job opportunities after graduation. Research (Ajibola et al., 2017) Shows that students are more likely to choose an educational path with clear and promising career prospects. (Fajrin et al., 2025) It also reinforces these findings by showing that career considerations are the main factor influencing students' decisions in choosing study programs, especially in Pesantren-based universities.

Theoretically, the results of this study can be analyzed using rational decision theory and socio-cultural theory. Rational decision theory explains that students choose study programs with rational considerations based on available information, such as career prospects, talent development, and parental direction. This is very relevant to the findings that career factors and talent development significantly influence the decision to choose a study program, which aligns with the thinking. (Fajrin et al., 2025) Regarding decisions based on rational considerations for a brighter future. On the other hand, socio-cultural theory explains that students' educational decisions are also influenced by social factors, such as values taught in the family and boarding school culture. (Por et al., 2024) and (Mpolokoso & Miyoba, 2024) Revealed that the influence of family, especially parents, is significant in influencing students' educational decisions.



Furthermore, the results of this study also show that although cost is a factor considered by students, its influence is not as significant as other factors such as parental rights, talent development, and career. This suggests that students are more likely to choose study programs relevant to their interests and future potential rather than considering cost as a significant factor. Research (Mpolokoso & Miyoba, 2024) This aligns with these findings, which show that although cost may be a consideration, other factors that better influence the future are more dominant in educational decision-making. Therefore, pesantren-based colleges must offer scholarships or financial aid to reduce cost barriers for students wanting to pursue further education.

The main contribution of this study lies in a deeper understanding of how internal and external factors, such as prospective, career, and parental support, mutually influence students' decisions in choosing study programs in pesantren-based colleges. This research provides beneficial insights for pesantren-based universities to develop programs more relevant to the job market's needs and support students' personal development. (Azizan et al., 2017) Underlines the importance of linking study programs with future career prospects, which is highly relevant to the finding that career factors play a significant role in study program selection. In addition, (Pinaraswati & Saibat, 2020) Suggests that pesantren-based universities need to strengthen relationships with families to increase support for students' educational decisions.

This study also contributes to developing educational policies in pesantren-based colleges by showing the importance of personal and career talent development in determining students' educational choices. Accordingly, pesantren-based colleges can strengthen their focus on clearer and more targeted career development and ensure that the curriculum supports the development of students' aptitudes and interests. These findings provide a strong basis for educational policies in pesantren-based colleges to adapt their study programs to the needs of the world of work and the personal desires of students who are more oriented towards career and talent development.

Finally, this study also strengthens the literature on pesantren education. It guides pesantren-based colleges to optimize students' potential through family value-based approaches, career development, and personal aptitude. In line with this, colleges must introduce programs combining pesantren values with modern higher education's needs to balance tradition and innovation to prepare students for future challenges.

**Table 5. Summary of the Contribution and Novelty of the Research Results**

Aspect	Analytic Theoritic	Contribution	Novelty
<b>Analytical Approach</b>	A quantitative approach that uses descriptive statistics to measure decision-making factors in selecting pesantren-based student study programs. Previously, studies such as (Aydin and Bayır, 2016) utilized a similar approach to analyze the influence of cost and quality of education.	This study utilizes in-depth descriptive statistics to contribute to the analytical approach to understanding the determinants influencing student decision-making in Pesantren-based universities.	This study introduces statistical analysis using the Guttman scale approach, which has rarely been used in educational research in Pesantren-based colleges. It provides more detailed insights into the ordering of factors in decision-making.

<b>Empirical Approach</b>	Most previous studies have also emphasized factors such as tuition fees and faculty quality (Aydın & Bayır, 2016), but have not discussed them in depth in the context of pesantren-based colleges. This study identifies and measures these factors in more detail.	Empirically, this study presents more detailed data on the influence of socio-cultural factors, religion, and family on the educational decisions of Pesantren students, which contributes to the development of more needs-based educational policies.	Most previous studies did not examine the influence of religion and pesantren factors in educational decision-making. In contrast, this study found that pesantren's religious and cultural values significantly influence students' choice of study programs.
<b>Conceptual Approach</b>	The Guttman scale method measures a single dimension in social and educational decision-making, which provides advantages in measuring the order of factors that influence educational decisions (Weldon et al., 1969)	Conceptually, this study opens new insights into the interaction between religious values, pesantren socio-culture, and academic decisions, and suggests the development of study programs that integrate these factors with labor market needs.	The main novelty of this study lies in incorporating the pesantren socio-cultural perspective into higher education decision-making theory, emphasizing the important role of family and culture in guiding students' educational choices.

Source: Primary Data Analysis, 2025

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that student decision-making in choosing study programs at pesantren-based universities is predominantly influenced by parental direction (86%) and talent development (90.9%), followed closely by career considerations (81%). Other factors such as program reputation (73%), location (64%), and personal choice (77%) also contribute significantly, while cost (41%) and peer influence (55%) have relatively minimal impact. The findings underscore the dominant role of family involvement and internal motivation over economic or social factors. These results suggest that pesantren-based colleges should align their educational offerings with student interests, talents, and career prospects while strengthening parental engagement strategies to support educational choices.

However, this study has limitations, namely the relatively small number of respondents (22 respondents), which may limit the generalization of the results of this study to a broader population. In addition, this study was only conducted in one pesantren-based university, so the results may not fully reflect conditions in other pesantren. Recommendations for future research are to expand the number of respondents and conduct similar research in various pesantren-based universities to get a more comprehensive picture of the factors influencing student decision-making in choosing study programs. Further research can also explore other factors, such as peer influence in a broader social context and the impact of pesantren culture on educational decisions.

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