

Boosting Teachers' Anti-Bullying Efficacy: Evidence from a Training-Based Intervention in Indonesian Schools

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ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a persistent problem in Indonesian schools despite the existence of national policies and teacher training initiatives, many of which have not been systematically evaluated or demonstrated effectiveness in strengthening teachers' readiness to intervene. Previous programs have tended to emphasize policy compliance or general awareness, leaving a critical gap in empirically tested, skills-based training that enhances teachers' self-efficacy and intervention capacity, particularly within the Indonesia educational context. Addressing this gap, the present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a structured, interactive teacher training program in improving teachers' anti-bullying efficacy. Using a quantitative one-group pretest-posttest design, the study involved 30 elementary school teachers who participated in a two-day training incorporating lectures, case-based discussions, role-play, and guided reflection. Teachers' knowledge, confidence, and perceived behavioral control related to bullying intervention were assessed before and after the training. Paired-sample t-tests analysis revealed a significant improvement in posttest scores compared to pretest scores ($t = -2.576$; $p = .015$), with a moderate effect size ($r = .43$), indicating a meaningful enhancement in teachers' preparedness to address bullying. This findings suggests that even short-term, interactive training can effectively strengthen teachers' anti-bullying efficacy when grounded in behavioral and empowerment-based frameworks. Practically, the study highlights the importance of integrating skills-based training into ongoing teacher professional development to support school-based bullying intervention. At a broader level, the findings contribute empirical evidence from a non-Western context, reinforcing the theoretical relevance of teacher self-efficacy and behavioral intention in bullying intervention and informing policy efforts to develop more effective, evidence-based prevention strategies.

Keywords: anti-bullying efficacy, bullying intervention, Indonesian education, self-efficacy, teacher training

Introduction

Bullying widely recognized as a serious and persistent problem in schools, defined as repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm and involving an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is a common challenge in schools, with an estimated prevalence of 17.9% and 30.9% among school-aged children. The prevalence of bullying has also been found to be increasing in Indonesia. Bullying in schools negatively impacts students' well-being and school performance. For example, adolescents who experience bullying are more likely to report internalizing symptoms (e.g.,

depression and anxiety; Christina, et.al, 2021), suicidal ideation (Van Geel, et al, 2022), and problem behaviors (Pan, et al, 2020), as well as lower perceptions of school connectedness and safety (Leadbeater, et al, 2015). Therefore, bullying poses a serious and pervasive threat to students' mental health, jeopardizes school safety, and requires increased attention from educators in the school context.

Teachers are key determinants of school-wide anti-bullying interventions (Vahedi, et al, 2016). Teachers are responsible for preventing and reducing bullying in the classroom and implementing bullying prevention programs in schools. Teachers play a crucial role in establishing an environment that supports or inhibits bullying (Salmivalli, 2014). For example, in classrooms where students believe their teachers strongly disapprove of bullying, there is a decrease in both self-reported and peer-reported victimization (Saarento, et al, 2015). Teachers who have greater confidence in handling bullying are more likely to intervene in bullying incidents they witness (Fischer, et al, 2019). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs and knowledge about bullying determine their likelihood of recognizing, intervening in, or proactively preventing such situations (Khanolainen, et al., 2021). Unfortunately, some teachers have limited knowledge and skills to intervene during bullying situations, possibly because they do not receive adequate training in their teacher education programs (Lester, et al., 2018; Li & Hesketh, 2021).

Studies also show that teachers who lack sufficient knowledge about bullying or believe that bullying is a normal part of child development are less likely to adopt effective bullying strategies (Hektner & Swenson, 2012; Mishna, et.al., 2020). One study showed that as prospective educators, most prospective teachers lack knowledge about bullying and have difficulty identifying and intervening in bullying situations (Dawes, et.al., 2022). Few prospective teachers understand the characteristics of bullying, and although most prospective teachers report being concerned about bullying, some still believe it is a normal part of growing up (Dawes, et.al., 2022). Teachers' failure to challenge bullying can contribute to a culture of bullying in schools (Hektner & Swenson, 2012; Saarento, et al, 2015).

To prevent bullying in schools, in 2023, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, officially launched Ministerial Regulation Number 46 of 2023 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Violence in Educational Institutions. This regulation was created to firmly address and prevent sexual violence, bullying, discrimination, and intolerance, and to assist educational institutions in handling cases of violence, whether online, psychological, or otherwise, from a victim-centered perspective. However, unfortunately, the majority of schools in Indonesia have not yet fully implemented this Ministerial Regulation, especially in the regions. According to the Commissioner of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), many cases of violence or bullying still occur between students.

Furthermore, bullying prevention from a teacher perspective has also been inadequate. Research (Santi, et.al., 2024) shows that teacher personality characteristics play a crucial role in anticipating and preventing bullying in schools. The Ministry of Education has

issued guidelines and requires the education system to implement proactive strategies to prevent bullying in schools. However, there is little bullying prevention training for educators and/or pre-service teachers.

Professional training and strategies are essential for addressing bullying appropriately and effectively (Huang, et.al., 2018). Training for pre-service teachers is particularly important, as these pre-service teachers “may be more open to change.” Studies conducted in Western countries have shown that anti-bullying training can not only better prepare pre-service teachers for interactions with students but also improve their attitudes toward bullying and willingness to intervene more effectively (Dawes, et.al., 2022). However, there are few published studies evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying training programs for teachers in Indonesia. Therefore, the development and evaluation of bullying prevention training for pre-service teachers in Indonesia is urgently needed. An interview study with 41 Chinese students who experienced bullying revealed that their teachers often failed to recognize and address bullying, or support the victims, wishing their teachers were better prepared (Li & Hesketh, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent need for training programs to educate pre-service teachers on bullying prevention.

Anti-bullying intervention programs to support teachers generally include three components: educating teachers to address and prevent bullying, supporting teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying efforts implemented in the classroom, and providing lessons to promote students' social-emotional competencies (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Chen, et.al., 2011). Teachers are provided with training designed to increase their awareness of bullying by providing information about bullying, how to recognize it, and how to handle bullying cases (Chen, et.al., 2011). However, such training has not always been proven effective for teachers. Therefore, evaluating teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward bullying, as well as their self-efficacy in intervention, should be considered an integral part of the training program. In addition, prospective teachers' social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies may influence the impact of bullying prevention training on their attitudes and beliefs about bullying and their responses to it (Zhu & Wang, 2024). One study among prospective teachers in China showed that emotional empathy played a significant role in their responses to bullying (Huang, et.al., 2018). This is also in line with the results of research conducted by (Salmivalli, 2014), which stated that teachers' ability to develop empathy in students can contribute to preventing students from being involved in bullying situations, either as perpetrators or victims. This study aims to examine how various aspects of prospective teachers' social emotional learning (SEL) competencies influence their anti-bullying self-efficacy and their misconceptions about bullying.

Responding to this research gap, the present study advances the field by evaluating a structured bullying prevention training program designed for Indonesian teachers, integrating bullying contemporary theoretical perspectives on self-efficacy and social-emotional learning (SEL). This study aims: (1) to examine the effectiveness of bullying prevention training in increasing anti-bullying self-efficacy and reducing misconceptions;

and (2) to analyze the extent to which SEL empirical evidence necessary for strengthening teacher preparation and informing national anti-violence policy implementation.

Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effect of a structured anti-bullying training intervention.

a. Instrumentation

Data were collected using a researcher-developed self-report questionnaire grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) and prior studies on teacher's bullying intervention self-efficacy (e.g., Fischer & Bilz, 2019; De Luca & Menesini, 2019). The instrument assessed teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and perceived behavioral control related to bullying prevention, which are conceptually aligned with self-efficacy and Theory of Planned Behavior constructs. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-type items measuring: (1) recognition of bullying cues; (2) beliefs and attitudes toward bullying; and (3) perceived capability to intervene effectively. Content validity was ensured through expert review by three senior psychologists specializing in school-based interventions. Reliability testing from pilot group (n = 15) produced a Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

b. Participants

The population consisted of elementary school teachers from four public schools in Surabaya: (1) SDN Kandangan 2; (2) SDN Kandangan 3; (3) SDN Krembangan I/56; and (4) SDN Benowo 1 Surabaya. A total of 30 teachers participated in the study using convenience sampling based on school availability and voluntary participation. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

c. Procedure and Data Analysis

The intervention consisted of two-day training workshop comprising seven structured sessions lasting 1.5 hours each. The sessions included lectures, case discussions, role-play simulations, and reflective activities designed to enhance teachers' conceptual understanding and applied skills in handling bullying cases. A pretest was administered immediately before the first session, and a post-test was conducted at the conclusion of the training to measure changes in knowledge and self-efficacy. The explanations of the sessions are as follows:

1. In the first session, the trainers provided teachers with a definition of bullying and engaged them in a discussion about various risk and protective factors at the individual, family, school, community, and societal/cultural levels for bullying and victimization, as well as the importance of teacher intervention and a positive school climate in preventing bullying.

2. In the second session, teachers learned about cyberbullying. In this session, teachers learned about the types of cyberbullying and how to recognize signs of cyberbullying in students.
3. In the third session, teachers learned about the elements commonly found in bullying behavior: bystanders, bullies, and victims. Teachers learned about the roles and dynamics of these elements. Teachers were introduced to the signs and symptoms of bullying and victimization. This can help teachers better identify bullying and provide evidence of the negative impacts of bullying on all involved.
4. In the fourth session, teachers learn about personality characteristics that need to be developed to increase their confidence and competence in handling bullying.
5. In the fifth session, teachers are taught how to respond to bullying incidents and what to do. Teachers are also encouraged to share their own experiences dealing with bullying in their respective schools.
6. In the sixth session, teachers learn about bullying intervention methods. This session will review various bullying prevention programs implemented by schools. It will also discuss important components of successful school bullying prevention programs, such as increased supervision, parental involvement, longer intervention duration and intensity, and providing support for school staff.
7. In the seventh session, teachers are taught how to build collaboration with parents, both parents of victims and perpetrators. In this regard, it is important for teachers to understand that bullying prevention must be carried out in an integrated manner, so teachers must be able to approach and collaborate with parents.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the difference scores (posttest – pretest) was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine whether a parametric test was appropriate. Because the normality assumption was met ($p > .05$), the paired-sample t-test was used to compare pretest and posttest scores. Descriptive statistic, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize participant performance. Effect size (r) was computed to assess the magnitude of change resulting from the training.

d. Validity and Reliability Assurance

To ensure procedural validity, training materials followed a standardized module delivered consistently. Triangulation of learning activities (lecture, case analysis, and roleplay) was used to strengthen construct exposure. Measurement validity was supported through expert evaluation, while reliability was addressed through internal consistency testing and standardized scoring procedures.

Results

Descriptive statistic indicated an increase in teachers' scores following the training intervention. As presented in Table 1, the pre-test showed a mean score of 21.17 (SD = 1.91), while the posttest mean increased to 22.40 (SD =2.91), suggesting a positive directional change in participants' knowledge and self-efficacy regarding bullying intervention.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Measurement	Mean	SD
Pretest	21.17	1.91
Posttest	22.40	2.91

Prior to hypothesis testing, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted to examine whether the difference scores met the assumption for parametric analysis. The results indicated the data met the normality criteria ($p>0.05$), allowing the use of a paired-sample t-test.

The results of the paired-sample t-test are presented in Table 2. The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in posttest scores compared with pretest scores, $t = -2.576$; $p = .015$. The mean difference between scores was -1.23 (SD = 2.62), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -2.21 to -0.25 , indicates that participants experienced measurable gains after completing the training.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results

Statistic	Value
Mean Difference	-1.23
SD Difference	2.62
t	-2.576
p-value	.015
95% CI	[-2.21, -0.25]
Effect Size (r)	.43

The effect size analysis revealed a moderate practical impact of the training intervention ($r = .43$), indicating that the program contributed meaningfully to enhancing teachers' preparedness to identify and respond to bullying. In addition, a moderate positive correlation was found between pretest and posttest scores ($r = .47$; $p = .009$), suggesting that teachers with higher initial scores tended to maintain or further improve their performance following the training. To further illustrate the pattern of improvement observed in the statistical analysis, a visual comparison of teachers' pretest and post-test mean scores is presented in Figure 1.

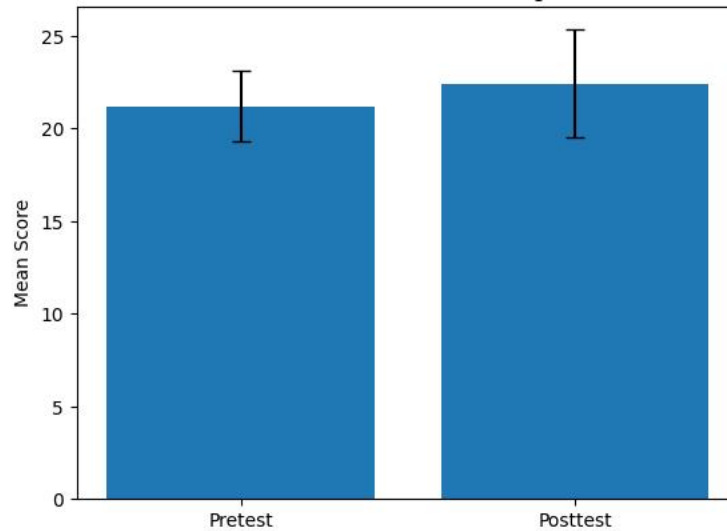


Figure 1. Comparison of Teachers Anti-Bullying Self Efficacy Scores Before and After Training

Overall, the statistical results show a clear and significant improvement from pretest to posttest, supporting the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing teachers' preparedness to identify and respond bullying.

Discussions

The result of this study demonstrate that the training-based intervention was effective in enhancing teachers' knowledge, awareness, and self-efficacy in identifying and responding to bullying cases. The significant improvement in posttest scores, along with a moderate effect size, indicate that the intervention brought about meaningful changes in participants' preparedness to recognize and address bullying behaviors. These findings provide clear answers to the research questions posed in the introduction, confirming that structured, interactive training can strengthen teachers' anti-bullying capacities and promote more assertive and informed responses to bullying incidents in school settings.

The improvement in scores aligns with the previous research showing that teacher training is a critical component of effective bullying prevention efforts. Studies within the past decade have consistently reported that teachers who receives systematic training demonstrate greater accuracy in identifying bullying, stronger intervention intentions, and better classroom management strategies (De Luca & Menesini, 2019; Huang & Cornell, 2019). A meta-analysis by Gaffney et al. (2019) further support this finding, noting that teacher-focused interventions can reduce bullying prevalence by approximately 20%. The current study reinforces this evidence by demonstrating that even a short-duration intervention, when designed with active learning components, can produce measurable changes in teacher competencies.

The theoretical explanations for these outcomes can be understood through multiple complementary frameworks. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986), participants not only learned new knowledge but also observed and practical

prosocial strategies through modelling, role-play, dan feedback. This experiential learning environment enabled them to internalize behavioral scripts for managing bullying. Teachers, as salient role models in the school environment, play a pivotal role in shaping classroom norms. When they consistently model empathy, assertiveness, and respectful communication, students are more likely to adopt similar prosocial behaviors. This is consistent with findings showing that children's aggressiveness or defending behaviors are often influenced by the behaviors they observe from adults and peers in their environment (Gini, Pozzoli, & Himmel, 2014; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). Thus, the improvement in posttest scores reflects not only an increase in knowledge but also the internalization of behavioral models that can influence broader classroom dynamics.

The theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2011) provides an additional explanatory lens. According to TPB, behavioral intentions are driven by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The training appears to have positively influenced all three components. Participants' attitudes toward intervening in bullying became more favorable as they gained a clearer understanding of bullying mechanism and consequences. Group discussion and shared reflections during training likely contributed to shifts in subjective norms, where participants recognized that proactive intervention is socially supported and professionally expected. Perceive behavioral control increased as participants strategies for managing bullying, thereby enhancing their confidence in performing such behaviors. This aligns with previous research showing that TPB-based interventions can significantly strengthen intervention intentions among educators (DeSmet et al., 2016).

Empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000) also helps explain the observed improvements. Psychological empowerment involves increased self-efficacy, perceived control, and meaningful engagement in social action. Participants in this study not only gained new skills also experienced increased confidence in applying them, which is essential for sustained behavioral change. The interactive nature of the training particularly activities requiring problem-solving, role-play, and collaborative reflection, likely contributed to greater feelings of competence and agency. This is consistent with findings that empowerment-oriented interventions can enhance individuals' capacity to navigate challenging interpersonal situations and support positive school climates (De Luca & Menesini, 2019). The combined influence of skills acquisition, modelling, social support, and psychological empowerment provides a comprehensive explanation for the statistically significant improvements observed in the posttest.

The improvement in teachers' knowledge, confidence, and intention to intervene can also be interpreted through the integrated lens of Social Learning Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Empowerment Theory, which together provide a comprehensive explanation for how the intervention generated behavioral and cognitive change. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the modelling and role-play activities embedded in the training allowed teachers to observe, rehearse, and internalize effective behavioral scripts for responding to bullying. These observational learning processes likely strengthened their self-efficacy and prepared them to enact similar strategies in real situations.

Complementing this, Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) suggest that the training influenced key determinants of behavioral intention: teachers' attitudes toward intervening became more favorable as they gained knowledge of the consequences of bullying; subjective norms were reinforced through collaborative discussion where participants collectively affirmed the professional expectation to intervene; and perceived behavioral control was enhanced as teachers practiced concrete strategies. From an Empowerment perspective (Zimmerman, 2000), the training increased teachers' sense of personal agency and psychological readiness to act by fostering critical awareness, competence, and motivation. This combination of strengthened self-efficacy, clearer intervention intentions, and heightened empowerment provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding why significant posttest improvements emerged despite the relatively short duration of the training.

Beyond changes in knowledge and attitudes, the findings of this study can also be interpreted through the lens of teacher professional agency, which emphasizes teachers' capacity to act intentionally, exercise professional judgement, and take responsibility within their institutional context. Recent studies highlight that professional agency is particularly critical in education systems characterized by hierarchical structures and strong policy demands, where teachers are often positioned as implementers rather than decision-makers (Lau et.al., 2024). The observed increase in teachers' self-efficacy and perceived behavioral control suggests that the training intervention functioned not only as a skill-building program, but also as a mechanism for strengthening teachers' sense of agency in responding to bullying situations. By engaging participants in reflective discussions, case analysis, and role-play simulations, the training provided a supportive space for rehearsing professional decision-making, thereby enhancing teacher's readiness to act proactively. From this perspective, anti-bullying training can be understood as an important pathway for empowering teachers as active agents in fostering safe and supportive school environments.

In this sense, the activation of teacher professional agency does not necessarily require long-term or intensive interventions. Recent studies have increasingly emphasized that short-term, skills-focused training programs can yield meaningful improvements in teacher efficacy, particularly when they incorporate active learning strategies and contextualized case discussions (Zhu & Wang, 2024; Dawes et.al., 2022). In post-pandemic educational contexts, teachers are expected to respond to increasingly complex social challenges, including bullying and cyberbullying, despite limited formal preparation. The present findings align with this emerging body of research by demonstrating that even brief, theory-driven interventions can strengthen teachers' readiness to intervene, especially in settings where systematic professional development remains limited.

The findings of this study can be further interpreted using the Dublin Anti-Bullying Self- Efficacy Model (O'Moore, 2014), which conceptualizes teachers' confidence in addressing bullying as a multidimensional construct shaped by knowledge, mastery experiences, emotional readiness, and perceived support within the school context. The significant increase in posttest scores suggests that the training intervention strengthened

several of these key components simultaneously. Through structured input on bullying characteristics and intervention strategies, teachers' conceptual understanding was enhanced, while role-play and case-based discussion provided opportunities for mastery experiences in safe learning environment. These experiential activities may have reduced anxiety and uncertainty associated with handling bullying cases, thereby improving emotional readiness to intervene. From this perspective, the training not only increased general self-efficacy, but also specifically enhanced teachers' anti-bullying self-efficacy as defined within the Dublin model. This framework offers more nuanced explanation of how targeted, interactive training can translate into greater confidence and preparedness to respond to bullying in real school settings.

In addition, a recent large-scale study conducted with teachers in Jordan found that self-efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward school bullying and their actual handling of bullying situations, indicating that positive attitudes alone may not translate into intervention behavior without sufficient confidence in one's capabilities to act (Shahrour et.al., 2025). Collectively, these findings underscore the central role of teacher self-efficacy as a key mechanism through which training interventions can translate into meaningful improvements in bullying prevention practices.

Despite the promising results, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the absence of a control group restricts the ability to confidently attribute score improvements solely to the intervention, as other external factors may have influenced participant responses. Second, the relatively small and homogeneous sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Third, data were collected only immediately after the intervention, preventing assessment of long-term retention or sustained behavioral change. Finally, the study did not explore moderating variables such as school climate, teacher characteristics, or differing levels of institutional support, all of which may influence training outcomes. Future research should address these limitations by employing controlled experimental designs involving larger and more diverse samples, and including longitudinal follow-ups to evaluate the persistence of training effects. In addition, qualitative data, such as interview or classroom observations could enrich understanding of how teachers implement their learning in practice. Expanding the training to include parents and school leaders may also enhance collective commitment to anti-bullying norms.

Taken together, these findings contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating that structured anti-bullying training can effectively enhance teacher competencies, even when implemented within a relatively short timeframe and in the context of Indonesian schools. Overall, the results add to a growing body of evidence supporting teacher-centered interactive, and empowerment-based training as an effective strategy for reducing bullying in schools and improving teacher capacity to create safe and supportive learning environments. This contribution is particularly important given that many schools continue to face challenges in implementing anti-bullying policies due to limited opportunities for systematic teacher training. The findings therefore support the integration of regular,

structured professional development on bullying prevention into broader school capacity-building strategies and educational policy initiatives.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that structured and interactive anti-bullying training can meaningfully enhance teachers' knowledge, awareness, and self-efficacy in recognizing and responding to bullying, suggesting that teacher-centered interventions play a pivotal role in promoting safer and more supportive school environments. By strengthening perceived behavioral control, shaping subjective norms, and fostering psychological empowerment, the intervention demonstrated measurable gains aligned with contemporary theories of behavior change. These findings imply that schools should adopt continuous, skills-based professional development and embed active learning strategies such as role-play and case-based dialogue into routine teacher training. At the policy level, the evidence supports the integration of anti-bullying competencies into national professional development frameworks and highlights the need for systematic, scalable, and well-monitored training programs. Although further research with larger samples, comparison groups, and longitudinal follow-up is required this study reinforces the importance of multi-level efforts that combine teacher capacity building with supportive institutional policies to sustain effective bullying prevention initiatives.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya and Universitas Negeri Surabaya for their support and collaboration throughout the implementation of this research. This study was made possible through the collective contributions of faculty members, school partners, and participants who generously dedicated their time and insights. The author also extend their appreciation to the elementary schools involved for granting access and facilitating the data collection process. Their cooperation and commitment were invaluable to the success of this study.

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