

Socio-Economic Determinants of Wife-Battering Among Ever-Married Women in Somolu Local Government Area, Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Wife-battering refers to the maltreatment of a wife by the husband which includes physical assault such as beating, biting, flogging and kicking. Socio-economic factors such as educational attainment, income and employment status were contributing factors to experience of wife-battering. This study examines the socio-economic factors of wife-battering among ever-married women in Somolu Local Government area of Lagos-State. In enhancing the explanatory power of this paper, Circle of violence theory and Marxist theory was utilised as theoretical underpinnings. The cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of Four hundred and twenty (420) respondents. The quantitative method of data collection was adopted for the study. Univariate and bivariate analysis were the statistical tools adopted for analysing the field data. The findings of the study aver that there are significant relationships between educational attainment (0.000), income (0.000) and the experience of wife-battering, but there is no relationship between employment status (0.360) and wife-battering. Premised on these findings, Government must introduce stiff measures to discourage perpetrators of wife-battering and also give women the requisite empowerment that will shield them from their batterers.*

Keywords: Socio-economic factors, Ever-married women, Somolu, Wife-battering

Introduction

Wife-battering denotes a brutal attack on women's physical and emotional well-being. A little push to get a wife out of the way or holding her to keep her in control and other actions that may result into injuries requiring hospitalisation are all forms of wife-battering (Wetzel and Ross, 1983). Wife-battering is the maltreatment of a wife by the husband which includes physical assault such as beating, biting, flogging, kicking, et cetera, Stank (1985). Wife-battering, according to Herbert (1983), refers to violent acts – psychological and/or sexual made with the intent of controlling the partner by inducing fear and pain.

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The word: 'battering' according to Ezeilo (2008) is unlawful application enforced on another person resulting in "harmful or offensive contact". It is the criminal act of treating somebody violently Hornby (1995). The above definitions are quite in agreement with the view of the researchers who consider battering as an inappropriate manner of handling someone with a view of inflicting or hurting the person's physical and emotional well-being.

General epidemiology studies on wife-battering are very uncommon in Africa. This is largely because, until freshly, the phenomenon did not attain the status of a social problem in a continent where poverty, political instability, religious fanaticism, corruption, high crime rate and other significant social ills compete for attention and solution Adewale (2007). The widespread incidences of wife-battering in Africa have been associated with its social and cultural acceptance as a means of physical chastisement of women. It goes with the belief that husbands have the right to discipline their wives. This is based on the assumption that at marriage a woman automatically becomes the man's property Adewale (2007).

Violence is a major threat to social and economic development UN (2006) and the most widespread and socially tolerated way in which women and girls are denied their basic right DFID (2007). Violence Against Women (VAW) was first established as a development issue at the United National Decade for Women's meeting in Nairobi in 1985 (Machera, 1997:28). Violence against Women (VAW) generally includes any type of harmful behaviours directed at women and girls because of their sex (CHANGE, 1999:3). World Health Organization has noted that about 16-52% of women in every country have been physically abused or assaulted by their partners Tracy (2006). The World Development Report of the World Bank reveals that domestic violence, physical abuse, and rape have claimed the lives of many women between ages 15 and 44 more than cervical cancer, breast cancer, and motor accidents WHO (2011). Furthermore, a World Health Organization (WHO) multi-country study has shown that about 15–71% of women reported to have experienced a form of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

The roles of socio-economic variables such as income, status of employment and educational status in the occurrence of wife-battering cannot be overlooked. Violence against women is also associated with their employment status. Women who stay at home and do not work outside the home as paid worker are at greater risk of being abused. When women have few personal resources severity of violence against them also increases. However, in some studies the situation is differently reported that housewives had a lower risk of violence than employed women. (Levinson 1989). Perry-Jenkins et al (2000) defined employment status as someone in employment either as an employee or working on his/her own account (self-employed). This study categorized employment status of women into 4 groups namely; those working in public sector, private sector, self-employment, and unemployment.

According to Mama (1993) the confinement of women to economically dependent roles is a condition which has made it very difficult for many women to leave unbearably violent situations. Similarly, a

woman might remain in an abusive relationship for purely economic reasons. She may be unskilled, semi-skilled or unemployed as in the case of a full-time housewife. If she has been a housewife for a long time, it may be very difficult for her to venture into the labour market. Also fear of hunger, fear of raising children on her own, et cetera (Ilevbabor, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

On a daily basis, women are beaten and "punished" for supposed wrongdoings, raped, murdered and even in some cases, cruel acid attacks by members of their family leave them with disgusting deformities Fatusi & Alatis (2006). It has also been observed in Nigeria that the law allows a man to reasonably chastise his wife Akande (1993). More so, Sociologically, a woman that is constantly battered hardly plays her role effectively. If a woman who is very close to the children is badly battered, by implication the social and emotional life of her children might be affected negatively.

According to Ella (1999:145) a woman that is deprived of the care and comfort of home and allowed to exhaust her strength through anxiety will not play her role as a mother." The early training needed by children, the formation of habits during early years of infancy will be marred by her own unlovely temper and this will not augur well for the children's academic progress.

Wife-battering continues because discriminatory laws condone and even legitimize certain forms of violence against women. Dismissive attitudes by the police and an inaccessible justice system compound the failures of the state to protect women's rights. Most of the studies carried out have considered the socio-economic impact of wife-battering among heterosexual couples in Lagos-state and beyond, but this study will beam light on the socio-economic correlates of wife-battering among ever-married women in Somolu Local council development area of Lagos-state.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the socio-economic determinants of wife-battering among ever-married women in Somolu Local Council Development area, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

- (i) To ascertain the relationship between educational status and wife-battering.
- (ii) To examine the relationship between income and experience of wife-battering.
- (iii) To investigate the relationship between status of employment and wife-battering.

Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant relationship between educational status and wife-battering.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There is no significant relationship between income and experience of wife-battering.

Hypothesis Three

H₀: There is no significant relationship between status of employment and wife-battering.

Theoretical Orientation

The role of theoretical framework in the explanation of any sociological study cannot be overlooked. Theoretical framework is an indispensable component of research work as it plays a prominent role in providing the appropriate means by which sociological studies are elucidated. In order to enhance the explanatory power of this study, two theories suffice, namely: (1) Marxist theory and (2) cycle of violence theory.

Marxist theory is the theoretical formulation of the German social philosopher and sociologist, Karl Marx. The Marxist theory theorise that capitalism places women among the deprived class in the society as they are denied economic control of sources of production, political power, and status.

Marx's theory of alienation is premised on assumptions about the nature of human being, involving the ideas of freedom, self-expression, creativity and sociality (Marx 1964 [1844]). The situations of everyday life in which patriarchy and sexism obtain—the situations in which existing social relations of power, authority, and dominance are assigned on the basis of gender and sex, including: marriage, the family, and the workplace—create a situation of alienation and domination for women. Similarly, Marx's theory of exploitation extends very naturally to the social relations of patriarchy. Patriarchy and the bourgeois family system embody exploitation of women, within the household and within the workplace (Marx 1977., 1867).

The **cycle of violence** theory, on the other hand, is a social cycle theory which emerged from the research conducted by Lenore Walker (1979) on battered wives; to explain the dynamics of an abusive relationship. It is premised on the fact that women are not constantly being abused, and their willingness to remain in an abusive relationship is related to cyclical fluctuations between periods of abuse and relatively peaceful coexistence.

The theory helps to expatiate the passive behaviour that is common-place among women who remain in dangerous living conditions even when an escape route stares them in the face (is possible), or who return to live with their assailants, even after being severely battered and injured. The cycle of violence theory is associated with domestic violence in which wife-battering is a subset, and breaks down into three stages: the honeymoon phase, the tension building phase, and an acute explosion. These phases are depicted to center around **denial** by both parties in the relationship that the problem exists, or is as severe as it is.

- **Tension building**

Stress builds from the pressures of daily life, like conflict over children, marital issues, misunderstandings, or other family conflicts. It also builds as the result of illness, legal or financial problems, unemployment, or catastrophic events, like floods, rape or war (Willis and Esmeralda, 2010). During this period, the abuser feels ignored, threatened, annoyed or wronged. The feeling lasts on average several minutes to hours, it may last as much as several months (Scott, 2006). This is the phase that falls between the honeymoon phase and the acute explosion phase. In terms of behavior by the aggressor, this stage includes derogatory remarks toward the victim, hyper-critical comments and nitpicking, extreme moodiness, possible drinking and/or drug abuse, yelling, and the withdrawal of affection. She might cook the aggressor his favorite meals, attempting to soothe him, and agree with statements made by the aggressor (even when they are derogatory comments towards herself). Frequently, the victim feels as though she is 'walking on eggshells'.

- **Acute Explosion**

The **acute explosion phase** involves an act of violence on the part of the aggressor toward the victim in the relationship. It is not uncommon for the aggressor to hit or use weapons on the victim, or possibly choke, rape, or even imprison them. In some cases, the aggressor uses verbal abuse or humiliates the victim. The Acute violence phase is often characterized by outbursts of violent, abusive incidents which may be preceded by verbal abuse (Willis and Esmeralda, 2010) and include psychological abuse (Scott, 2006). During this stage the abuser attempts to dominate his/her partner (survivor), with the use of domestic violence.

- **Reconciliation/honeymoon**

The **honeymoon phase** in the cycle of violence is the calm stage of the relationship, that which may appear to be the most 'normal.' During this stage, everything seems peaceful and the relationship seems to be going well. The aggressor may appear affectionate, passionate, and even jealous, making the victim think that the aggressor is concerned about her. He also may be apologetic and promise to never act abusively again. He may make other promises regarding his behaviour to win back the victim's trust and affection.

The abuser may use self-harm or threats of suicide to gain sympathy and/or prevent the survivor from leaving the relationship. Abusers are frequently so convincing, and survivors so eager for the relationship to improve, that survivors (who are often worn down and confused by longstanding abuse) stay in the relationship (Walker, 1979; and Brewster, 2006).

Research methods The cross-sectional descriptive survey design was utilised for the study. The location for the study is Somolu Local Government Area of Lagos State. Somolu Local Governments (Lat. 6.540833° and Long. 3.387222°) lie in the Ikeja Division of Lagos State, Nigeria. It has a population of about 403,559 NPC (2006) and has a land area of 11.6 km². In the North it shares boundary with Bariga Local Government and in the South it shares boundaries with the Akoka

communities. In the East the boundary is the major Ikorodu road from Fadeyi to Anthony and at the West, Abule-Ijesha. A residential suburb of Lagos, the town is plagued by problems of Overcrowding, Poor housing, and Inadequate sanitation. Most of its inhabitants are Yoruba. The town's local activities include work in leather handicrafts and printing. The study population for this cross-sectional survey consists of ever-married women aged 20 years and above living and/or working within Somolu Local Government area. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used for this study. Stage one: There are Fifty-seven Local Council Development Areas in Lagos-State out of which the researcher randomly selected Somolu LCDA. Stage two: Somolu LCDA of Lagos-State has eight (8) political wards. Stage three: there are over eight hundred streets in the eight geo-political wards in Somolu LGA. Stage Four: from the over eight hundred streets in Somolu LGA are houses where respondents were ultimately drawn. The questionnaire method of data collection was adopted for the study. The univariate (for running the frequency distribution of respondents) and bivariate (for establishing the relationship between variables of study using Chi-Square X^2) method of data analysis was utilised for the study.

Results and discussion of findings

Table 1 indicate that the study is an all women affair. This is so because all the 420 (100%) respondents are females. Furthermore, 6.4% (27) of the respondents were between ages 20-25, 26.0% (109) of the respondents were between ages 26-35, 43.6% (183) of the respondents were between ages 36-45, 19.3% (81) of the respondents were between ages 46-55, 4.3% (18) of the respondents were between ages 56-65 and 0.5% (2) of the respondents were between ages 66 and above. The result in table 1 shows that majority of the respondents falls between the age range of 36-45 which is more or less an economically active age group.

A total of 27.1% (114) of the respondents are Muslims, 67.8% (285) of the respondents are Christians and 5.0% (21) of the respondents are adherents of African traditional religion. This distribution by religion shows that majority of the respondents were Christians. The status of employment of the respondents indicated that 36.2% (152) were employed in the public sector, 13.3% (56) were in the private sector, 26.2% (110) were self-employed and 24.3% (102) were unemployed. This is a marker that majority of the respondents are employed in the public sector.

The respondents' monthly income indicated that 41.2% (173) earned below ₦40,000; 12.9% (54) of the respondents earned between ₦40,000 and ₦49,999; 8.6% (36) of the respondents earned between ₦50,000-₦59,999; 11.7% (49) of the respondents earned between ₦60,000 and ₦69,999 and 25.7% (108) of the respondents earned ₦70,000 and above. This distribution by income shows that majority of the respondents earned below ₦40,000. This monthly earning of women is worth a paltry 80 US dollars and needless to say that this is very low when we put into cognisance the economic recession that is bedevilling the country at the moment, never mind the high cost of goods and services. The study further reveals that 67.9% (285) of the respondents are married, 5.7% (24) of the respondents are divorced, 14.8% (62) of the respondents are separated and 11.7% (49) of the

respondents are widowed. This distribution by marital status reveals that majority of the respondents are married.

The educational level category of the respondents avers that 6.9% (29) of the respondents had non-formal education, 7.9% (33) of the respondents had Primary education, 33.6% (141) of the respondents had Secondary education, 47.6% (200) had Tertiary education, 4.3 (15) had other forms of education and 4.0% (17) of the respondents have attained other categories of Education. This distribution implies that majority of the respondents are graduates of the tertiary institution.

The table also shows that 4.0% (17) of the respondents were Hausa, 13.1% (55) of the respondents were Igbo, 77.9% (327) of the respondents were Yoruba and 5.0% (21) of the respondents were of the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This distribution shows that majority of the respondents are Yoruba.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	420	100.0
Male	0	0.0
Total	420	100.0
Age Group		
Under 25	27	6.4
26-35	109	26.0
36-45	183	43.6
46-55	81	19.3
56-65	18	4.3
66 and older	2	0.5
Total	420	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	285	67.8
Islam	114	27.1
Traditionalist	21	5.0
Total	420	100.0
Status of employment		
Public sector	152	36.2
Private sector	56	13.3
Self-employed	110	26.2
Unemployed	102	24.3
Total	420	100.0
Income		

Below – N40,000	173	41.2
N40,000-N49,999	54	12.9
N50,000-N59,999	36	8.6
N60,000-N69,999	49	11.7
N70,000 – Above	108	25.7
Total	429	100.0
Marital status		
Married	285	67.9
Divorced	24	5.7
Separated	62	14.8
Widowed	49	11.7
Total	420	100.0
Ethnicity		
Hausa	17	4.0
Igbo	55	13.1
Yoruba	327	77.9
Others	21	5.0
Total	420	100.0
Educational attainment		
No formal education	29	6.9
Primary	33	7.9
Secondary	141	33.6
Tertiary	200	47.6
Others	17	4.0
Total	420.0	100.0

Source: Author's analysis of research data, (2016)

Table 2 shows frequency distribution of respondents by whether they have experienced wife-battering. Data garnered from the field avers that 56.8% (196) of the respondents have experienced battering before, 43.2% of the respondents have not experienced battering from their partners. By implication, majority of the respondents have experienced wife-battering before. This is contrary to the clause that when some women informants were asked whether they had ever been hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by intimate partners, 38.5% admitted that they had experienced such, as observed by Knapp (2001).

Table 2: Experience of wife-battering (n = 420)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Experience of wife-battering		
Experienced	239	56.9
Not experienced	181	43.1
Total	420	100.0

Source: Author's analysis of research data (2016).

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of respondents on knowledge of wife-battering. Data obtained shows that 82.3% (284) of the respondents have the knowledge of wife-battering, 17.7% (61) of the respondents did not have the knowledge of wife-battering. It can be deduced from this table that majority of the respondents have the knowledge of wife-battering. This is contrary to the inference drawn by Oyedokun (2008) that there is scant information on wife-battering in Nigeria and that there is no proper documentation to support its existence. According to him, People do not talk about domestic violence because it seems to be an acceptable part of marriage. Furthermore, the table also showed that 11.9% (50) of the respondents' source of knowledge on wife-battering is from schooling, 71.0% (298) did not have the knowledge from schooling and the question was not applicable to 17.1% (72) of the respondents. 29.0% (122) of the respondents get the knowledge of wife-battering from radio and TV programmes, 53.8% (226) of the respondents did not get their knowledge of wife-battering from radio and TV programmes and the question did not apply to 17.1% (72) of the respondents. 27.4% (115) of the respondents knew about wife-battering through relatives and friends, 55.5% (233) did not know it through this source and the question was not applicable to 17.1% (72) of the respondents. 11.9% (50) of the respondents got the knowledge of wife-battering through colleagues at work, 71.0% (298) of the respondents did not have this knowledge through colleagues at work and the question was not applicable to 17.1% (72) of the respondents. 3.8% (16) of the respondents have the knowledge of wife-battering through health seminars, 79.1% (332) of the respondents did not know about wife-battering through health seminars and to 17.1% (72) of the respondents the question was not applicable. Less than 3% of the respondents have the knowledge of wife-battering through other sources like religious programmes, social media, gossips, et cetera, over 80% did not have the knowledge through this source and to almost 20% of the respondents the

question was not applicable. Derivatives from the findings above show that a lot of things still have to be done in order to acquaint women with the knowledge of wife-battering. Increased social awareness would go a long way in making know more about this violence against women and also where to report such.

Table 3: Knowledge and source of knowledge of Wife-Battering (n=420).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge of wife-battering		
Yes	348	82.9
No	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through schooling		
Yes	50	11.9
No	298	71.0
Not applicable	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through Radio/Tv Programmes		
Yes	122	29.0
No	226	53.8
Not applicable	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through relatives and friends		
Yes	115	27.4
No	233	55.5
Not applicable	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through colleagues at work		
Yes	50	11.9
No	298	82.9
Not applicable	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through health seminars		
Yes	16	3.8
No	332	82.9
Not applicable	72	17.1
Total	420	100.0
Knowledge through other sources		
Yes	10	2.4
No	338	338
Not applicable	72	17.1

Total **420** **100.0**

Source: Author's analysis of research data (2016).

Table 4 showed frequency distribution of respondents by how often they are involved in wife-battering. Data reveals that 7.4% (31) of the respondents are always involved in wife-battering, 24.5% (103) of the respondents are occasionally involved in wife-battering, 35.0% (147) of the respondents are hardly involved in wife-battering and 33.1% (139) of the respondents have never been involved in wife-battering. This is an indication that majority of the respondents have in one way or the other been involved in wife-battering because just over thirty percent of them claimed their non-involvement.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by frequency of involvement in wife-battering

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of Involvement in Wife-battering		
Always	31	7.4
Occasionally	103	24.5
Hardly	147	35.0
None	139	33.1
Total	420	100.0

Source: Author's analysis of research data, (2016) **HYPOTHESES TESTING**

Testing Hypothesis One

The relationship between educational attainment and experience of wife-battering avers calculated value as 48.71 and p-value at 0.000 which is less than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between educational attainment of women and experience of wife-battering. Education is power, key and the bedrock of any nation. The higher and lower the educational attainment of women, the stronger tendency that they will be victims of wife-battering. A well-educated woman, in most cases, understands her rights, is exposed to a lot of things such as the violence that women often experience in the hands of men; not just that, have the tendency to question the obvious, criticise conventions and would likely not be mute when her self-esteem is eroded or when the respect due to her is relegated to play second fiddle. All these dispositions of well-educated women, covertly or overtly, get in the way of men who hold firmly the unwavering traditional believe that it is a man's world - the system of patriarchy still reign supreme and that no matter how educated a woman is, a man always have the final say. Violence always ensue when this sense of authority is questioned by an educated woman. The less or none educated woman, on the other hand, who is lacking in so many areas to the extent that she is made a full-time housewife; and without vocational skill or other empowerment, will always be at the mercy of her husband. Such women depend on their husbands for all basic needs and failure to get an attention or help is a recipe for preposterous things, wife-battering inclusive.

Testing Hypothesis Two

The relationship between income of women and involvement in wife-battering shows calculated value as 25.44 and p-value at 0.000 which is less than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the income of women and their involvement in wife-battering. Income is a very vital economic variable that often sustain most marital relationships. This is further underlined by the fact that most spinsters and bachelors are always afraid to go into long term marital commitment when the flow of income is not steady and forthcoming. In view of this, one could be forgiven for saying that most marital relationship is premised or built on what (income) husbands and wives brings to the table to ensure that daily and basic needs are met, and the home continue to thrive. However, the inability of either of the partners to bring something to the table when there is need to offset utility bills, buy food items, pay children school fees, take care of medical bills, pay for rent (if they are tenants), et cetera, is always greeted with resentments and this often triggers wife-battering. If a man cannot establish his authority economically or financially and take responsibility, he tend to do so physically through wife-battering. Similarly, women with low income and who hardly support their husbands because of this incapacitation are not likely to be respected and would be victims of wife-battering, even at the slightest provocation.

Testing hypothesis Three

The relationship between status of employment of women and experience of wife-battering shows calculated value 3.215 and p-value at 0.360 which is greater than the level of significance (0.05). hence, the null hypothesis is accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is no relationship between employment status of women and women's experience of battering. The staus of employment cannot be seen as a trigger for wife-battering. Other socio-economic factors such as income and educational attainments of women have clearly indicated strong relationship with wife-battering.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis of respondents selected socio-economic characteristics and experience of Wife-battering (n=420)

Variable	X ²	df	P	Decision
Educational attainment	48.711	4	0.000	S
Income	25.440	4	0.000	S
Status of employment	3.215	2	0.360	NS

Source: Author's analysis of research data, (2016)

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations suffices:

- Government must formulate policies that will ensure that women are protected against all forms of violence that usually emanate from the family-context.
- There appears to be a law that was put in place by some state governments in Nigeria to punish perpetrators of domestic violence and to also check the menace, but little has been

achieved in this regard. Nevertheless, Government must ensure that adequate laws are put in place to severely punish all the perpetrators of wife-battering (violence against women). The perpetrators must not be given the opportunity to benefit from or revel in wife abuse. It is in doing this that strong signal would be sent to other men who have the tendency to also beat their wives.

- Non-Governmental organisations, local governments, state governments and the federal government must organise programmes that will be geared towards sensitising men about the need to always show more support and care to women and to also see the ills that is enmeshed in wife-battering.
- Government must also intensify efforts to ensure that women are given the necessary empowerment in the areas of education, finance, et cetera, so that they will not be victims of violence as a result of over-reliance on men for their basic needs, among others. Education is the bedrock of any nation. Any nation that does not take to heart the education of women will likely struggle to attain positive development. Hence the education of women must be taken seriously as this will give them the requisite empowerment to know their rights and report cases of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Violence against women has been deemed to be a global phenomenon and Nigeria is not an exemption. In a relative sense, there appears to be an increase in what is known about wife-battering in the country. However, much still need to be done to further create a social awareness that will encourage women to start speaking out and stop dying in silence as a result of violence that is domiciled within the family context. Income, religion affiliation and educational status have been found to be significantly linked to wife-battering. Hence all hands must be on deck to ensure that women are no longer victims of economic suppression, religion extremism and educational marginalisation which inadvertently occasion violence.

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