

# Use of Social Media Among the Students in Secondary Schools in Tanzania

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**Abstract:** This study examined the Use of Social Media among the Students in Tanzania. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyze data. As regard factors triggering use of social media, the findings showed social media is significantly influenced by online learning. It provides an exciting learning platform where students can access academic content such as easy to access audio-visual materials and enhance learning though only a few students have a good balance between social media time and doing other school work. As regard the challenges of using social media, cyber-bullying, exposure to unsuitable digital contents, sleep deprivation, devoting lesser time in studies and online dating due to chatting with unknown adult strangers that lead to sexual solicitation from them were prevalent. Based on the findings it can be concluded that there is increased use of social media among secondary school students. Both negative and positive effects of social media use among students were revealed. The common perception on social media use among students has been negative. This study revealed some positive ways of using social media to enhance learning including accessing educational content. Social media use cannot be fully accepted without critique. This makes it necessary for students to be guided on how to use it appropriately. On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be made: Teachers, parents and police should teach young Internet users Internet safety advice on how to perceive and avoid potentially predatory communications and relationships with adults. They should also teach them how to use the internet safely and not chatting to strangers online.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Students, Online Dating, Facebook, Cyber Bullying

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Nearly 4.65 billion people around the world now use social media. This is equal to more than half of the global population. Most of the users are aged between 15 and 25 years. Facebook is the most widely used social media followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, Tiktok, Facebook messenger, Douyin and Snapchat. Other social media platforms are Kuaishou, Sina Weibo, QQ, Telegram, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, LinkedIn and Quora [1-3]. Social and historical context of research on students and social media shows that social media play important role in students' life. They facilitate knowledge sharing, instant online discussion, communication etc. [4]. Despite their importance, several studies have reported

negative effects of the media on students. Worldwide, there is persistent atmosphere and public concern about the effect of social media. The focus of this concern is typically on moral issues, most obviously, sex in relation to girls and violence in relation to boys. This in turn seems to reflect broader fears of the future direction of society. Findings from USA, South Korea, UK, and Germany revealed concerns about the harmful effects of media on students. This includes concerns about the influence of video and television on violence and cinema on sex. These concerns reached the level of 'moral panic' and campaigns against 'video nasties' of the 1980s following the murder of the toddler James Bulger by two the ten years olds in 1993 in Britain. This was also followed by shootings at High School in Colorado, USA, in 1999. The debate about social media including computer games and Internet are merely the latest manifestation. Predictably, these events led to calls for

banning of violent video games [5, 6]. Increasingly, in India, Bangladeshi, Kenya and Tanzania, students who are using social media are exposed to cyber-bullying, pornography, online dating, sleep deprivation, unsuitable digital content, are often devoted lesser time to their studies in comparison to non-users. This results to poor performance [7-10, 36]. Seemingly, no effort has been made to divert them from inappropriate use of social media. Socialization agents and parents have, arguably, evaded their responsibilities of directing youth away from risky behavior, thereby allowing the social media to play a more fundamental influence [11].

Aggravating the situation, for a long time in Tanzania there was no laws governing the use of social media. However, realizing the need, the government enacted the Cybercrimes Act, 2015 to make provisions for criminalizing offences related to computer systems; Information and Communication Technologies and address challenges related to children threats. Despite the enactment of the law, still there are incidences of inappropriate use of social media among the youths and students. This is mainly caused by lack of political will, commitment among the leaders and law enforcers to curb the problem. To make things worse, weak rules, regulations and tracking mechanisms of perpetrators or the culprits create loop holes. Because of this, there is mushrooming of pornographic videos shacks, locally known as “*vibanda umiza*” used to play video games, and gambling by students under the age of 18. Efforts on controlling improper use of social media among the children and students are often limited in impact [12]. This is worsened by the lack of sustained commitment and support from the government to insure the scale up of implementation plans addressing this long-time challenge. Maddening the situation is the wrong view of freedom of information which encourages improper use of social media. All these have triggered the conduct of this study.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Youths are negatively affected, overtly and covertly, by the improper use of social media than other age groups. Social media are packaged with portrayals that glamorize risky adult behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, excessive drinking, smoking etc. which expose youths and students in particular in high risks [3]. The risk appetite is so high. While on line, they view different things posted from other cultures, age groups, careers and entertainment. They chart with people in their circle. This provided space, opens room for cyber bullying, encourages imitation, covers children shyness and lets them hide their real profiles for virtual ones. Despite the various initiatives put in place including the enactment of the cybercrimes Act, 2015, parental and religious leaders’ guidance, still the problem of children’s improper use of social media is on the increase [13, 12]. Most of them, including students, stay on social media for many hours than they do in school assignments. By the age 18, an individual will have spent more time watching television than any other activity besides sleeping. Several studies have been done on the impact of social media including; [14-17] but they focused generally on children and not on secondary schools’ students that this study appraises.

## 2. Methods

This study used descriptive design which constructs a numeric and graphic rendition of the findings from a real-world setting and participants to accentuate a sense of being there [18-20]. This design allowed greater flexibility, high response rate and, a blending of both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods) [21]. A deeper understanding of the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of respective respondents was achieved. Establishment of frequencies, percentages and the magnitude of social media use among the children was possible [22, 23].

Participants were drawn from one secondary school, namely, Nzasa in Temeke District in Dar es Salaam Region. Adolescent male students aged between 15 and 19 years who were not in candidate classes, that is, form one and form three were involved because they were not busy with the preparation for national emanations. Teachers, Social Welfare Officers (SWOs), Police Officers and parents were also involved.

The determination of sample size was based on the Krejcie and Morgan table [24]. According to Morgan’s table [24], there are given sample sizes(s) for the given population sizes (N) (See Appendix). The recommended sample size for a study drawn from large population size of 110 people is 86.

Drawing from the formula below,

$$S = x^2 NP (1-P) + d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)$$

86 targeted respondents were selected. This was based on the Krejcie and Morgan table which requires respondents to be representative enough. 80 questionnaires were returned. This is a 93% return rate. The target population of this study was Nzasa Secondary School students in Dar-es-Salaam, a few teachers, parents and social workers.

### 2.1. Data Management and Analysis

Quantitative data were entered and analyzed by descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Before quantitative data were analyzed, questionnaire was carefully coded. Evaluation of students’ use of social media was established by using frequency counts and percentages. Thematic analysis model was used to analyse data collected through an in-depth interview. Repeated patterns of meaning within data context were identified, analyzed and reported [25-27].

### 2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Heidegger’s Theory of Shared World as applied to social media use. This theory emphasizes on the significance of others. Drawing from Heidegger, our being-in-the-world is characterized by the concern for others and taking care of others. Everything we do and think is in reference to our parents, friends, and the love of our life. This is what Heidegger calls the “shared-world.” The strength of this theory is that the “shared-world” moves away from instrumentalism toward “being-with.” In the “shared-world,” perspective there is no objective presence of objects. There is

a relation from one being to another. Relating this study to Heidegger’s “shared-world” enabled the researchers to understand how users use social media. How is social media used to support, continue, strengthen and replace the present offline social relationships. Students use social media to socialize with friends when this is not possible in unmediated situations. They also use social media to get new friends, to find old friends and send messages to friends. Social media is, also, used to keep contact, share information and educational content with other students [39]. Students are attracted by social media because of experiences related to others who use such spaces. Social media uses friendship networks in order to build associations among users. It is also used to help young people who come to a university from high school to maintain their previous high school friends and develop new friends at the university. In this way, it builds friendship networks and build associations among users.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Participants Characteristics

A total of 80 respondents completed questionnaires. Their age ranged between 14 and 36 years and above. The majority of whom aged between 14 and 18 (88%). Nearly three quarters (70%) were secondary school students. (The respondents’ profile is summarized in Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents Distribution by Age and Level of education.

| Age group                       | Frequency | Percent% |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| 14-18 Years                     | 70        | 88%      |
| 20-35 Years                     | 07        | 08%      |
| 36 Years and above              | 03        | 04%      |
| Total                           | 80        | 100%     |
| Respondent’s Level of Education | Frequency | Percent  |
| Primary                         | 00        | 00%      |
| Secondary                       | 70        | 88%      |
| College                         | 04        | 05%      |
| University                      | 06        | 07%      |
| Total                           | 80        | 100      |

#### 3.2. Factors Influencing Students to Use Social Media

To identify factors influencing use of social media, respondents were first asked a questions on types of social media mostly used, requiring them to respond affirmatively or in negation. In general, a majority of respondents were, seemingly, affirmative and pointed out several social media mostly used. However, a closer examination of their responses on types of social media platforms frequently used revealed that there are social media which are preferred most than others.

For example, 80% of the respondents said that YouTube was frequently used. Again, a statistically, higher proportion (75%) of respondents said that WhatsApp is increasingly being used followed by snapchat as pointed out by 60% of the respondents. It was further found out that a proportion of respondents reported that they highly preferred Skype (45%) of respondents, Instagram (40%), Twitter (35%) and Facebook (30%). On probing further, it was revealed from

interview that students preferred gaming and chatting sites, online multiplayer games and chat rooms which are increasingly becoming common social media places for them. These findings correlate with the findings by Lenhart [28] who says that Facebook [37, 38], Instagram, YouTube, online games and snapchat are the common social media used by students and youths.

As regard the factors influencing use of social media by students, several factors were identified including: learning, having fun, developing friendship etc. Respondents were asked to rate their responses with the highest being strongly agree (5) and the least strongly disagree (1).

Mean scores were used to describe and rate key variables in this study. The study applied the categories of mean results as proposed by Oxford [29] and Oxford and Burry-Stock [30]. Mean results are categorized into three groups, that is, Low (Mean score= 1.0 and 2.4); Medium (Mean score=2.5 to 3.4) and high (Mean score= 3.5 to 5.0).

When the results were analyzed, mean results indicated that students were using social media. The mean scores of specific items of social media usage by students ranged from 4.06 to 4.56. More specifically, social media were highly used by students to have fun with (M=4.57; SD=0.72793). In this regard, students were using social media such as YouTube to view video clips from Tv shows, movies or home videos. They also used WhatsApp when their phones were connected to the Internet to send and receive messages, calls, photos or videos. This was followed by developing relationship (M=4.33; SD=.099424) which enabled them to establish friendship with other people in the online community and connecting with other people whom they chat with while learning or playing (M=4.20, SD=0.92476). The mean results further revealed that students highly used social media to share interest with other people (M=4.17; SD=91287) and for learning purposes (M=4.07; SD=90719) (See Also Table 2). In terms of learning, social media provides an exciting learning platform where students can access information outside the syllabus. It provides easy to access audio-visual materials and enhance learning.

These findings coincide with the study by de Haan & Huysmans [31] which shows that students are increasingly spending most of their free time in social media. Also, the study by Boyd [32] shows that students use social media due to a range of reasons such as students’ need to continue relationship or connecting with others, playing online games with others. As regard enhancing learning, the above findings are justified by Paul [33] who revealed that social media influence students’ academic performance. Some students can spend time on social media platforms and yet their performance for the semester or academic year still remains the same. There is a positive and significant relationship between friend and people connections and students’ academic performance.

This is so because students can form study groups which facilitates better means through which students improve on their studies. Also lecturers can connect with students to provide and ready study material that are helpful and useful to students. There is a positive and significant influence of Nature of Usage with students’ academic performance.

Similar finding by Anne [34] states that social networking sites provide an avenue for students to join to interesting groups that allow them to learn new skills in area of their choice. There is a significant relationship between internet addiction and students' academic performance. This is so because the more addicted one is to the internet the more

time they spend on it. They spend more time without taking into consideration their meal. This is so, because of the changes that are being made frequently on these social media platforms which could have the concentration of students on their studies and thus affect their test or examination score.

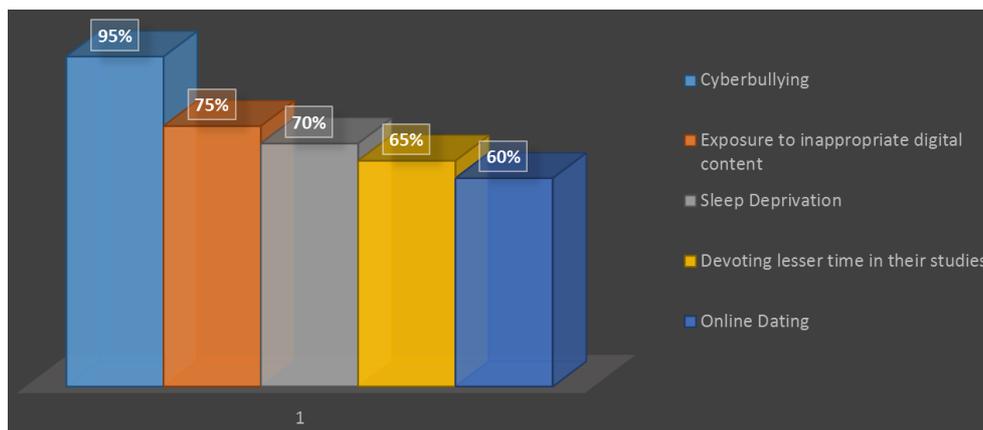
**Table 2.** Factors influencing students to use social media.

| S/No | Factor                       | Strongly Agree | Agree      | Neutral   | Dis agree | Strongly DisAgree | Mean Value | Rank |
|------|------------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|------------|------|
| 1    | Having fun                   | 20 (66)        | 8 (27)     | 1 (3.3)   | 1 (3.3)   | 0 (0.0)           | 4.5667     | 1    |
| 2    | Developing Relationships     | 17 (56.7%)     | 9 (30%)    | 2 (6.7%)  | 1 (3.3%)  | 1 (3.3%)          | 4.3333     | 2    |
| 3    | Connecting with other people | 13 (43.3%)     | 12 (40.0%) | 4 (13.3%) | 0 (00.0%) | 1 (3.3%)          | 4.2000     | 3    |
| 4    | Sharing interests            | 12 (40.0%)     | 13 (43.3%) | 4 (13.3%) | 0 (00.0%) | 1 (3.3%)          | 4.1667     | 4    |
| 5    | Learning                     | 10 (33.3%)     | 14 (46.7%) | 5 (16.7%) | 0 (00.0%) | 1 (3.3%)          | 4.0667     | 5    |

### 3.3. Challenges Facing Students When Using Social Media

As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the respondents revealed that there are a number of challenges that students encounter when using social media. Clearly, 95% of the respondents revealed that students encounter cyber-bullying when using social media. This is followed by exposure to

unsuitable digital contents as pointed out by 75%. Other challenges include sleep deprivation as indicated by 70% respondents, devoting lesser time in their studies as shown by 65% of respondents. Nearly 60% of the respondents said students are prone to online dating when they use social media (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Challenges facing students when using social media.

On probing further, similar data came forth through interview with three quarter of the respondents who showed that there is an increasing number of children, mostly students, who use social media. Students face several challenges when they use social media. which calls for critical measures meant to address this increasing inappropriate use. In describing further, the students' inappropriate actions while using social media one respondent said:

*Students and especially adolescents are chatting with adult strangers on-line. This leads to sexual solicitation from them or online dating. Many who chat with adult strangers involve themselves in an interpersonal online relationship commonly known as grooming. Others, though in rare cases, meet and engage in sexual intercourse with adults from an online chatroom. In other circumstances, large number of students have had sexualized conversations or romantic relationships with adults online which at times lead to physical sexual intercourse between them (students) and adults.*

The above findings relate with several studies which showed that many students spend a lot of their time online. An increased students' addiction to the use of social media is associated with falling standard of performance in schools and decline in students' intellectual development and school attendance. In social media, students are playing games, watch videos in You Tube and devote less time to studying or reading [35]. This sometimes exposes them to inappropriate content like provocative photos, porns, and violent or aggressive sexual comments. As pointed out by over three quarter of the respondents during the interview youths are exposed to inappropriate sexual contents.

*Using social media exposes students to unwanted experiences. They see inappropriate sexual contents. They also talk to strangers. Some of our friends have been contacted online by someone they don't know. These are those who keep their snapchat profile public because they enjoy sharing their stories openly, and often received compliments for them. However, you will see, that also*

means that they will regularly receive unsolicited, inappropriate messages from boys they don't know. When we talk to them they seem to perceive this as normal and an inevitable consequence of keeping their profile open. In this way, the pressure to receive 'likes' or favorable comments can override lessons of online safety (Student).

Another respondent was alarmed by the mushrooming of play stations and video games centers locally known as 'vibanda umiza' in the streets. In many streets students also play computer games in these locally established video rooms or play stations. The parent remarked:

*Many students play computer games or watch nasty videos in the streets in video shacks or play stations locally known as 'vibanda umiza'. There are several play stations where students pay about 200/= shillings per turn. It is time stern measures are taken to control this. This is because computer games are addictive. In fact, more addictive than lottery, cigarette or alcohol. There are incidents of old men who could not accomplish their goals in life because they were addicted to gaming. I can foresee the same danger in many students. Currently, students below 15 years, most of whom still at school, are more vulnerable to computer games. Others do not go to school or escape school to play video games. Apart from the psychological impact, these games are also addictive, control mind and make one's body lazy which is very bad to our students and the nation. What is scaring me is that playing online games and games in general needs money. This tempts students to steal money from their parents or to be sexually abused to get money-(Parent).*

The above findings are partly echoed by the then Minister for Sports and Culture-Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe who also said that there is mushrooming of play stations and gaming centers used for showing film without control. Considering the fact that most of the people who watch films or videos in these places are students, these centers can be a source of moral decay. If we put control and proper system in place in the development and production of film, these video centers (*vibanda umiza*) will be eliminated. Films that are inappropriate for students will only be watched after 12 midnight and before 5 in the morning [12].

Another informant, a student who claimed to be playing games, continued saying:

*There are times we spend money while gaming. We make in-game purchases for things like access to additional points, tokens or levels, or for game upgrades or add-ons.*

Addictive as they are, as remarked by one respondent social media if not properly used can have negative effects:

*Among the negative effects of using social media include: some of the students dropping academically. Others develop violent attitude, engage in early sexual behavior, share sex related images and messages on WhatsApp, develop poor attitude towards class attendance, class attention disorder and poor focus on school related activities (Teacher).*

Another informant advanced:

*Only a few students who use social media have 'a good*

*balance between social media time and doing other things'. They have a sense 'self-regulating' in terms of time spent on social media in order to focus on school work. However, many students find social media as a way of discreetly getting information that they know parents and teachers do not approve. Unfortunately, they cannot balance social media and school time. They are excited about the lewd posts they sometimes enjoy to watch more than the academic content that may be posted on the social sites. We, therefore, instruct them to delete social media apps so they would not be distracted from revision and spend more time in the school work. Those who take heed to our instruction we have realized that they are now trying have 'a good balance between social media time and doing other things' (Teacher).*

When another respondent was asked about the negative effect of social media, she averred:

*Social media is wasting learning time because it has many attractions which are not related to academic learning such as: chatting with friends, watching videos, gaming which distract students from studies both at school and at home. This lead to poor performance. I am not contending the fact that social media is trending and students should not be left behind. If used for the purpose of studies, this is positive, students get knowledge and a lot of information very easily and quickly. If used badly it can cause negative effects I mentioned to students (Parent).*

The above explanations are in line with the study by Brown and Marin [36] who revealed that social media contents affect general behaviour and wellbeing of secondary school students. It negatively affects their relationship with the people surrounding them.

## 4. Recommendation

Further studies may embark on a comparative analysis of the extent to which students use social media for accessing academic material in terms of gender.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

The results of this study show that a significant proportion of respondents reported that students use social media to have fun ( $M=4.57$ ;  $SD=0.72793$ ). Several other factors were examined with regard to their contribution in triggering use of social media among students. Use of social media for developing friendship ( $M=4.33$ ;  $SD=0.99424$ ) and for learning purposes ( $M=4.07$ ;  $SD=0.90719$ ) were pointed out. In terms of learning, social media provides an exciting learning platform where students can access information outside the syllabus. It provides easy to access to audio-visual materials and enhance learning. online learning has significant influence on use of social media. These two variables dependent on each other in such a way that an increase in online learning will be associated with the increase in use of social media and vice versa since correlation is two tailed.

When challenges associated with the use of social media was

measured, the results showed that cyber-bullying as pointed out by 95% of respondents, followed by exposure to unsuitable digital contents as revealed by 75% of respondents ranked high. Sleep deprivation as indicated by 70% respondents, devoting lesser time in their studies as shown by 65% of respondents followed. Nearly 60% of the respondents said students are prone to online dating. Many chat with adult strangers they don't know which leads to sexual solicitation from them. Others spend a lot of their time online. There is an increased student's addiction to use social media which is associated with falling standard of performance in schools and decline in intellectual development and school attendance. In social media, students are playing games, watch videos in You Tube and devote less time to studying or reading.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that

there is increased use of social media among secondary school students. Both negative and positive effects of social media use among students were revealed. The common perception on social media use among students has been negative. This study revealed some positive ways of using social media to enhance learning including accessing educational content. Social media use cannot be fully accepted without critique. This makes it necessary for students to be guided on how to use it appropriately.

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## Appendix

**Table 3.** Table for Determining Sample Size for a Finite Population.

| N  | S  | N   | S   | N   | S   | N    | S   | N    | S   | N      | S   |
|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|
| 10 | 10 | 85  | 70  | 220 | 140 | 440  | 205 | 1200 | 291 | 4000   | 351 |
| 15 | 14 | 90  | 73  | 230 | 144 | 460  | 210 | 1300 | 297 | 4500   | 354 |
| 20 | 19 | 95  | 76  | 240 | 148 | 480  | 214 | 1400 | 302 | 5000   | 357 |
| 25 | 24 | 100 | 80  | 250 | 152 | 500  | 217 | 1500 | 306 | 6000   | 361 |
| 30 | 28 | 110 | 86  | 260 | 155 | 550  | 226 | 1600 | 310 | 7000   | 364 |
| 35 | 32 | 120 | 92  | 270 | 159 | 600  | 234 | 1700 | 313 | 8000   | 367 |
| 40 | 36 | 130 | 97  | 280 | 162 | 650  | 242 | 1800 | 317 | 9000   | 368 |
| 45 | 40 | 140 | 103 | 190 | 165 | 700  | 248 | 1900 | 320 | 10000  | 370 |
| 50 | 44 | 150 | 108 | 300 | 169 | 750  | 254 | 2000 | 322 | 15000  | 375 |
| 55 | 48 | 160 | 113 | 320 | 175 | 800  | 260 | 2200 | 327 | 20000  | 377 |
| 60 | 52 | 170 | 118 | 340 | 181 | 850  | 265 | 2400 | 331 | 30000  | 379 |
| 65 | 56 | 180 | 123 | 360 | 186 | 900  | 269 | 2600 | 335 | 40000  | 380 |
| 70 | 59 | 190 | 127 | 380 | 191 | 950  | 274 | 2800 | 338 | 50000  | 381 |
| 75 | 63 | 200 | 132 | 400 | 196 | 1000 | 278 | 3000 | 341 | 75000  | 382 |
| 80 | 66 | 210 | 136 | 420 | 201 | 1100 | 285 | 3500 | 346 | 100000 | 384 |

Note: N is population size. S is sample size

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970.

The table above is constructed using the following formulas for determining sample size.

*Formula for determining sample size:*

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP}{d^2} + d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)$$

S= required sample size.

$X^2$  = the table of value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N= the population size.

P= the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

D= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

Source: Krejcie and Morgan, 1970.

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