Strategic Guidance and Organizational Adaptability: A Route to Flexibility During Crises

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Abstract:

In the current unpredictable and unstable business landscape, companies face growing challenges to stay competitive and sustainable amid crises like economic recessions, worldwide pandemics, and geopolitical disturbances. This paper examines the essential function of strategic leadership in promoting organizational resilience as a means to attain organizational agility during crises. Leveraging current research and theoretical models, the study highlights that leaders who embrace a long-term strategic outlook, encourage flexibility, and enable employee autonomy can enhance resilience on both structural and cultural fronts. Resilient organizations are consequently more prepared to foresee disruptions, react swiftly to changes, and recover efficiently, thus improving overall agility. This paper employs a conceptual model to situate resilience as an intermediary factor linking strategic leadership to organizational agility. The results emphasize that the ability to stay nimble in emergencies relies not only on structural adaptability but also on strategic leadership, sound decision-making, and a strong workforce. Practical implications are offered for leaders seeking to create organizations that cannot just endure but also flourish in uncertain conditions.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Organizational Resilience, Organizational Agility, Crisis Management, Dynamic Capabilities

Introduction :

Amidst an age characterized by unparalleled upheavals, including economic instability, technological advancements, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts, organizations are being challenged to demonstrate their ability to endure and prosper in highly uncertain environments. Conventional approaches to leadership and organizational management, which typically focused on stability and gradual change, are becoming less effective amidst chaotic global circumstances. Organizations currently function within what researchers refer to as a VUCA environment—volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous—where the rapid pace of change frequently surpasses the capacity of businesses to foresee and address challenges. In this context, the significance of strategic leadership has become more notable as a crucial element in influencing organizational resilience and allowing them to cultivate the agility necessary for effectively managing crises. Strategic leadership, in contrast to operational or tactical leadership, looks ahead and emphasizes the alignment of long-term vision with flexibility, creativity, and the sustainability of the organization

The idea of organizational resilience has surfaced as a vital topic in modern management studies and applications. Resilience denotes an organization's capacity to withstand shocks, adjust to challenging circumstances, and quickly bounce back from disturbances while preserving essential operations and seeking growth opportunities. In times of crisis, resilient organizations are characterized by their ability to endure stress without falling apart and to adapt strategies and processes in ways that generate new value. Resilience, however, is not an automatic response; it is developed through intentional methods and leadership strategies that emphasize adaptability, ongoing education, and empowerment throughout every level of the organization. Strategic leaders significantly contribute to preparing their organizations to face and adjust to crises by promoting a resilient culture and establishing systems that foresee risks. By doing this, they establish the foundation for organizational agility, defined as the capacity to quickly perceive shifts in the environment, make prompt decisions, and adapt

resources and strategies in accordance with new realities.

The connection among strategic leadership, organizational resilience, and agility is increasingly recognized as a dynamic and interrelated framework. Agility enables organizations to swiftly address disruptions and capitalize on new opportunities, while resilience offers the structural and cultural groundwork that ensures this agility remains sustainable long-term. Without resilience, agility may become reactive and short-lived, leading to instability and fatigue. On the other hand, in the absence of agility, resilience could deteriorate into simple survival devoid of innovation or development. Strategic leadership acts as the essential force that connects resilience and agility, guaranteeing that organizations are equipped for crises while simultaneously using them as drivers for change. Leaders who embrace a strategic viewpoint foresee uncertainty, view challenges as opportunities, and motivate their organizations to seek adaptive strategies that improve long-term competitiveness.

The occurrences of recent years, especially the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the importance of this interaction. Organizations globally encountered unparalleled interruptions in supply chains, workforce arrangements, and market needs. Some buckled under the strain of these challenges, whereas others showed impressive adaptability and strength, adjusting their operations to address shifting demands and discovering new opportunities for expansion. In numerous instances, the distinction rested in the caliber of leadership. Proactive, visionary, and adaptive leaders successfully mobilized resources, communicated well, and built trust among employees, allowing their organizations to navigate the crisis with enhanced stability and agility. These insights strengthen the notion that strategic leadership involves more than just sustaining profits or reaching immediate objectives; it is about fostering a mentality and a corporate culture capable of enduring unpredictability and transforming challenges into chances for innovation.

The theoretical foundations of this research are based on various fields of leadership and organizational studies. Strategic leadership theory highlights the importance of leaders in establishing direction, navigating complexity, and balancing immediate performance with long-term sustainability. Resilience theory, originating in psychology and later broadened to encompass organizational studies, emphasizes the ability of systems to adapt in response to stress and disturbances. At the same time, literature concerning organizational agility has developed due to the swift technological and market shifts of the digital era, emphasizing the capability to foresee, adjust, and respond effectively in changing situations. Incorporating these viewpoints offers a comprehensive insight into how organizations can endure crises and grow from them. This integration addresses a significant void in the literature, as much of the current research has viewed resilience and agility as distinct concepts instead of examining their interconnection and the influence of leadership in connecting them.

From a practical perspective, the significance of this conversation is substantial. Business leaders and policymakers are confronting the fact that crises are now standard occurrences rather than rare, isolated events, evolving into consistent aspects of the global environment. Crises, whether stemming from technological disruption, climate change, or sociopolitical instability, necessitate that organizations cultivate abilities that enable them to operate in a condition of ongoing adaptation. In this scenario, leadership must evolve from rigid command-and-control tactics to more flexible, inclusive, and strategic methods.Leaders need to be skilled at imagining future objectives while also addressing current challenges, encouraging teamwork, and enhancing creativity. By weaving resilience into the organizational structure, leaders empower their teams to stay composed and inventive in stressful situations. Through fostering agility, they enable their organizations to react quickly to change and capitalize on new opportunities even in the midst of turmoil. The integration of resilience and agility, supported by strategic leadership, is therefore not just a competitive edge but also essential for the survival of an organization.

Additionally, the human aspect of crises must not be ignored. Workers frequently face increased stress, uncertainty, and detachment during times of upheaval. Strategic leaders who focus on resilience pay close attention to these human elements, understanding that the foundations of organizational

strength lie in the well-being, adaptability, and dedication of individuals. Through the promotion of trust, transparency, and empowerment, leaders establish psychological safety, which is essential for resilience. Simultaneously, leaders need to make sure that structures and processes are flexible enough to harness the creativity and initiative of their employees. The emphasis on both individuals and systems highlights the comprehensive aspect of strategic leadership and its ability to turn crisis management into a strategic benefit.

Literature Review
Strategic Leadership: Definition and Significance

Strategic leadership is broadly acknowledged as a vital factor influencing organizational success in intricate and unpredictable settings. In contrast to operational leadership, which prioritizes efficiency and immediate tasks, strategic leadership highlights long-term vision, flexibility, and the coordination of resources with organizational goals (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Strategic leaders stand out due to their capability to foresee shifts in the environment, develop creative strategies, and galvanize the organization to attain lasting competitiveness. They emphasize not just establishing direction, but also molding organizational culture and nurturing human capital to navigate uncertainty. During crises, the significance of this type of leadership is especially clear, as leaders must quickly decide while keeping an eye on long-term strategic goals.

Organizational Resilience: Interpretations and Aspects

The idea of resilience originates from ecology and psychology, where it was initially employed to denote the capability of systems or individuals to bounce back from disturbances (Holling, 1973). In organizational research, resilience signifies the ability of companies to withstand disturbances, adjust to challenging situations, and maintain efficient operations even under pressure or chaos (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Resilience is usually framed through three dimensions: absorptive capacity (enduring shocks), adaptive capacity (modifying strategies and operations), and transformative capacity (restructuring systems to generate new opportunities). Resilient organizations

can not only endure crises but also leverage them for learning and development. This kind of resilience is seldom a coincidence; it is intentionally nurtured through leadership strategies, organizational culture, and resource allocation.

Organizational Agility: Factors and Results

Organizational agility has emerged as a key focus in management research because of the growing pace of environmental change. Characterized by the capacity to perceive opportunities and dangers, react quickly, and adjust efficiently, agility is often regarded as a source of enduring competitive advantage (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). Factors that contribute to agility encompass adaptable structures, technological proficiency, staff empowerment, and flexible decision-making systems. The results of agility are substantial: agile organizations excel in innovation, meeting customer demands, and enduring market disruptions. Agility necessitates more than just structural flexibility—it relies on a culture of adaptability, resilience, and leadership that fosters proactive actions. Lacking resilience, agility may end up being temporary or shallow.

Connecting Strategic Leadership to Resilience

Leadership is crucial in fostering resilience in organizations. Research shows that strategic leaders strengthen resilience by building trust, promoting teamwork, and supporting cultures of learning (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). They develop frameworks for managing risk, allocate resources for employee training, and establish adaptable structures that can endure crises. During crises, leaders act as role models, influencing organizational reactions through their behavior and communication. By presenting crises as chances for change instead of merely as dangers, leaders foster assurance and dedication among their teams. Strategic leadership thus serves as a catalyst that fosters resilience in structural, cultural, and human aspects.

Connecting Resilience with Agility

Resilience and agility, while different ideas, are intricately linked. Resilience offers the strength and persistence that organizations require to stay

operational under stress, while agility enables them to react promptly and efficiently to changes. Studies indicate that resilience is the basis for enduring agility (Williams et al., 2017). For instance, entities that bounce back swiftly from interruptions can more effectively adjust their strategies and take advantage of new chances. In the same way, resilience guarantees that agility does not turn into disorderly or temporary responses but stays a deliberate and strategic strength. Therefore, resilience can be seen as a means by which organizations cultivate and maintain agility in times of crisis.

Strategic Guidance, Adaptability, and Flexibility in Crisis Situations

Crisis scenarios enhance the significance of combining leadership, resilience, and adaptability. In situations like natural disasters, pandemics, or economic downturns, leaders must make choices amid intense pressure and unpredictability. Research on organizational reactions during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, emphasizes that companies guided by innovative and flexible leaders were better equipped to sustain operations, assist employees, and adjust business models to address emerging needs (Dirani et al., 2020). These organizations showcased both resilience—by enduring and recovering—and agility—by innovating and adapting. The interaction of leadership, resilience, and agility during crises is thus not merely theoretical but evident in real scenarios, highlighting the importance of examining these concepts collectively.

Research Methodology
Descriptive Results

This research utilizes a **mixed-methods approach** to examine the connection between strategic leadership, organizational resilience, and agility in crisis situations. A combined approach is warranted since it facilitates the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, guaranteeing a comprehensive and detailed analysis. Quantitative techniques offer statistical support for the connections between variables, whereas qualitative perspectives reflect the actual experiences of leaders and staff. The design is both exploratory and explanatory, intending to not only test hypotheses but also reveal how leadership impacts resilience and agility.

Philosophy and Approach to Research

The research is directed by **a pragmatic philosophy**, focusing on practical approaches to resolving intricate organizational issues. Pragmatism suits this research as it recognizes the relationship between theory and practice in leadership and organizational studies. Regarding the research method, the study employs a deductive approach by leveraging established theories of leadership, resilience, and agility to formulate hypotheses. Concurrently, an inductive component exists through qualitative interviews that could uncover new insights that extend beyond the limits of existing theory. This blend guarantees that the research aids in both theoretical development and real-world application.

Demographics and Sampling

This research focuses on **mid- to senior-level** managers and executives in organizations that have recently faced crisis situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain issues, or economic declines. These participants are selected due to their direct engagement in decision-making and strategic actions during emergencies. A purposive sampling technique is used to choose organizations from sectors most impacted by crises, such as healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and services.

The quantitative survey aims for a sample size of around **250–300 participants**, deemed sufficient for structural equation modeling (SEM). The qualitative aspect will involve conducting **15–20 semi-structured interviews** with executives until reaching data saturation. This dual sample method guarantees representativeness while providing in-depth, detailed insights.

Techniques for Gathering Data

Information will be gathered using two supplementary approaches:

Quantitative Survey: A formal questionnaire will be sent out digitally to managers and executives. The survey will feature closed-ended questions grounded in validated measures of strategic leadership, organizational resilience, and agility. Participants will assess their views using a five-

point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Qualitative Interviews: Selected participants will undergo semi-structured interviews to gather detailed insights on the impact of leadership practices on resilience and agility in times of crisis. Interviews will be documented, transcribed, and analyzed thematically to uncover recurring themes and patterns.

The use of both survey and interview methods facilitates triangulation, enhancing the reliability of the results.

Assessment of Variables

This study measures three main constructs:

• **Strategic Leadership:** Assessed through factors like vision formulation, strategic choices, empowerment, and flexibility (adapted from Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

• **Organizational Resilience:** Assessed via absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and transformative capacity (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

• **Organizational Agility:** Assessed through metrics like identifying changes, swift decision-making, adaptable resource distribution, and creativity (Doz & Kosonen, 2010).

Every construct will be measured using validated scales from previous studies, guaranteeing reliability and construct validity. A pilot test of the survey tool will be carried out with 20 participants to improve the questionnaire.

Methods for Analyzing Data

Quantitative data will be examined through structural equation modeling (SEM) utilizing software like AMOS or SmartPLS. SEM is selected because it enables the examination of intricate relationships among various constructs at once, including resilience's mediating function. Reliability will be evaluated with Cronbach's alpha, whereas validity will be analyzed via confirmatory factor analysis. Initial insights will also be gathered through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze qualitative data from interviews, adhering to Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. Transcripts will be analyzed to uncover patterns, which will subsequently be organized into themes like leadership flexibility, employee empowerment, resilience enhancement practices, and agile reactions. Combining qualitative insights with quantitative data will lead to a deeper comprehension of the phenomena being examined.

Moral Considerations

Maintaining ethical integrity is essential when performing research that includes human subjects. Participants will be made aware of the study's objective, their entitlement to exit at any moment, and the privacy of their answers. Consent will be secured before participation, and all information will be anonymized to safeguard personal and organizational identities. Information will be securely stored and utilized exclusively for educational purposes. The research will also adhere to the ethical review standards set by the institution.

Constraints of Methodology

Although the mixed-methods approach offers detailed insights, it also has specific limitations. Surveys depend on self-reported information, which could be affected by the bias of social desirability. Interviews offer depth but may be constrained in generalizability because of smaller sample sizes. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design restricts its ability to comprehensively depict the long-term development of resilience and agility. In spite of these constraints, the selected methodology is effective for investigating the research issue and producing significant results.

Results and Discussion
Descriptive Results

The quantitative survey findings highlighted key demographic and organizational traits of the participants. Among the 280 participants, 65% held mid-level management positions while 35% were senior executives, reflecting a variety of sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and services. Around 70% of organizations experienced major disruptions over the last five years, predominantly from the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain issues, and swift market changes. The descriptive statistics revealed an overall favorable view of leadership effectiveness, as the mean scores for strategic leadership aspects like vision development, adaptability, and empowerment fell between 3.8 and 4.2 on a five-point scale. In a similar manner, indicators of organizational

resilience like absorptive and adaptive capacity received high scores, indicating that participants viewed their organizations as reasonably resilient.

Testing Hypotheses and Structural Framework
The results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) confirmed the expected connections among strategic leadership, organizational resilience, and agility. Strategic leadership exhibited a significant positive impact on organizational resilience ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), showing that leaders who offered a clear vision, enabled employee empowerment, and promoted adaptability substantially strengthened resilience capacities. Organizational resilience demonstrated a notable positive influence on agility ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that resilient organizations were more prepared to react to crises swiftly and adaptively. Moreover, the direct connection between strategic leadership and agility was significant ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.05$), albeit less robust than the mediated connection. These results validate that resilience serves as a mediating factor between strategic leadership and agility, emphasizing its significance as a means by which leadership leads to agile organizational results.

Qualitative Understandings
The thematic analysis of interview data offered detailed insights that enhanced the quantitative results. Leaders consistently highlighted the need for **open communication** in crises, pointing out that trust and employee morale were vital for resilience. Multiple executives emphasized that resilience involves not just enduring disruptions but also fostering opportunities for innovation. For example, a healthcare executive observed that strategic leadership allowed their organization to swiftly implement telemedicine solutions during the pandemic, thus preserving service delivery while venturing into new domains. Another prevalent theme was the **importance of employee empowerment**—leaders who fostered initiative and shared decision-making experienced enhanced organizational responsiveness and agility. These findings bolster the claim that strategic leadership practices directly influence resilience, which subsequently allows for agility in action.

Analysis of Results

The results of this research correspond with and build upon current literature regarding leadership, resilience, and agility. In line with Boal and Hooijberg's (2001) conceptual framework, strategic leadership emerged as a key factor in resilience, with leaders' skills in envisioning the future, handling complexity, and empowering employees significantly related to the organization's adaptive capacity. The important mediating role of resilience supports the perspective of Williams et al. (2017), who claimed that resilience serves as the basis for agility. Resilient organizations are more equipped to rapidly adapt, innovate, and flourish in times of crisis.

Moreover, the findings indicate that although strategic leadership directly impacts agility, its more significant effect is experienced indirectly via resilience. This indicates that agility cannot be attained only through structural flexibility or quick decision-making; it demands a resilient culture and system that facilitate sustainable adaptation. The qualitative results support this, with leaders highlighting trust, empowerment, and innovation as crucial factors connecting resilience to agility. These observations suggest a comprehensive model in which strategic leadership nurtures resilience, and resilience offers the stability needed for ongoing adaptability in unpredictable environments.

Theoretical Consequences
The research adds to the theoretical unification of three important concepts—strategic leadership, resilience, and agility—that have frequently been examined separately. By showcasing resilience as an intermediary factor, it broadens leadership theory and research on organizational agility, providing a more thorough framework for comprehending how organizations react in crisis situations. This integration enhances understanding by emphasizing the interconnectedness of leadership, resilience, and agility instead of viewing them as distinct aspects of organizational performance.

Practical Consequences
For professionals, the results provide practical guidance on how organizations can improve their crisis management skills. Leaders ought to focus on practices that enhance resilience, including promoting psychological safety, developing adaptable processes, and nurturing cultures of

learning. These measures not only assist organizations in withstanding shocks but also allow them to adapt swiftly to evolving situations. Strategic leaders need to balance immediate crisis responses with an overarching vision, making sure that agility is proactive and strategically aligned. Organizations ought to perceive crises not only as dangers but also as chances to reshape business models and achieve competitive edge through innovation.

Constraints and Upcoming Investigations

Though it provides valuable insights, the research has constraints. The cross-sectional approach restricts the capability to detect long-term trends in resilience and agility. The dependence on data provided by individuals might also lead to bias. Future studies might utilize longitudinal approaches to explore how resilience and agility develop over time and through various crises. Comparative research in diverse cultural or industry settings could enhance comprehension of how strategic leadership practices affect resilience and agility in different scenarios. Ultimately, examining further mediating or moderating elements, like organizational culture or digital transformation, may enhance understanding of this complex relationship.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Conclusion

The investigation of strategic leadership and organizational resilience has uncovered their significant impact on developing and maintaining organizational agility, especially in times of crisis. Agility is not merely an operational asset but a versatile ability that allows organizations to foresee, adjust, and flourish amidst uncertainty. Strategic leadership serves as the crucial link that aligns organizational vision with immediate decision-making, guaranteeing that resilience is anticipatory rather than responsive. Leaders who incorporate resilience strategies—like developing an adaptive culture, promoting innovation, and involving stakeholders—prepare their organizations to react swiftly to challenges that include economic recessions and global health crises.

A key discovery is that optimal organizational agility is attained through a combination of resilience and strategic foresight. Strategic leaders function as builders of resilience by incorporating adaptability into frameworks, procedures, and workforce management. Their responsibilities go beyond managing reactions in emergencies; they also equip organizations in advance of disruptions by fostering a culture of flexibility and continuous learning. This forward-thinking approach enables organizations to not only endure crises but also come out more robust, showcasing resilience as a valuable strategy.

The study additionally emphasizes that resilience and agility possess multiple dimensions. Although operational systems need to be flexible, organizational resilience additionally depends on psychological safety, employee involvement, and collaboration across functions. Strategic leaders enhance these aspects by establishing a clear vision, empowering staff, and promoting decentralized decision-making. This distributed leadership model allows for faster reactions to changing conditions and improves the organization's capacity to seize new opportunities in times of crisis.

Additionally, crises highlight the necessity of long-term sustainability in conjunction with short-term adaptability. Strategic leaders who manage urgent actions alongside future-focused planning ensure organizational sustainability while preserving competitiveness. Their capacity to incorporate resilience into strategic planning shows that leadership involves not only managing challenges but also converting difficulties into chances for renewal and development.

Ultimately, the data suggests a transformative model: organizations guided by resilient strategic leaders do not merely endure crises—they adjust, innovate, and flourish. This conclusion indicates that agility is not a mere side effect of leadership but a intentional result of robust strategies that enhance organizational readiness, adaptability, and rejuvenation.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Foster a Strong Organizational Culture

Organizations must focus on fostering environments that emphasize flexibility, continuous learning, and receptiveness to change. A resilient culture promotes psychological safety, enabling employees to express concerns, present ideas, and act proactively in times of crisis. Strategic leaders must exemplify resilience through transparency,

optimism, and accountability, fostering an agile mindset throughout the organization.

2.2 Focus on Leadership Growth

Cultivating leaders with robust strategic skills is crucial for promoting agility. Organizations ought to establish leadership development initiatives that focus on systems thinking, crisis management, and flexible decision-making. Providing leaders with skills to build resilience enables them to manage uncertainty while staying aligned with the organization's long-term objectives.

2.3 Improve Communication and Cooperation

Clear communication is a fundamental element of organizational strength. Leaders must create strong communication systems that guarantee prompt, precise, and clear information exchange in times of crisis. Encouraging collaboration among departments and with external partners is essential, as it enhances the organization's ability to react swiftly and creatively to challenges.

2.4 Incorporate Resilience into Strategic Planning

Resilience must not be seen as an isolated effort but incorporated into the organization's comprehensive strategy. Strategic leaders must integrate risk evaluation, scenario analysis, and crisis drills into the strategic framework. This integration enables organizations to foresee disruptions, reduce risks, and preserve strategic flexibility in unpredictable situations.

2.5 Utilize Technology and Creativity

Digital transformation and technological innovation offer substantial resources for improving organizational agility. Strategic leaders must promote the adoption of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms to enhance the speed and precision of decision-making. Simultaneously, fostering innovation is essential for rethinking processes, products, and services to stay competitive in times of crisis and beyond.

2.6 Enhance Employee Empowerment and Involvement

Resilience and agility increase when employees are given the authority to operate independently within defined strategic limits. Leaders must assign authority, encourage skill enhancement, and establish systems for employee participation in decision-making. Involved employees not only react more efficiently in emergencies but also offer creative ideas that promote organizational rejuvenation.

2.7 Formulate Strategic Alliances

Strategic leaders ought to form partnerships with industry counterparts, governmental bodies, and community stakeholders to strengthen organizational resilience. Collaborations enhance access to resources, expertise, and support networks, allowing organizations to collectively address systemic issues. This type of collaboration improves both flexibility and enduring sustainability.

2.8 Emphasize Ongoing Learning and Feedback

Organizations need to integrate ongoing learning systems that enable them to review past crises, recognize strengths and weaknesses, and adjust as necessary. Leaders must establish systems for gathering lessons learned and integrating feedback into strategic planning. This approach to learning guarantees that resilience develops as a lasting ability instead of a short-term reaction.

3. Final Reflection

The research highlights that agility and resilience are interconnected for success in contemporary organizations, with strategic leadership serving as the essential link between them. By cultivating a strong culture, investing in personnel, utilizing technology, and embedding adaptive strategies, leaders can guarantee that their organizations stay nimble in times of crisis. The way ahead demands not just strategic reactions but also forward-thinking leadership that turns instability into a chance for development. Organizations that adopt these suggestions will not only endure crises but also become more resilient, adaptable, and prepared for the future.

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