



Influence of Organizational Culture on Project Performance in Rwanda. A case of Community Empowerment and Sustainability Project in Karongi District, Rwanda

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Abstract: This study investigated the influence of organizational culture on project performance, specifically within the context of community empowerment and sustainability projects. Data was collected from 101 employees of community empowerment and sustainability project working in departments, and they were chosen by using the census sampling technique. The data analysis utilized quantitative and qualitative methods, presenting the findings of respondents through mean and standard deviation. The results revealed that if all organizational culture variables are held constant at zero, the community empowerment and sustainability project performance will reach 67.5 percent. Additionally, a unit increase in leadership would enhance Community empowerment and sustainability project performance by 75%, while a one percent increase in diversity would improve performance by 64.2%. Furthermore, a one percent rise in team cohesion and collaboration would lead to a 25% increase in Community empowerment and sustainability project performance, and a similar increase in reward and recognition system would result in a 12.5% improvement. Overall, leadership had the most significant impact on Community empowerment and sustainability project performance, followed by diversity, team cohesion and collaboration, and reward and recognition system. At a 5% significance level and 95% confidence level, leadership showed a significance level of 0.000; diversity also had a significance level of 0.000; team cohesion and collaboration were at 0.001; and reward and recognition system was at 0.041. Therefore, these findings suggest that organizations should maintain strong leader support and resource provision to inspire teams, promoting a sense of belonging and regularly assessing team dynamics and maintaining its focus on team recognition and fair rewards.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Leadership, Diversity, Team Cohesion Collaboration, and Reward and Recognition Systems, Project Performance

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1. Introduction

As a result of globalization, the world is increasingly resembling a global village. Organizations are progressively hiring individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Consequently, organizational culture has emerged as a prominent topic in research. Ouchi and Wilkins (2014) noted that organizational culture is perhaps the most extensively studied aspect of culture. Scholars have examined culture from multiple

viewpoints and disciplines. According to Cameron and Ettington (2013), the anthropological functionalist perspective identifies culture through observable behaviors. From this viewpoint, a functionalist interprets culture as a unified set of norms, values, and beliefs that reflect social structures (Peterson, 2013). In line with sociological perspectives, culture also possesses a symbolic dimension (Peterson, 2013). Geertz (2015) described culture as “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited

concepts expressed in symbolic forms that allow individuals to communicate, sustain, and expand their understanding and attitudes toward life.”

The influence of organizational culture on project performance in community empowerment and sustainability initiatives remains a critical yet underexplored challenge, particularly in contexts where stakeholder engagement and long-term impact are paramount. While organizational culture encompassing shared values, leadership styles, communication practices, and decision-making norms has been widely recognized as a determinant of project success, its role in community-driven projects often intersects with complex socio-cultural dynamics, resistance to change, and conflicting stakeholder expectations. In today’s dynamic and competitive business landscape, organizations increasingly rely on projects to drive innovation, achieve strategic objectives, and maintain a competitive edge. However, many projects face significant challenges, including budget overruns, missed deadlines, and failure to meet stakeholder expectations. Studies indicate that most projects across various sectors fail to achieve their objectives fully. This prevalent issue underscores a critical need to understand the underlying factors that contribute to project performance, which is particularly relevant in project-driven organizations. While technical skills and project management methodologies are essential, emerging research suggests that intangible elements such as organizational culture are pivotal in determining project outcomes. (Mike et al., 2021).

Yazici (2009) a study of reengineering projects found that failure was primarily linked to the organizational context and could be attributed to the lack of leadership, organizational culture, integration, and commitment. Failure of projects is depicted through termination of projects before completion, project cost overruns, and the project outcomes not fully addressing the business requirements. This has serious consequences for the company in terms of lost market share and reduced revenue. The importance of projects and the pervasive influence of culture, it is essential to investigate how specific cultural dimensions impact project performance. This research aims to fill the existing gap by analyzing how various components of organizational culture, such as leadership style, diversity, team cohesion, collaboration, and reward and recognition systems, affect project outcomes (Battistella et al., 2024). By examining these relationships, this study offers valuable insights for project managers and organizational leaders, enabling them to foster cultural environments that promote successful project outcomes (Sophia et al.,2017). The general objective of this study is to establish the influence of Organizational Culture on Project performance.

To address the purpose of this study, the following research objectives were formulated as follow:

1. To determine the influence of leadership on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.
2. To determine the influence of diversity on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.
3. To determine the influence of team cohesion and collaboration on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.
4. To determine the influence of a reward and employee recognition on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Culture Theory

Organizational Culture was developed by Edgar Schein in 1984, and it highlights that organizational culture isn't inactive; it advances as workers adjust to their environment and fathom issues. Schein's Hypothesis of Organizational Culture gives an organized way to analyze how culture functions within organizations (Schein,1990). Schein's model consists of three unmistakable levels that speak to distinctive viewpoints of organizational culture. The primary level, artifacts is the foremost obvious level of culture, enveloping all the substantial and perceptible components inside an organization. Whereas artifacts are simple to watch, they can be troublesome to decipher precisely without understanding the more profound values and suspicions that support them. For occasion, an open office format may propose a culture of collaboration, but without setting, it may too reflect cost-cutting measures.

The moment level comprised of Morals incorporates values and standards that an organization leans towards. These are the organization's pronounced set of values and rules that direct behavior and decision-making forms. Upheld values can be found in mission statements, corporate policies, and vital destinations. Be that as it may, there can frequently be a hole between what an organization upholds and what happens at home. For illustration, a company may claim to esteem advancement but may not support risk-taking behaviors among its workers.

The third level, essential fundamental suspicions is the most profound level of culture and comprises the oblivious convictions, recognitions, contemplations, and sentiments that drive behavior in an organization. Fundamental presumptions are taken for allowed and frequently go unexamined; they are the substance of culture and essentially impact how representatives connect and approach their work. If an organization accepts that alter is perilous, this presumption will shape its resistance to modern thoughts or hones.

2.2 Cultural Dimensions Theory

Cultural dimensions theory was developed by Geert Hofstede in 1970, it emphasizes a system for understanding how national societies influence organizational behavior. Hofstede distinguished a few measurements, counting control separate, independence vs. collectivism, manliness vs. gentility, instability shirking, and long-term introduction. In venture settings, these measurements can impact group elements and decision-making forms. Progressive structures may smother open communication among group individuals, driving mistaken assumptions and wasteful aspects in extended execution. On the other hand, societies that emphasize collectivism may cultivate cooperation and shared duty, improving extended execution through collaborative endeavors (Hofstede, 1980).

Researchers have used Hofstede's dimensions to analyze cultural impacts on international business practices and interpersonal communication (Taras et al., 2009). This research highlighted that understanding cultural dimensions is crucial for effective management in multinational organizations, as it helps leaders navigate cultural differences that can affect team dynamics and project outcomes. The ongoing relevance of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is evident in its widespread use across disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and international relations, demonstrating its enduring impact on cross-cultural research and practice (Orr & Hauser, 2008).

2.3 Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal Theory is a prominent leadership framework developed by Robert House in early 1971. This theory posits that a leader's primary role is to motivate and guide their followers toward achieving specific goals. Effective leaders clarify the path to goals, remove obstacles, and provide necessary support to enhance employee performance and satisfaction. By integrating elements of both motivational theory and situational leadership, the theory emphasizes that leadership behaviors should be adapted based on the needs of employees and the demands of the task at hand (Swigart, 2024).

Path-Goal Theory identifies four primary leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Directive leadership involves providing clear instructions and expectations, it is particularly effective in ambiguous or complex situations. Supportive leadership focuses on creating a friendly and approachable atmosphere, enhancing team morale, and fostering positive relationships among team members. Participative leadership encourages employee involvement in decision-making processes, which can increase commitment and satisfaction by making individuals feel valued. Achievement-oriented leadership sets challenging goals for employees while demonstrating confidence in their abilities, motivating

them to excel (Njoku, 2020). The effectiveness of each leadership style depends on various factors, including the nature of the task, the work environment, and individual employee characteristics. By adapting their leadership approach to fit these variables, leaders can effectively guide their teams toward achieving organizational objectives while enhancing overall job satisfaction. It remains relevant in contemporary leadership studies as it underscores the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in leadership practices. This adaptability allows leaders to create an environment where employees feel supported and motivated to perform at their best, ultimately contributing to organizational success (Bans-Akutey, 2021).

2.4 Systems Theory

Systems theory is a multidisciplinary framework that explores the interconnectedness and interdependence of components within a system (Zott & Amit, 2020). It emphasizes that systems are more than the sum of their parts, focusing on the interactions and relationships among elements rather than analyzing them in isolation. This approach is widely applied across management, psychology, and sociology to understand complex systems and their behaviors (Gao & Zhang, 2022). Key principles of systems theory include holism, which stresses the importance of studying the entire system rather than individual components; emergence, where new properties arise from interactions within the system; and feedback loops, which regulate system behavior through positive or negative reinforcement (Midgley *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, systems are often hierarchical, with subsystems nested within larger systems, and they interact dynamically with their environments through defined boundaries. In organizational contexts, systems theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing how various elements, such as leadership, communication, and team dynamics influence outcomes. For example, it can help organizations identify feedback mechanisms that drive performance or pinpoint systemic issues affecting efficiency. By adopting a holistic perspective, systems theory enables researchers and practitioners to address complex challenges and improve decision-making processes in dynamic environments (Jackson *et al.*, 2020).

2.5 Empirical Review

The relationship between leadership and project performance may be a noteworthy area of research, especially in the setting of community empowerment and sustainability. Muange, Miroga, and Otinga (2024) explored the effect of different authority styles on Project performance in community-based water ventures in Trans-Nzoia Province, Kenya. The think utilized an expressive study plan, gathering information from 94 respondents over 62 enlisted community water projects. The discoveries demonstrated a positive relationship between successful leadership styles such as

transformational and participative leadership and project performance measurements, counting community cooperation and maintainability results. The creators concluded that developing quality leadership is fundamental for upgrading the adequacy and supportability of community-based projects.

Eltayeb *et al.* (2024) showed how distinctive leadership styles impact project performance in social enterprises. This investigation highlighted that transformational leadership enhances project outcomes by cultivating an environment of collaboration and development among group individuals. The researcher utilized a quantitative approach, analyzing information from different social enterprises to set up the relationship between leadership and project performance metrics such as stakeholder satisfaction and project sustainability. The results underscored the basic part of leadership style in driving extended victory, especially in settings that require flexibility and responsiveness to community needs. By coordinating these discoveries compelling leadership could be a foundation for developing an organizational culture that underpins fruitful project implementation in community-strengthening activities.

The organizational culture on project culture with a focus on group cohesion and collaboration in community empowerment projects. The results demonstrate that groups characterized by cohesion prove superior performance metrics compared to those with lower levels of collaboration and illustrate predominant execution measurements compared to those with lower levels of teamwork. Using a quantitative research plan with information collected from different community projects, this study emphasizes the need to develop a collaborative culture to drive fruitful results in community-focused activities (Grobler *et al.*, 2024).

Mbuva (2020) conducted a study on the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in health non-governmental organizations in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research highlighted that effective reward and recognition systems significantly enhance employee motivation, which in turn positively affects project performance. The study utilized a quantitative approach with a sample of 328 respondents, revealing that organizations with robust recognition practices reported higher project success rates. The findings underscore the importance of aligning reward systems with organizational culture to foster an environment conducive to high performance.

Nuryanto *et al.* (2019) investigated the impact of organizational culture on employee performance in Indonesian companies, highlighting the role of reward and recognition systems as mediators between culture and performance outcomes. The study found that organizations with a strong emphasis on recognizing employee contributions saw significant improvements in project performance metrics such as efficiency and quality of deliverables.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used quantitative methods for statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected via questionnaires, and interview guides. In contrast, qualitative methods gather non-numerical data aimed at understanding respondents' beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and interactions. A correlational research design also examined the relationship between organizational culture and project performance through correlation analysis.

3.2 Study Population

A target population refers to the specific group that a researcher aims to study to gather information that can be used to make generalizations and draw conclusions (Creswell, 2009). This study's target population comprises 101 employees from a community empowerment and sustainable project.

A sample is a portion of the population that is selected for study purposes. Since the total population is small, the researcher considered them all so there is no need to calculate sample size.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection techniques refer to technique of gathering and analyzing various appearances of data (Taherdoost, 2021). Standard data collection techniques include reviewing documents on a topic as well as conducting interviews and observations. Therefore, in this section, the researcher used various tools to collect primary and secondary data.

A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a series of questions used to collect information from visitors through a survey or statistical study (McLafferty, 2019). Therefore, in this research the questionnaire contained by the closed-ended questions limit the answers and opinions of the respondents by using pre-selected options. The questionnaire was also chosen by researcher because it is the most efficient way of gathering information needed from these respondents. They are divided into four parts: the first part is related to the respondent's information. The second section was contained by eight closed-ended questions addressed to respondents based on the influence of leadership, the third section contained by eight closed-ended questions addressed to respondents based on the role of diversity, while the fourth section by eight questions was also focused on the influence of team cohesion and collaboration and finally a fifth section with 12 questions based on community empowerment and sustainability project performance.

Secondary sources provided supplementary data to complement the primary data. This mainly included documented information from the selected Community empowerment and sustainability project implemented by Caritas Rwanda. Project reports, and other relevant documents. These sources were essential for the researcher to draw valid conclusions and make informed recommendations based on a comprehensive understanding of the context and existing knowledge.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of this study employed quantitative that uses descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics produced frequency tables, percentages, and means that used for the presentation of characteristics of themes. From a perspective view, inferential statistics including the Pearson correlation and regression analysis look at the significance of the study as well as the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study. The regression and correlation examine the influence of the independent variables on project performance. The regression quantified the impacts of relationships and correlation determines the strength and direction of the relationships between two variables. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS software.

The researcher presents the regression model as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y= project performance,

β_0 : constant,

$\beta_1 \beta_2 \beta_3 \beta_4$: regression coefficients,

X_1 : Leadership,

X_2 : Diversity,

X_3 : Team cohesion and collaboration,

X_4 : Reward and employee recognition and

ε : error term.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical conduct, the researcher obtained a formal introduction letter from the University of Kigali, giving respondents a transparent overview of the study's purpose. Permission was also sought from the community empowerment and sustainability Project. Confidentiality was rigorously maintained by not disclosing respondents' names in the report. Following data analysis, identifying details were omitted from the final report.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter details the study's practical application. It begins by presenting an analysis of the field data collected from respondents, organized around the research's specific objectives.

4.1 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics employ sample data to draw conclusions or make predictions regarding a broader sample or population. Consequently, the following section provides the correlational matrix, model summary, ANOVA tests, and correlation coefficients.

Table 1: Correlation matrix

		Leadership	Diversity	Team cohesion and collaboration	Reward and recognition system	Project performance
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Diversity	N	101				
	Pearson Correlation	.889	1			
Team cohesion and collaboration	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001				
	N	101	101			
Reward and recognition system	Pearson Correlation	.789	.876	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001			
Project performance	N	101	101	101		
	Pearson Correlation	.902	.910	.888	1	
Project performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.482		
	N	101	101	101	101	
Project performance	Pearson correlation	.899	.911	.794	.882	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	101	101	101	101	101

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Pearson's theory of correlation coefficients, Table 1 demonstrates a positive correlation between all variables of organizational culture and the performance of community empowerment and sustainable projects. Notably, when community empowerment and sustainable project reach 100%, the leadership variable shows a strong correlation of .899, indicating a significant relationship between effective leadership and the achievement of community empowerment and sustainable project performance. Similarly, diversity correlates at .911, while team cohesion and collaboration show a correlation of .794 when performance is at 100%. Additionally, diversity again shows a correlation of .882

in this context. Thus, addressing organizational needs is vital for the success of the project. Enhanced leadership, diverse teams, strong team cohesion, and collaboration, along with effective reward and recognition systems, significantly influence overall project goals, leading to improved outcomes in community empowerment and sustainability initiatives. Muange, Miroga, and Otinga (2024) explored the effect of different authority styles on Project performance in community-based water ventures in Trans-Nzoia Province, Kenya. The researcher concluded that developing quality leadership is fundamental for upgrading the adequacy and supportability of community-based projects.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884 ^a	.782	.709	.141

a. Predictors: (Constant), leadership, diversity, team cohesion and collaboration, reward and recognition system.

In Table 2, the correlation coefficient, denoted as R, indicates the relationship between the variables in the study. The results presented in the table above reveal a positive correlation of 0.884 between the study variables at a 5% significance level. Additionally, R squared value serves as the coefficient of determination, reflecting how much variation in the dependent variable can be attributed to changes in the independent variables. Specifically, the squared value was found to be 0.782, suggesting that 78.2% of the variation in community

empowerment and sustainability is influenced by changes in leadership, diversity, team cohesion and collaboration, as well as the reward and recognition system at a 95% confidence interval. Eltayeb *et al.* (2024) showed how distinctive leadership styles impact project performance in social enterprises. The results underscored the basic part of leadership style in driving extended victory, especially in settings that require flexibility and responsiveness to community needs.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.380	4	.345	10.765	.001 ^a
	Residual	.385	97	.032		
	Total	1.765	101			

a. Predictors: (Constant), leadership, diversity, team cohesion and collaboration, reward and recognition system.

b. Dependent Variable: Project performance

ANOVA is a test used to determine differences between study results from three or more independent samples or groups.

If P-value < 5% -Model fit

If P-value > 5% -Model not fit

Conclude: The model is fit to predict the study variables because P value < 0.05 or 5%. Supported by Mbuva

(2020) conducted a study on the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in health non-governmental organizations in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings underscore the importance of aligning reward systems with organizational culture to foster an environment conducive to high performance.

Table 4: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	0.675	1.152		1.193	.319
Leadership	.750	.417	.661	1.800	.000
Diversity	.642	.531	.545	.963	.000
Team cohesion and collaboration	.250	.417	.220	.600	.001
Reward and recognition system	.125	.597	.110	.210	.041

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

The regression analysis revealed that if organizational culture were held constant at zero, the baseline performance of community empowerment and sustainability projects would be 67.5%. Moreover, a one-unit increase in leadership effectiveness is predicted to improve project performance by 75%, while similar increases in diversity, team cohesion/collaboration, and reward/recognition systems would yield performance gains of 64.2%, 25%, and 12.5%, respectively. Leadership demonstrated the strongest influence on project performance, followed by diversity, team cohesion/collaboration, and reward/recognition. All factors were statistically significant: leadership ($p < 0.001$), diversity ($p < 0.001$), team cohesion/collaboration ($p = 0.001$), and reward/recognition ($p = 0.041$), indicating a 95% confidence level. Therefore, all the variables were significant ($p < 0.05$). Nuryanto *et al.* (2019) investigated the impact of organizational culture on employee

performance in Indonesian companies. The study found that organizations with a strong emphasis on recognizing employee contributions saw significant improvements in project performance metrics such as efficiency and quality of deliverables.

$$Y = 0.675 + 0.75X_1 + 0.642X_2 + .25X_3 + 0.125X_4 + \epsilon$$

The equation is our final estimated equation, which shows the extent to which each independent variable affects the dependent variable as already explained in the interpretation and analysis above.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses Results

The study analyzed the effect of organizational culture on project performance: A case of community empowerment and sustainability project. The findings are below:

Table 5: Hypotheses summary results

	P-value	Decision
H₀₁: Leadership has no significant influence on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.	0.000	Rejected
H₀₂: Diversity has no significant influence on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.	0.000	Rejected
H₀₃: Team cohesion and collaboration have no significant influence on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.	0.001	Rejected
H₀₄: Reward and recognition system have no significant influence on project performance of community empowerment and sustainability project.	0.041	Rejected

Significant overviews on the influence of organizational culture on project performance: A case of community empowerment and sustainability project, are given by the findings of the hypotheses testing in Table 5. There is strong evidence to refute the null hypothesis (H₀₁, H₀₂, H₀₃, and H₀₄), Specifically, leadership, diversity, team cohesion and collaboration, and reward and recognition systems all demonstrate a significant effect on community empowerment and sustainability Project. These findings emphasize the critical role of organizational culture on community empowerment and sustainability project performance generally.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The findings indicate that effective leadership and team diversity are crucial components of project success. Leaders play a vital role by providing ample support and resources, which inspires teams to excel. They also foster an environment where team participation in decision-making is encouraged, conflicts are resolved constructively, and project goals are communicated clearly. In addition to strong leadership, team diversity significantly enhances project outcomes. The presence of varied professional expertise and inclusivity within the team contributes to creativity and the timely achievement of project milestones. However, there is some variability in valuing diverse viewpoints during decision-making.

Furthermore, the survey highlights a strong consensus regarding team dynamics and the effectiveness of the rewards and recognition system. Team cohesion is reinforced through quick conflict resolution and a high level of trust among members, alongside effective communication and clear role understanding. The rewards and recognition system not only positively influences overall project performance but is also perceived as fairly distributed among team members, enhancing motivation. Overall, these findings emphasize that trust, communication, recognition, and diversity are essential for fostering collaboration and achieving

project objectives, creating a positive work environment that drives success.

Finally, the regression analysis indicated that with organizational culture held constant at zero, the baseline performance of community empowerment and sustainability projects is projected to be 137.5%. A one-unit increase in leadership effectiveness is expected to enhance project performance by 75%. In contrast, similar increases in diversity, team cohesion/collaboration, and reward/recognition systems are predicted to result in performance improvements of 64.2%, 25%, and 12.5%, respectively. Leadership substantially impacts project performance, followed by diversity, team cohesion/collaboration, and reward/recognition. All factors were statistically significant: leadership ($p < 0.001$), diversity ($p < 0.001$), team cohesion/collaboration ($p = 0.001$), and reward/recognition ($p = 0.041$), confirming their relevance at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

5.2 Recommendations

1. Organizations should maintain strong leader support and resource provision to inspire teams, encourage inclusive decision-making, and enhance leaders' adaptability and constructive feedback skills.
2. To enhance project success, the organization should strengthen inclusive decision-making by ensuring diverse viewpoints are valued, celebrating diversity through recognition of contributions, monitoring diversity metrics for continuous improvement, and expanding recruitment strategies to attract a broader talent pool.
3. The organization should maintain its focus on team recognition and fair rewards while enhancing individual acknowledgment through personalized methods.

5.3. Areas for Further Research

This section identifies potential areas for future research building upon the study's findings. Specifically, further investigation should focus on exploring how digital technologies influence organizational culture and, in turn, affect the effectiveness of community empowerment projects.

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