

A Value-Based Islamic Education Management Model: A Case Study of Love-Based Curriculum Implementation in Developing Humanistic School Culture

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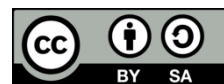
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ABSTRACT

This study examines how a love-based curriculum is institutionalized within Islamic education management to develop a humanistic school culture. The research addresses the persistent gap between value-based educational leadership discourse and its practical implementation in institutional management, particularly in faith-based schooling contexts. This research employed a qualitative interpretive case study design conducted at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, Indonesia. Data were collected from 24 participants, including school leaders, teachers, staff members, students, and a school committee representative, through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and analysis of institutional documents. Data were analyzed using iterative thematic coding to identify patterns of value integration across management practices. The findings reveal that the love-based curriculum functions not only as a pedagogical approach but also as an organizational governance framework embedded in four interconnected managerial dimensions: value-oriented strategic planning, empathetic-participatory leadership, dialogical learning practices, and continuous character-oriented evaluation. These dimensions collectively form an integrative Islamic education management model that transforms ethical values into institutional drivers shaping relational trust, psychological safety, and student social-religious engagement. Theoretically, this study contributes to value-based educational leadership and school culture research by conceptualizing love as an institutional governance mechanism within Islamic educational management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in the twenty-first century faces complex challenges related to declining empathy, social fragmentation, intolerance, and increasing academic pressures that

prioritize cognitive achievement over holistic character development. These challenges affect not only secular education systems but also madrasahs as formal Islamic educational institutions. Existing studies show that Islamic education practices frequently remain oriented toward the transmission of religious knowledge, while relational and humanistic dimensions such as compassion, dialogue, and social responsibility are insufficiently embedded within institutional management structures [1]–[3]. Consequently, a critical problem emerges: ethical and humanistic values promoted in Islamic educational philosophy are not always operationalized within the organizational systems that govern schools.

In response to this concern, the concept of a love-based curriculum has been introduced as a pedagogical and ethical approach aimed at revitalizing humanistic values in Islamic education [4], [5]. Empirical studies in Indonesian madrasahs indicate that this approach contributes to the development of empathy, the creation of inclusive learning environments, and students' moral formation [6]–[8]. These findings are consistent with broader international discussions on humanistic education and the ethics-of-care tradition, which emphasize relational engagement as the foundation of meaningful learning experiences [9], [10]. However, most of these studies primarily examine classroom interactions and instructional practices rather than the broader organizational processes through which such values become embedded within school management systems.

This limitation reveals an important research gap. Previous studies on love-based education tend to focus on pedagogical implementation in teaching and learning processes [11], [12]. Meanwhile, research on Islamic education management has explored leadership strategies and institutional governance in madrasahs [13], [14], yet these studies largely describe the implementation of values rather than explaining how curriculum-based ethical values function as systemic managerial mechanisms. As a result, the relationship between value-based curriculum principles and institutional management structures remains insufficiently theorized.

Theoretically, educational leadership scholarship emphasizes the central role of values in shaping institutional effectiveness. Leithwood argues that sustainable school improvement is strongly influenced by leadership systems grounded in shared values, while Bush highlights that educational management is fundamentally value-driven rather than purely structural or technical [15]. Similarly, organizational culture theory, developed by Schein, explains that institutional culture emerges from the internalization of shared values that guide everyday organizational practices [16]. Nevertheless, empirical research rarely demonstrates how religious-humanistic values move beyond symbolic declarations to function as governance mechanisms that shape school culture.

Based on these considerations, the central problem of this study is not merely whether love-based education promotes humanistic values, but how such values are institutionalized within educational management systems to influence organizational culture. Addressing this issue is particularly important in the context of faith-based educational institutions where ethical principles are expected to guide both pedagogical practices and organizational governance.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: How is a love-based curriculum institutionalized within Islamic education management systems? How

does this institutionalization contribute to the formation of a humanistic school culture? To answer these questions, this research investigates the implementation of a love-based curriculum at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, Indonesia, with particular attention to how ethical values are integrated into managerial functions, including planning, leadership, implementation, and evaluation.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of a value-based Islamic education management model that conceptualizes love not merely as a pedagogical ethic but as an organizational governance mechanism. By demonstrating how curriculum-based ethical values operate across institutional management structures, this research advances value-based educational leadership and organizational culture theory in faith-based educational contexts. Furthermore, the study offers a conceptual framework that may inform educational leaders and policymakers seeking to operationalize moral values within school governance systems and to foster sustainable humanistic school cultures.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using an interpretive case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how a love-based curriculum is institutionalized within Islamic education management practices. A case study design was selected because it enables a comprehensive exploration of contemporary organizational phenomena within their real-life context and allows researchers to examine complex interactions among institutional actors, managerial policies, and school culture [17], [18]. Grounded in an interpretive paradigm, this research views social reality as socially constructed through meaning-making processes among school members. Therefore, the study aimed to understand how the value of love is interpreted, internalized, and operationalized across managerial functions, including planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, and how these processes contribute to the formation of a humanistic school culture.

The researchers positioned themselves as interpretive observers seeking to understand participants' lived experiences rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process by critically reflecting on how the researchers' academic background in Islamic education management and familiarity with value-based educational discourse might influence data interpretation. Reflective field notes were documented continuously to enhance analytical transparency and minimize potential subjective bias.

2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted at MAN Kotawaringin Timur, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The site was selected through purposive sampling based on several criteria. First, the madrasah has formally integrated a love-based curriculum orientation into its institutional vision, mission, and educational programs. Second, the school has been recognized locally for its efforts to promote character education and humanistic learning practices within the madrasah environment. Third, the institution demonstrates consistent implementation of value-based management practices across both instructional and organizational activities.

These characteristics made MAN Kotawaringin Timur an appropriate case for examining how ethical values can be systematically institutionalized within Islamic education management structures.

2.3. Participants

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, which was subsequently expanded through snowball sampling until theoretical data saturation was achieved. The purposive sampling strategy ensured that participants had direct experience and knowledge of implementing the love-based curriculum within school management practices.

A total of 24 participants were involved in the study, comprising: 1 madrasah principal, 3 deputy principals, 10 teachers representing both Islamic and general subjects, 4 educational administrative staff, 5 students, and 1 representative of the madrasah committee. This diversity of participants allowed the study to capture multiple organizational perspectives regarding leadership practices, curriculum implementation, institutional coordination, and value internalization processes.

2.4. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over four months, from January to April 2025, using three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and institutional document analysis. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all participants, lasting 45-90 minutes. The interview protocol explored participants' experiences related to leadership practices, curriculum implementation, organizational coordination, and the internalization of humanistic values in school management.

Participatory observations were undertaken during classroom learning activities, management meetings, religious programs, and everyday social interactions within the school environment. In total, approximately 120 hours of observation were documented through detailed field notes. In addition, document analysis was conducted to examine institutional materials, including vision and mission statements, curriculum documents, annual work plans, instructional guidelines, and internal evaluation reports. The combination of these three data sources enabled methodological triangulation, strengthening the credibility of the findings.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive analytical framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [19], which involves three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted iteratively alongside the data collection process. The coding procedure consisted of three stages:

- a. Open Coding. Initial coding was conducted to identify meaningful units related to value integration in educational management practices. Codes were generated inductively from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents.
 - b. Axial Coding. During the second stage, related codes were grouped into broader categories by examining relationships among patterns of managerial practices, leadership behaviours, and cultural outcomes.
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c. Selective Coding and Theme Development. In the final stage, categories were synthesized into overarching themes that represent key dimensions of value institutionalization in Islamic education management. These themes ultimately formed the basis for the conceptual model proposed in this study.

Coding and data organization were conducted manually using a systematic coding matrix to ensure analytical transparency. Throughout the analysis, emerging interpretations were continually compared with empirical data and relevant theoretical frameworks in Islamic education management, curriculum studies, and value-based educational leadership.

2.6. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings. Member checking was conducted by returning summarized interpretations of interview data to selected participants for confirmation and clarification. An audit trail documenting data collection procedures, coding decisions, analytical memos, and theme development was systematically maintained to ensure dependability and transparency. Data credibility was further reinforced through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, as well as peer debriefing with fellow researchers in educational management to review emerging interpretations. Prolonged engagement in the research setting also helped ensure contextual accuracy and minimize misinterpretation.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants after they received clear explanations about the research objectives, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential, and pseudonyms were used during data analysis and reporting to protect privacy. All collected data were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes. The study was conducted in accordance with institutional research ethics guidelines to ensure respect for participants, confidentiality, and responsible data management.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Implementation of Love-Based Islamic Education Management at MAN Kotawaringin Timur

The findings indicate that the love-based curriculum at MAN Kotawaringin Timur is implemented as a foundational value embedded within the entire educational management system rather than as a supplementary program. School leaders consistently emphasized that the concept of love represents a guiding institutional principle shaping decision-making, leadership practices, and everyday school interactions.

The principal explained during the interview: *“We want to build a school that is not only academically excellent, but also warm in terms of relationships. Love here means caring, not just a slogan.”* Institutional documents further confirm this orientation. The madrasah’s vision and mission statements explicitly emphasize character development grounded in moral and humanistic values, while the annual work plan includes programs to

strengthen empathy, social responsibility, and respectful communication among school members.

Field observations also showed that value-oriented programs are regularly implemented through morning reflections, collective prayers, social service activities, and teacher-student dialogue sessions. These activities were integrated into both academic and extracurricular programs, indicating that the value of love functions as an organizing principle guiding institutional practices.

The empirical findings reveal that the institutionalization of the love-based curriculum can be understood through the four core functions of educational management: planning, organizing, actuating (implementation), and controlling (evaluation).

Planning

At the planning stage, value integration occurs through the formulation of institutional policies and strategic planning documents. School leaders ensure that character development and humanistic values are explicitly incorporated into the madrasah's vision, mission, and annual programs. Observation of school planning meetings revealed that discussions often extend beyond academic targets to include relational and moral aspects of education. For example, planning sessions included discussions about strengthening student empathy programs and integrating reflective dialogue into classroom activities.

Organizing

The madrasah's organizational structure supports participatory decision-making among teachers and administrators. Regular coordination meetings are held at the beginning of each semester to discuss curriculum implementation and school programs. The deputy principal for curriculum explained: "*At the beginning of each semester, we discuss with the teachers, not only about target scores, but also how to build a more humanistic classroom atmosphere.*"

Teachers also confirmed that emotional relationships with students are considered an important dimension of instructional success. One Islamic education teacher stated: "*We are encouraged not only to teach the material, but also to build emotional closeness with students. That is an indicator of successful learning.*" These meetings serve as forums for collaborative planning, enabling teachers to share experiences and coordinate strategies for implementing value-based learning practices.

Actuating (Implementation)

At the implementation stage, observations revealed that the love-based curriculum is reflected in dialogical and participatory classroom practices. Teachers actively encourage students to express opinions, ask questions, and engage in discussions without fear of negative judgment. During classroom observations, teachers were observed facilitating group discussions in which students were invited to respond to ethical and social issues related to lesson topics. Teachers often emphasized respectful dialogue and mutual listening among students.

One student described the classroom atmosphere as follows: *“If we have different opinions, the teacher does not immediately blame us. We are invited to discuss.”* Such practices create a learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and engaging in reflective dialogue.

Controlling (Evaluation)

The evaluation process at MAN Kotawaringin Timur does not focus solely on cognitive academic performance. Instead, the madrasah integrates character assessment and behavioral guidance into its evaluation system. The deputy head of student affairs explained: *“Report card grades are important, but we pay more attention to attitude and character in our guidance.”*

Documentation analysis showed that student reports include behavioral evaluations, mentoring notes, and teacher feedback on character development. Teachers regularly monitor students’ social behavior, cooperation, and respect toward peers and teachers as part of the evaluation process. Observations during school activities also indicated that teachers often provide informal guidance to students when interpersonal conflicts occur, emphasizing dialogue and reconciliation rather than punitive discipline.

Table 1. Integration of Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Education Management Functions

Management Function	Empirical Evidence	Observed Practice	Cultural Outcome	Supporting Literature
Planning	Vision documents include a moral-humanistic orientation	Character programs integrated into annual planning	Shared institutional values	Khairudin (2018) [20]; Bush (2020) [20]
Organizing	Teacher participation meetings	Collaborative decision-making	Relational trust	Leithwood et al. (2020) [20]
Implementation	Dialogic classroom interaction	Open discussion & student voice	Psychological safety	Freire (2018) [20]; OECD (2021) [20]
Evaluation	Character-based assessment reports	Behaviour monitoring & mentoring	Reduced interpersonal conflict	Hattie (2023) [20]; Al-Attas (2019) [20]

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the love-based curriculum at MAN Kotawaringin Timur is systematically integrated into institutional practices across all management functions. This integration is reflected not only in formal policies and programs but also in everyday interactions among teachers, students, and school leaders.

3.1.2. The Contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum Management Model to Humanistic School Culture

The findings indicate that the humanistic school culture at MAN Kotawaringin Timur emerges from the systematic integration of the love-based curriculum within the four

management functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC) implemented in the madrasah. The integration of these values is reflected in the school's daily interactions, institutional programs, and evaluation practices.

Observations conducted during classroom activities, school assemblies, and informal interactions show that respectful language, mutual greetings, and open dialogue characterize communication among teachers and students. Teachers frequently encourage students to express their opinions during discussions, fostering a learning environment that supports participation and mutual respect.

One teacher explained the principle applied in handling student problems: *"We emphasize that every student must feel valued. If there is a problem, it should be resolved through dialogue, not harsh punishment."* A student also described the relational atmosphere within the school environment: *"We feel that our teachers care. If we have personal problems, we can talk to them."* Field observations documented several routine activities that support the development of this relational culture, including morning reflections, religious mentoring programs, student discussion circles, and teacher-student dialogue sessions. These activities provide students with opportunities to communicate openly and build interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers.

The empirical evidence also shows that the integration of love-based values occurs within the school's managerial functions. At the planning stage, institutional documents indicate that the madrasah integrates character development and humanistic values into its vision, mission, and annual work plans. School planning meetings include discussions not only on academic targets but also on strategies to strengthen students' character and social responsibility.

Within the organizing function, collaborative coordination between teachers and school leaders is regularly conducted through meetings that discuss curriculum implementation, learning strategies, and student development programs. These meetings aim to ensure that institutional values are consistently reflected in educational practices. At the implementation stage, classroom observations reveal dialogical learning practices in which teachers actively encourage students to participate in discussions. Students are often involved in group discussions and reflective dialogues related to lesson content and to social and ethical issues connected to their daily experiences.

The evaluation process in the madrasah also includes monitoring of students' character development alongside academic performance. Teachers provide feedback regarding students' attitudes, cooperation, and social behaviour, which are documented in school evaluation reports and discussed during mentoring sessions with students. Overall, these practices contribute to a school environment characterized by harmonious relationships among school members, open communication between teachers and students, and active student participation in social and religious activities.

Table 2. Humanistic School Culture Outcomes within the Love-Based Curriculum Management System

Cultural Dimension	Empirical Evidence	Observed Practice	Supporting References
Relational Trust	Teachers encourage open dialogue with students	Teacher-student mentoring and consultations	[15], [21]
Psychological Safety	Students express opinions comfortably	Classroom discussions and reflective dialogue	[16], [25]
Moral Interaction	Respectful communication patterns	Greeting habits and polite language	[22], [27]
Social Engagement	Active student participation in programs	Religious mentoring and social service activities	[7], [8], [12]

The findings show that the humanistic school culture at MAN Kotawaringin Timur is reflected in respectful communication patterns, collaborative learning practices, and consistent character-based mentoring. These patterns are observable in daily school activities and are supported by institutional programs and evaluation mechanisms implemented within the madrasah.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the institutionalization of a love-based curriculum at MAN Kotawaringin Timur operates as a systemic management process rather than a pedagogical initiative limited to classroom practices. The empirical evidence indicates that the value of love is embedded across the four core functions of educational management planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, thereby shaping organizational practices and the broader school culture. This pattern suggests that the emergence of a humanistic school culture is not simply the outcome of instructional innovation but is closely connected to managerial structures that regulate institutional behaviour, leadership practices, and decision-making processes.

One of the central themes emerging from this study is the conceptualization of love as an organizational governance principle within educational management. The integration of ethical values into strategic planning, leadership coordination, learning implementation, and evaluation mechanisms illustrates how moral principles can function as institutional drivers rather than symbolic ideals. From an educational management perspective, this pattern aligns with the planning–organizing–actuating–controlling (POAC) framework, which explains how managerial processes influence institutional outcomes. When ethical values are embedded in strategic planning documents and institutional policies, they become operational guidelines shaping organizational priorities and decision-making processes [20]. Organizational culture theory also supports this perspective by explaining that shared values become stable cultural patterns when they are internalized through everyday institutional practices and leadership behavior [16]. In this context, the value of love functions not merely as a moral aspiration but also as a governance mechanism that structures how the institution organizes programs, manages relationships, and evaluates educational outcomes.

A second important theme concerns the relationship between value-based leadership and the development of school culture. The findings show that participatory leadership

practices in the madrasah play a significant role in translating institutional values into daily organizational activities. Teachers are actively involved in curriculum discussions, planning meetings, and program coordination, reflecting leadership patterns based on collaboration and shared responsibility. Such practices resonate with the argument of Leithwood et al. [15], who emphasize that successful school leadership depends on the ability to build relational trust and collective commitment among organizational members. Similarly, Bush [21] argues that educational management becomes effective when leadership practices are grounded in shared institutional values and participatory governance. The evidence from this study indicates that leadership practices emphasizing empathy, dialogue, and collaboration create an organizational climate that encourages trust, open communication, and constructive engagement among teachers and students.

The dialogical learning practices observed in classrooms further demonstrate how value-based leadership translates into pedagogical practice. Teachers encourage students to participate actively in discussions, express opinions, and engage in reflective dialogue related to both academic and social issues. Freire [24] argues that meaningful education emerges through dialogical relationships in which teachers and students interact as partners in the learning process. In such environments, communication patterns grounded in mutual respect foster a sense of psychological safety, supporting student engagement and participation. Research on school climate similarly indicates that relational trust, supportive communication, and collaborative interaction significantly influence the quality of learning environments and student well-being [25], [32]. Studies also show that the *having* and *being* dimensions of wellbeing often achieve the highest mean scores, underscoring the importance of adequate facilities and opportunities for self-fulfillment in fostering students' overall well-being [30]. The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that integrating ethical values into leadership and classroom interactions can foster a supportive, humanistic educational climate.

A third theme relates to the concept of Islamic humanistic education. Within the context of Islamic educational thought, the value of love implemented in the madrasah intersects with ethical principles such as *rahmah* and *tarbiyah*, which emphasize compassion, moral guidance, and respect for human dignity. These principles position education not merely as a process of knowledge transmission but as a transformative process aimed at developing ethical awareness and social responsibility among learners [22], [27], [28]. The dialogical learning practices and character-oriented evaluation observed in the madrasah reflect this holistic educational orientation. Teachers not only assess academic performance but also monitor students' attitudes, cooperation, and social relationships, reflecting the holistic evaluation concept that emphasizes the development of both cognitive and moral competencies [26].

Another important contribution of this study lies in its comparative position within previous research on love-based education. Earlier empirical studies have largely focused on the implementation of love-based learning approaches at the classroom level or within character education programs [7], [8]. The empirical evidence, therefore, suggests that institutional culture transformation occurs when ethical values are systematically embedded in both formal organizational structures and informal relational practices.

Meanwhile, conceptual studies have examined the philosophical foundations of love-centered education in Islamic educational thought [4], [5], [12], indicating that a pedagogy of love can serve as a transformative framework that fosters dialogue, empathy, egalitarian teacher-student relationships, and critical awareness [29]. Curriculum studies have also emphasized the importance of aligning educational values with institutional practices to shape school culture [9]. However, these studies rarely explain how ethical values become embedded in institutional management systems capable of systematically shaping organizational culture. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that love-based curriculum principles can serve as organizational drivers when integrated into managerial structures, such as planning frameworks, leadership practices, learning processes, and evaluation systems.

This observation highlights the study's main theoretical innovation: the conceptualization of love as a systemic management driver. Rather than understanding love solely as a pedagogical value or interpersonal virtue, this research demonstrates that love can serve as an institutional governance mechanism that shapes organizational culture by aligning management processes. By situating the value of love within the POAC management framework, the study illustrates how ethical principles can be operationalized across strategic planning, leadership coordination, instructional practice, and evaluation mechanisms. This perspective contributes to the development of value-based educational leadership and Islamic education management theory by demonstrating that ethical values can serve as structural drivers that shape institutional culture and organizational behaviour.

Finally, the findings have broader implications for global educational management and leadership practices. Contemporary discussions in educational leadership increasingly emphasize the importance of value-based governance, ethical leadership, and human-centered organizational culture in addressing challenges such as school climate, student well-being, and social cohesion. In this context, previous research also indicates that digital well-being education significantly contributes to enhancing students' self-awareness, emotional resilience, and healthy decision-making in the use of technology [32]. The model identified in this study suggests that sustainable cultural transformation within educational institutions requires systemic alignment between institutional values, leadership practices, and management structures. When ethical values remain limited to rhetorical statements or symbolic discourse, their influence on institutional behaviour tends to be temporary. However, when such values are embedded in formal organizational systems and everyday practices, they can shape long-term organizational culture and improve relational dynamics within educational communities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the love-based curriculum at MAN Kotawaringin Timur serves not only as a pedagogical innovation but also as a strategic management framework that fosters a humanistic school culture. By illustrating how ethical values are institutionalized across the core functions of educational management, this study makes a conceptual contribution to the literature on value-based educational leadership and Islamic educational management, while offering a framework that may inform the development of value-oriented governance in educational institutions worldwide.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Love-Based Islamic Education Management Model operates as a systemic managerial framework that integrates ethical values across planning, leadership, learning implementation, and evaluation processes within the madrasah context. Empirically, the study shows that institutionalizing love as an organizational value contributes to the development of a humanistic school culture characterized by relational trust, psychological safety, and constructive social engagement among school members.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of value-based educational leadership and Islamic education management by conceptualizing love not merely as a pedagogical principle but as an institutional governance mechanism capable of shaping organizational culture through the alignment of managerial functions. This perspective extends existing discussions on school culture and value-based leadership by highlighting how ethical values can operate as structural drivers within educational management systems.

In practice, the findings suggest that educational policymakers and school leaders can strengthen school culture by systematically embedding ethical values into strategic planning, participatory leadership structures, dialogical learning practices, and character-oriented evaluation systems. Such alignment enables educational institutions to translate normative values into sustainable organizational practices.

However, this study is limited to a single qualitative case study within a single madrasah context, which limits broader generalization. Future research is recommended to examine the model's applicability across diverse educational settings using comparative, mixed-method, or longitudinal approaches in order to assess its broader impact on institutional performance and student well-being.

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