

Perceived Parental Rejection and Psychosocial Maladjustment: A Study of Convicts

***Bushra Sajid and Mah Nazir Riaz, PhD**

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, Pakistan

The present research explored the degree of perceived parental acceptance-rejection and its impact on psychological adjustment in a group of 81 convicts (40 men & 41 women) with mean age = 37.2 ($SD = 13.77$) years. They were selected from the Central Jail, Peshawar. For comparison, 90 normal (45 men and 45 women) having mean age = 36.23 ($SD = 12.68$), were selected from the general population. Short form of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Adult PARQ: Father & Mother), Parental Control Scale (Adult PCS: Father & Mother), and Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ) by Rohner and Khaleque (2008), translated into Urdu by Riaz (2011) were used for assessment. Results revealed that convicts perceived more parental rejection than normal. Multiple regression analysis showed that parental rejection, specifically parental indifference/neglect, is a significant predictor of psychological maladjustment among convicts. In addition, both men and women convicts described their parents as exercising lax and highly permissive mode of disciplining behaviors.

Keywords: parental warmth and rejection, parental control, psychological maladjustment, convicts

Parental acceptance-rejection plays primary and most influential role in determining children's behavior over life span (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Effective personality and psychological development of children is possible only when there is a positive parent-child relationship that begins to establish when parents provide unconditional love for the child as a special individual (Brooks, 2004). Therefore, parental warmth is an important ingredient in making the developmental process more effective (Hetherington & Parke, 1986).

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Bushra Sajid, PhD Schalar, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, Pakistan. Email: bushra_228@hotmail.com

Mah Nazir Riaz, PhD, Former Dean, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, Pakistan. Email: mahnazirr@gmail.com

Rohner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection theory (PARTheory) postulates that children all over the world, irrespective of gender, age, cultural variations, and socioeconomic conditions, need parental love and warmth for desirable social and emotional growth. Parents use various physical, verbal, and symbolic behaviors to express their feelings. Parental acceptance-rejection is commonly represented along a continuum reflecting the quality of the affectional bond between parents and their children. One end of the warmth continuum is marked by parental acceptance and the other end is marked by parental rejection. Parental acceptance refers to the parental love and care, whereas parental rejection reflects the neglect, detachment, negative attitude, and harsh/hostile treatment of parents towards their children (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012).

Personality sub-theory of PARTheory attempts to predict and explain major personality and psychological outcomes of perceived parental warmth and rejection. The subtheory elucidates in light of empirical evidences that a child's life would be positively influenced by receiving positive parenting and will be adversely affected if negatively treated by parents. Children who perceive themselves as rejected by parents are likely to be psychologically maladjusted as compared to those who perceive parental acceptance. PARTheory categorizes all such individuals as *troubled* (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Furthermore, frequency, severity, and type of parental neglect and rejection also determine the nature as well as the intensity of damage to the mental health of child sufferers. However, sometimes youth belonging to loving families also manifest psychological problems typically displayed by rejecting children. The negative personality or psychological consequences of parental rejection may include immature dependence, hostility, aggression, impaired self-esteem, impaired self-adequacy, emotional instability, and negative view of the world (Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2012). Empirical evidence suggests that it is not only maternal love and warmth, but the quality of father-child relationships, the amount of the time fathers spend with their children, and the activities that they share with them, all stand of equal importance for healthy psychological development of child (Lamb, 2004).

Numerous psychologists believe that negative parent-child relationship adversely affects a child's life as a whole (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Anger, hostility, social maladjustment, drug-abuse, and low self-esteem are some of the negative effects of perceived parental neglect (Davies & Beech, 2012). Besides, parental hostility and rejection have

been found to be strongly associated with socially deviant acts among children (Hoeve et al., 2009). As parental warmth is a necessary tool for children to guide them to follow societal norms and values, absence of parental concern mostly creates hindrance in their way of becoming desirable members of the society and increases their likelihood of acquiring disruptive behaviors (Brooks, 2004). Furthermore, early-life involvement in antisocial acts resulting from deprivation of parental love and care persists and transforms into future criminal behaviors (Smith, Hoeksema, Fredrickson, & Loftus, 2003).

Review of literature shows that numerous researchers have examined the impact of parental involvement in children's lives over the course of their developmental span (for instance, Ainsworth, 1989; Baumirnd, 1991; Andrews & Bonta 2010). It is well documented that besides parental warmth and affection, parental control is also necessary for overall development of individuals. Hetherington and Parke (1986) suggest that permissive parents are more effective than authoritarian parents in controlling their child's behavior. However, a harmonious application of permissiveness in combination with authoritativeness produces more desirable outcomes as excessive use of either style may lead to generate impulsive and uncontrolled behaviors among youth. In addition, Hagan (1988) postulates that absence of parental supervision equally determines the extent to which both boys and girls are inclined to deviate from the societal norms. A meta-analysis was conducted by Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) to explore the possible relationship between family factors and juveniles' involvement in antisocial activities. The findings revealed that lack of parental control and supervision was one of the major causal factors responsible for the behavioral, emotional and psychological difficulties among children including aggression that tends to persist and eventually lead to violent acts during adolescence and adulthood. In another similar study, it was concluded that lack of disciplinary control by parents was an important predictor of criminal activities among violent offenders (McCord & Howard, as cited in Huesmann, 1994).

Being the primary agent of socialization, parents play a crucial role in the process of behavioral as well as psychological development of children. They adopt different techniques in controlling their children's behavior. They help them acquire and refine necessary skills in order to meet the challenges of later life and thus enable them to grow as well-adjusted members of the society. With advancing years, children undergo various changes in their personality and temperament. Consequently,

they react differently to the same parental attitudes as they grow up. Hence, for desirable outcomes, it is necessary to establish a positive parent-child relationship which is possible only when the child is valued as a special individual by his parents. On the contrary, harsh parenting such as physical/verbal abuse, lack of parental love and support, and parental neglect may lead to psychological maladjustment in children including aggression, low self-esteem, and behavioral difficulties that tend to persist and become more intensified in later life. Keeping in view the importance of parent-child interaction on development of psychologically healthy personality and the possible consequences of poor parent-child relationship for acquiring deviant behavior, the present research was carried out. The main objectives of the study were:

Objectives

1. To investigate the degree of perceived parental rejection among convicts.
2. To measure the relationship between perceived parental rejection, parental control and psychological maladjustment in a group of convicts.

Hypotheses

1. Convict individuals are likely to perceive their parents as more rejecting than accepting as compared to normal control.
2. Parental neglect is likely to be a significant predictor of psychological maladjustment of convicts.

Method

Research Design

It is a between group research design which measure difference between convicts and normal control in relation to perceived parental rejection and psychological maladjustment and its impact on personality development of respondents.

Sample

The sample consisted of two groups: convicts and normal control. The convict group comprised of 90 convicts, selected from the Central Jail, Peshawar using purposive sampling technique. The convicts were involved in drug-trafficking ($n = 38$), murder ($n = 30$), kidnapping ($n = 12$), and theft/robbery ($n = 10$). However, during scoring and analysis of data, it was found that five respondents did not answer all the questions

comprising PARQ, whereas four participants left many questions unanswered in PAQ. Thus, 81 convicts including 40 men and 41 women (mean age 37.2 years; $SD = 13.77$) constituted sample of the study.

For comparison a Control group comprising 90 adults (45 men and 45 women) was selected from general population using convenience sampling technique. Mean age of Control group was 36.23 years ($SD = 12.68$). Majority of respondents comprising each group belonged to low socioeconomic status, both in terms of occupation as well as education (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	Convicts ($n = 81$)		Normal ($n = 90$)	
Age				
<i>M</i>	37.20		36.23	
<i>SD</i>	13.77		12.68	
Gender	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Men	40	50.3	45	50
Women	41	50.6	45	50
Occupation				
Unemployed	56	69.1	3	3.3
Labor class	15	18.5	48	53.3
Low-Paid Private Jobs	4	4.9	25	27.8
Govt. Servants	2	2.5	10	11.1
Business	4	4.9	4	4.4
Education				
Illiterates	59	72.8	48	53.3
School level	12	14.8	2	2.2
Intermediate Level	3	3.7	9	10
Bachelor Level	5	6.2	16	17.8
Masters Level	1	1.2	7	7.8
Other	1	1.2	8	8.9

Table 1 show that 72.8% of the convicts were illiterates, whereas 14.8% possessed school-level education. Moreover, 3.7% convicts were educated up to HSSC level and 6.2% possessed B.A/B.Sc degree whereas only 1.2% had M.A/M.Sc degree and a further 1.2% had other professional trainings/ education, too. On the other hand, 53.3% of normal were illiterates whereas 2.2% reported that they had school level education. Among the normal control, 10% had studied up to HSSC level, whereas 17.8% were possessing B.A/B.Sc degree. In addition, 7.8% had M.A/M.Sc degree and 8.9% had other professional training/education.

Assessment Measures

The following self-report questionnaires devised by Rohner (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) and translated in Urdu language by Riaz (2011) were used in the present study:

1. Adult PARQ: Father Version (Short Form)
2. Adult PARQ: Mother Version (Short Form)
3. Adult PCS: Father Version
4. Adult PCS: Mother Version
5. Adult PAQ
6. Personal Data Sheet (devised by the researcher for the present study)

Adult Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (PARQ; Father/Mother). In order to assess an individual's perception of the degree of parental acceptance-rejection received during childhood, Rohner has devised three versions of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (PARQ): the Adult PARQ; the Parent PARQ; and the Child PARQ (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) All of these scales are available in two forms: the Standard Form comprising 60 items and the Short Form comprising 24 items. All versions of PARQ represent four-point Likert-like rating scales ranging from "Almost Always True" to "Almost Never True" (4-1). Each scale consists of four subscales: Warmth/Affection; Hostility/Aggression; Indifference/Neglect; and Undifferentiated Rejection. Following the same response pattern and scoring systems, all PARQ subscales are keyed in the direction of perceived rejection, that is, the higher the score on any scale or total PARQ, the greater the perceived parental rejection. Scores on the standard PARQ range from a possible low of 60 indicating maximum perceived parental acceptance to a high of 240 that reflects maximum parental rejection perceived by the respondent(s). On the other hand, the possible scores on PARQ (Short Form) range from 24 to 96. Summing up scores on the four subscales with the entire warmth scale reverse scored, provides a measure of perceived overall parental acceptance. Psychometric properties of Urdu translation of PARQ have been established by Riaz (2011). Reliability of PARQ measures revealed by alpha coefficient was .89 for Mother Version and .88 for Father Version. Validity of scales was determined by item-sum correlations and inter-scale correlation methods. All the correlations were significant yielding evidence of validity of measures.

Adult Parental Control Scale (PCS: Father/Mother). Parental Control Scale (PCS: Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) is a 13-item self-report inventory widely used for assessing variations in the individuals' perceptions of the parental control (i.e., permissiveness or strictness). It is available in four versions: (1) Child PCS; (2) Adult PCS; (3) Parent PCS; and (4) Parent PCS: *Infant Version*. Like the PARQ, it follows the same response pattern and scoring system. Items in the PCS are scored on a four-point Likert-like rating scale ranging from "Almost Always True" to "Almost Never True" (4-1). Scores are recorded and summed up at the bottom of the PCS Scoring Sheet. Scores on all but the infant version spread from a low of 13 indicating minimum behavioral control (maximum permissiveness) to a high of 52 representing intense restrictiveness (maximum behavioral control). Scores between 13-26 show low/lax control; 27-39 moderate control; 40-45 firm control; and 46-52 strict/restrictive control.

Adult Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ). Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ:Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) is a self-report questionnaire used to measure individuals' perceptions of themselves on personality and behavioral dimensions of hostility/aggression, dependence, self-esteem, self-adequacy, emotional responsiveness, emotional stability, and world-view. Total number of items comprising PAQ is 63. Each of the seven subscales consists of nine items which collectively assess the individuals' overall psychological adjustment/maladjustment. Urdu version of the Adult PAQ was used in the present study (Riaz, 2011). This scale has certain features that are identical with the PARQ and PCS in that they all share the same instructions and rules for administering the questionnaires. Moreover, they also follow the same response pattern representing the four-point Likert-like scale ranging from "Almost Always True" to "Almost Never True" (4-1). By summing up the seven PAQ subscale scores, researchers can obtain an overall or total (composite) PAQ score. The Total Composite Test Score (TCTS) may spread from a low of 63 (revealing excellent psychological adjustment) to a maximum possible score of 252 (revealing serious psychological maladjustment). The theoretical midpoint is 157.5. Scores at or above this midpoint indicate overall psychological maladjustment (Rohner et al., 2012). In addition, psychometric properties of Urdu translation of Adult PAQ have been established by Riaz (2011). Reliability of Adult PAQ measure revealed by alpha coefficient was .73.

Personal Information Sheet. A self-devised questionnaire was used by the researcher to gather information regarding demographic variables of the participants, namely, age, gender, family structure, the type of crime committed and its underlying reasons, socioeconomic status and educational background.

Procedure

The convicts at the Central Jail, Peshawar were approached by taking formal written permission from the concerned authorities, including Inspector General (I.G.) Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Jail Superintendent. The researcher contacted each convict individually to seek his/her consent for participation in the study. After recording demographic information, Urdu version of Adult PARQ (Short Form), Adult PCS, and Adult PAQ were administered on each participant in a one to one situation. It was observed that majority of the convicts belonged to rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and came from low socioeconomic class with less or no formal education. The researcher first read out the instructions written on the title page of each questionnaire and encouraged the participants to answer all the questions in a single sitting by giving rapid response to the questions in the way they actually feel.

Later, the same measures of the study were administered following the similar sequence on the control (normal) group. All the instruments were administered on each respondent in one to one situation. It took about 30-40 minutes by each participant to complete all the questionnaires.

Results

Information collected using the assessment measures was carefully recorded and scored using procedure prescribed by Rohner and Khaleque (2008). To test our first hypothesis that convicts perceive their parents as more rejecting than accepting as compared to normal, independent t-test analysis was carried out. The results are presented in the following tables (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2

Means, SDs and t-Values Showing Differences Between Scores of Convicts and Normal Control on PARQ Mother Short Form

	Convicts (n = 81)			Normal Control (n = 90)			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE_M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE_M</i>					
Warmth/ Affection	29.12	3.84	.42	12.46	4.43	.46	26.33	.001	15.40	17.92	4.01
Hostility/ Aggression	18.85	5.08	.56	10.52	3.37	.35	12.68	.001	7.03	9.63	1.93
Indifference/ Neglect	18.86	4.82	.53	9.85	3.25	.34	14.39	.001	7.77	10.24	2.19
Undifferentiated Rejection	13.58	3.51	.39	6.13	2.66	.28	15.65	.001	6.50	8.38	2.39
Total PARQ	78.58	14.24	1.58	41.07	11.10	1.17	19.44	.001	33.96	41.63	2.96

Table 3

Means, SDs and t-Values Showing Differences Between Scores of Convicts and Normal Control on PARQ Father Short Form

	Convicts (n = 81)			Normal Control (n = 90)			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE_M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE_M</i>					
Warmth/ Affection	26.30	6.65	.73	15.30	6.44	.68	10.95	.001	9.01	12.97	1.68
Hostility/ Aggression	18.77	5.27	.58	10.25	4.13	.43	11.77	.001	7.09	9.94	1.79
Indifference/ Neglect	17.89	5.08	.56	11.15	4.36	.46	9.29	.001	5.31	8.17	1.42
Undifferentiated Rejection	12.84	3.65	.40	6.55	3.10	.32	12.13	.001	5.26	7.31	1.85
Total PARQ	74.59	17.67	1.89	44.24	13.41	1.41	12.98	.001	25.73	34.96	1.93

Table 2 presents mean scores of the two groups on PARQ-Mother. A comparison of both the groups on PARQ-Mother and its subscales show that convicts perceived more maternal rejection as compared to normal control.

Table 3 shows that convicts perceived more paternal rejection as revealed by scores on PARQ-Father as compared to normal control.

Our second hypothesis assumed that parental neglect is a significant predictor of psychological maladjustment of convicts. To test this assumption, multiple regression analysis was carried out.

Results presented in Table 4 show that in the present study, father's rejection explained 21% of the variance, whereas, mother's rejection explained 36% of the variance in the psychological maladjustment of respondents. These findings suggest that indifferent/neglecting attitude of parents is a significant predictor of respondents' psychological maladjustment.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Parental Rejection as Predictor of Psychological Maladjustment in Convicts (N = 81)

Predictor Variables	Father	Mother
	β	β
Warmth/Affection	-.12	.06
Hostility/Aggression	.11	.14
Indifference/Neglect	.46***	.60***
Undifferentiated Rejection	-.07	.14
R^2	.21***	.36***
F	21.36***	45.26***

*** $p < .001$

Further, to investigate the parental disciplining mode as perceived by convicts, Adult Parental Control Scale (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008) was used (Table 5). It was further examined if there is any significant difference between mothers and fathers in implementing a specific type of discipline (permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian).

Table 5

Mean Scores, SDs, and t-values Showing Gender Differences in Perceived Maternal and Paternal Control by Convicts as Revealed by Scores on PCS-Mother & Father (Short Forms)

	Men (n = 40)			Women (n = 41)			t	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
	M	SD	SE _M	M	SD	SE _M					
Mother Control	20.20	5.19	.82	19.87	4.36	.68	-.30	.84	-	1.79	0.06
Father Control	22.87	5.39	.85	22.31	6.29	.92	-.43	.60	-	2.03	0.09
										3.15	

Table 5 shows no significant differences between male and female convicts in perception of parental control. Mean scores on Parental Control Scale reveal a lax and highly permissive parental control exerted by parents of convicts.

Discussion

Parents play a significant role in determining human actions and personality. They serve as the primary institution for overall behavioral, emotional and psychological development of children. Keeping in view the importance of parental involvement in individuals' life, the present study was designed to examine the contribution of parental neglect and rejection in adopting maladaptive behaviors by convicts. The first hypothesis assumed that convicts will perceive their parents more rejecting than accepting as compared to normal, which is supported by the results presented in Tables 2 and 3. The second hypothesis suggested that parental neglect will be a significant predictor of psychological maladjustment among convicts which is also evident from analysis of the present data as shown in Table 4. These two hypotheses were generated on the basis of previous literature.

According to Reder and Lucey (1995), whether or not a child becomes a desirable member of the society largely depends on the parental treatment received during the early years of life. Parents must show unconditional love and concern for their child's actions and interests as their attitude leaves everlasting impressions on a child's life. For healthy psychological development of young ones, it is necessary that parents should not neglect the child's needs and provide unconditional love to their children ; try to understand their perspective by sharing their experiences and spending quality time with them. Empirical evidence by Ambert (2013) shows that in certain cases, parents are at least partially responsible for the child's misconduct and undesirable behavioral dispositions, such as drug use, theft, and other forms of

antisocial activities. Most often, such unfortunate incidents seem to have emerged from parental neglect and lack of parental support and control. Bartol (1986) suggests that different forms of behavioral problems originate in homes where parents present themselves as poor models by showing less affection and negative attitudes towards children. Contrary to that, healthy parent-child relationship minimizes the chances of developing antisocial behaviors among adolescents (Fabrizio, Stewart, Alison, & Lam, 2014). Ineffective parenting characterized by harsh, abusive parental attitude creates hurdles in healthy psychological development of individuals which paves the way for emergence of serious psychological problems during the growing years (Proctor & Linley, 2013). Similarly, parental maltreatment and absence of parental love have been recognized as the major causal factors for originating serious psychopaths within a society (Kimonis, Cross, Howard, & Donoghue, 2013).

Literature provides an abundance of researches emphasizing that parents serve as the most influential force in molding children's behavior towards a specific direction. Several researchers suggest that strong identification with fathers decreases the frequency of internalizing (psychological) and externalizing (behavioral) symptoms among adolescents such as depression, low self-esteem, and disruptive behaviors (Frustenberg & Harris, 1993) including stealing, drug use, and academic failure (Barnes, 1984). Parental love and involvement provide shelter for children against the tendency to indulge in delinquent behaviors and is assessed to decrease the risk of substance abuse among adolescents (Coombs & Landsverk, 1988). Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) provided empirical evidence demonstrating that lack of affectionate and supportive attitude of fathers towards children give rise to criminal tendencies among youth particularly of financially deprived families that tend to continue and become more intensified in adolescence and later adulthood.

The present study further examined the possible impact of parental lax/ strict control on development of criminal behavior. For this purpose, Parental Control Scale was used. Scores on Control scale falling between 13-26 indicate low/lax control and signify that parents rarely try to control the adolescent behavior. Figures presented in Table 5 show that both parents were found exercising low/lax control on their children. Mean scores of male convicts on Control Scale were 20.20 and 22.87 for Mother and Father, respectively. Similarly, mean scores of female convicts were 19.87 and 22.31 as reported by the respondents about their

Mothers and Fathers. These findings show no significant gender difference in perceived parental control as revealed by scores of the respondents on Parental Control Scale (PCS) suggesting that all the respondents perceive parental control, and supervision in the same way and are equally affected by parental attitudes irrespective of the boundaries of gender. Several researches in this regard have concluded that antisocial conducts are acquired mainly during childhood due to absence of parental control and monitoring with a high potential of persistence through adolescence and adulthood (Morizot & Kazemian, 2014). Individuals are motivated to commit crimes when they do not receive adequate parenting and support during childhood (Weatherburn & Lind, 1998). Neglectful parenting practices have been associated with increased possibility of drug use by youth (Becona et al, 2012). In addition, it is empirically evident that hurt, murder, crimes against property, theft, dacoity, fraud, and alcohol use are caused by adverse parental control (Tariq, 1983). To sum up, lack of parental supervision is one of the active external stimuli that motivates both boys and girls to adopt criminal behavior (Belknap, 2014) and give rise to many emotional and psychological problems among children which transform into deviant behavioral outcomes during adolescence and adulthood (Berns, 2013).

By and large, the findings of our study support our hypotheses that parental rejection and indifferent attitudes influence the child's emotional, psychological and behavioral outcomes. Parental love accompanied by acceptance is necessary for overall desirable emotional and psychological development of children. Moreover, parents who adopt lax and extremely permissive /indifferent disciplinary pattern are more likely to raise children with lifetime psychosocial, emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Limitations, Suggestions and Implications. Sample size in the present research was restricted as there were only a limited number of convicts available at the Central Jail, Peshawar that also limits the boundaries of generalizing the results. Another limitation of this study is that it could generate more extensive results if it were based on a multidimensional model to explain antisocial behavior. For example, other than parental attitudes, low socioeconomic status including lack of education and poverty, negative influences of peer group ,and criminal behavior of people in neighborhood are suggested to be investigated as important determinants of criminal behavior by future researchers.. In addition, majority of the convicts were illiterate.. It is suggested that

arrangements for imparting basic education to read and write may be provided to the convicts by the concerned authorities within the jail premises.

The results of our study have significant implications for parents, forensic counselors, and mental health experts. Our findings highlight the urgent need for therapeutic practices that must be provided to the convicts so as to help them to cope with their psychological maladjustment. Moreover, the findings may be considered as the eye-openers for all those parents who believe in practicing lax parenting styles. There is a strong need to create awareness among the masses about desirable parent-child relationship and child-rearing practices.

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