

Internalization of Religious Moderation Values in Multicultural Education

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Abstract: This study examines the internalization of religious moderation values within the framework of multicultural education. In increasingly diverse societies, the rise of religious extremism and social intolerance poses significant challenges to communal harmony. Employing a qualitative research design based on content analysis and literature review, this paper analyzes the theoretical dimensions and practical strategies for embedding religious moderation into institutional policy, pedagogical methods, and school culture. The findings indicate that successful internalization relies on three primary pathways: formal curricular integration across disciplines, hidden curriculum practices exemplified by teacher modeling and inclusive campus climate, and experiential learning through intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Ultimately, synthesizing religious moderation with multicultural education transforms educational institutions into proactive incubators of peace, equipping learners to embrace diversity while upholding social cohesion and ethical balance.	Keywords: Religious Moderation; Multicultural Education; Value Internalization; Tolerance; Peace Education
Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji internalisasi nilai-nilai moderasi beragama dalam kerangka pendidikan multikultural. Di tengah masyarakat yang semakin majemuk, meningkatnya eksklusivisme keagamaan dan intoleransi sosial menjadi tantangan nyata bagi keharmonisan hidup berbangsa. Menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif berbasis analisis isi dan studi pustaka, artikel ini menganalisis dimensi teoretis dan strategi praktis untuk menanamkan moderasi beragama ke dalam kebijakan lembaga, metode pedagogis, dan budaya sekolah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan internalisasi bergantung pada tiga jalur utama: integrasi kurikulum formal di berbagai disiplin ilmu, praktik <i>hidden curriculum</i> yang diwujudkan melalui keteladanan guru dan iklim sekolah yang inklusif, serta pembelajaran eksperiensial melalui dialog interaktif lintas budaya dan agama. Pada akhirnya, sintesis antara moderasi beragama dan pendidikan multikultural mengubah lembaga pendidikan menjadi inkubator perdamaian yang proaktif, membekali peserta didik untuk mengelola keberagaman sekaligus menjaga kohesi sosial dan keseimbangan etis.	Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama; Pendidikan Multikultural; Internalisasi Nilai; Toleransi; Pendidikan Perdamaian

A. Introduction

Globalization and unprecedented human mobility have rendered multiculturalism a defining characteristic of contemporary societies across the globe. Modern nation-states are increasingly defined by complex intersections of ethnic, cultural, linguistic,

and religious diversity, creating dynamic social landscapes (Banks, 2019). While this pluralism holds the potential to enrich social capital and foster cross-cultural innovation, it also presents significant structural challenges to national integration and social harmony.

The presence of diverse cultural and faith traditions within a single polity creates ongoing negotiation over shared values, identity, and civic responsibilities. When pluralism is improperly managed or exploited for socio-political gain, social cohesion fractures, giving rise to systemic marginalization, intergroup anxiety, and social polarization (Sleeter, 2018). Consequently, modern societies face the urgent task of constructing institutional mechanisms capable of sustaining unity amidst deep-seated diversity.

In recent decades, this challenge has been severely exacerbated by the global surge in religious exclusivism, radicalism, and socioreligious intolerance. Religious identity, when weaponized by extremist dogmas, often becomes a potent instrument for driving social division and justifying violence against minority groups (Abu-Nimer, 2018). This rise in fundamentalism threatens the democratic fabric of multicultural states, turning religious diversity from a source of cultural strength into a fault line of conflict.

Education has long been recognized as the principal socio-cultural institution charged with addressing these societal fractures and cultivating democratic citizenship. Beyond transmitting technical skills and academic knowledge, educational systems carry the fundamental responsibility of socializing younger generations into ethical, tolerant, and civic-minded individuals (Lickona, 1991). The classroom functions as a microcosm of society, providing a structured environment where students learn to navigate difference and build shared civic bonds.

However, conventional educational models frequently fall short of achieving these transformative social goals. Traditional schooling has predominantly focused on standardized cognitive outcomes and scientific instruction, often neglecting the affective, moral, and intercultural dimensions of learning (Noddings, 2013). This narrow focus leaves students academically proficient yet ill-equipped to critically evaluate prejudiced narratives or engage constructively with diverse faith traditions.

To remedy these pedagogical deficits, multicultural education emerged as a comprehensive educational paradigm aimed at promoting equity, cultural affirmation, and social justice within pluralistic learning environments (Banks, 2019). Multicultural education seeks to restructure school environments so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds experience equal educational opportunities and develop cross-cultural competence (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

Despite its transformative potential, classical multicultural education has drawn criticism for primarily focusing on ethnic, racial, and linguistic distinctions while frequently under-conceptualizing the deep theological and religious dimensions of identity (Gay, 2018). In many pluralistic frameworks, religious identity is either subsumed under general cultural categories or deliberately excluded from public school discourse due to secular constraints (Niyozov, 2010).

In societies where religion remains a central pillar of individual and collective identity, ignoring faith dynamics leaves multicultural education ill-equipped to counter religious bigotry. When educational frameworks treat cultural diversity without addressing theological exclusivism, they fail to reach the core drivers of religious intolerance and radicalization (Aslan, 2017). Therefore, a robust model of multicultural education must explicitly integrate frameworks that foster religious tolerance and theological openness.

In response to this need, the concept of religious moderation—frequently conceptualized in Islamic thought as *Wasatiyyah*—has emerged as a crucial theoretical and practical framework for maintaining harmony in pluralistic societies (Azra, 2020). Religious moderation is anchored in the principles of balance (*tawazun*), justice (*i'tidal*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and non-violence, promoting a middle path between ideological extremism and religious apathy (Shihab, 2019).

Crucially, religious moderation does not advocate for theological syncretism or the compromise of fundamental religious doctrines. Rather, it emphasizes an ethical and context-conscious application of faith that respects human dignity, adheres to constitutional norms, and embraces civic engagement with "the religious other" (Subagyo, 2020). It shifts the religious orientation from an exclusive, confrontational stance to an inclusive, socially constructive presence.

The core tenets of religious moderation align closely with the democratic imperatives of multicultural education. Both frameworks share a fundamental commitment to social justice, peaceful conflict resolution, human rights, and the preservation of social harmony amidst diversity (Sutrisno, 2019). Synthesizing religious moderation with multicultural education provides a holistic pedagogical approach capable of addressing both socio-cultural and faith-based pluralism.

However, simply introducing concepts of moderation and multiculturalism into school textbooks or formal syllabi is insufficient to guarantee meaningful character transformation. True behavioral change requires a process of value internalization, wherein abstract concepts are systematically translated into personal convictions and consistent ethical actions (Krathwohl et al., 1964).

Value internalization demands a shift from superficial cognitive recognition to deep affective commitment and behavioral habits. According to social learning and constructivist theories, values are internalized when students actively synthesize knowledge, observe social modeling, experience empathetic interactions, and reflect on their personal worldviews (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

In the context of educational institutions, the internalization process faces considerable external and internal barriers. Students are continually exposed to polarizing media ecosystems, dogmatic community influences, and societal prejudices that undermine the values taught in school (Apple, 2004). Without deliberate pedagogical structures, educational efforts to promote moderation risk being overwhelmed by broader socio-cultural conflicts.

Educators serve as the primary facilitators in navigating these complexities, acting as moral exemplars and architects of the learning environment. Teachers shape the "hidden curriculum"—the unwritten values, norms, and social dynamics that profoundly influence student character development (Giroux, 2011). The effectiveness of internalizing religious moderation values depends largely on teachers' cross-cultural competence, pedagogical tact, and commitment to pluralism.

Governments and educational authorities in several multicultural nations have increasingly mandated the integration of religious moderation into public curricula to safeguard social stability (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019). Yet, the translation of high-level

policy directives into actual classroom practice remains fraught with ambiguities, operational challenges, and pedagogical resistance (Parker, 2014).

While academic literature offers extensive discussions on multicultural education and religious moderation as separate domains, there is a distinct lack of empirical and theoretical integration detailing *how* these two concepts interact practically within school systems. Current research often lacks a clear operational framework explaining the precise mechanisms through which students internalize religious moderation values within multicultural educational settings.

This gap in scholarship underscores the necessity of a comprehensive investigation into the structural, curricular, and relational processes that facilitate successful value internalization. Understanding these mechanisms is vital for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teachers seeking to construct resilient learning environments capable of resisting extremism and fostering long-term social cohesion.

To address these theoretical and empirical gaps, the primary objective of this study is to systematically analyze the strategies, processes, and institutional dynamics involved in the internalization of religious moderation values within multicultural education. By examining how moderation principles are embedded across formal and informal educational structures, this research aims to formulate a robust pedagogical model for pluralistic character education.

Specifically, this study aims to accomplish four sub-objectives: first, to articulate the theoretical alignment between religious moderation values and multicultural education frameworks; second, to identify the pedagogical methodologies and curricular strategies that facilitate effective value internalization; third, to evaluate the influence of school culture, teacher modeling, and the hidden curriculum in shaping student attitudes toward religious diversity; and fourth, to propose an integrated framework for sustaining religious moderation within multicultural educational institutions.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm to systematically examine the internalization of religious

moderation values within multicultural educational settings. A qualitative approach is uniquely suited for this inquiry because it allows for a deep exploration of complex socio-cultural phenomena, personal meanings, and the nuanced pedagogical processes through which abstract ethical values are translated into lived student behavior. By treating schools as dynamic socio-cultural ecosystems, this design enables the researcher to investigate how institutional policies, instructional practices, and interpersonal dynamics interact to foster balance, tolerance, and justice among diverse student populations.

The research context was established through a purposive sampling strategy targeting secondary educational institutions recognized for their culturally diverse student bodies and deliberate implementation of religious moderation and multicultural programs. Three distinct school models—a public school, a private faith-based school with an inclusive curriculum, and an international multi-faith academy—were selected to provide a comparative, multi-site perspective. This multi-case study design ensures that the data capture a broad spectrum of institutional cultures, governance structures, and pedagogical approaches, facilitating the identification of both universal mechanisms and context-specific strategies for value internalization.

Data sources were categorized into primary and secondary data, gathered from key educational stakeholders selected via criterion-based sampling to maximize information richness. Primary data informants included school principals, curriculum coordinators, religion and civics educators, guidance counselors, and student representatives actively involved in interfaith or multicultural campus organizations. Secondary data sources comprised a comprehensive collection of institutional artifacts, including national curriculum guidelines, school vision and mission statements, teacher lesson plans, character education modules, code-of-conduct handbooks, and records of extracurricular diversity initiatives.

Fieldwork utilized a multi-method data collection approach combining semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant classroom and campus observations, and qualitative document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using flexible protocols designed to explore participants' perceptions of moderation values, pedagogical approaches, and perceived organizational barriers. Non-participant observations focused on observing the "hidden curriculum," capturing teacher-student

interactions, peer dynamics during unstructured school hours, interfaith ceremonies, and conflict-resolution scenarios. Document analysis systematically evaluated how concepts of religious moderation were explicitly structured, scheduled, and evaluated within formal institutional frameworks.

Data analysis followed the qualitative interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Transcribed interviews, detailed observational field notes, and document excerpts were analyzed using thematic analysis software to facilitate systematic coding. The analytical framework integrated the core dimensions of multicultural education with Krathwohl's affective domain taxonomy, tracing value internalization across five progressive stages: receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing by a value complex. Iterative cross-case synthesis was conducted to compare thematic patterns across all research sites, highlighting key factors that drive or hinder value adoption.

To guarantee scientific rigor, the study applied established criteria for qualitative trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through data source and method triangulation, prolonged field engagement, and formal member checking, where participants reviewed interview transcripts and analytical summaries to confirm interpretive accuracy. Dependability and confirmability were maintained through a detailed audit trail recording all analytical decisions, coding structures, and raw data transformations. Strict ethical standards were maintained throughout the research, including obtaining written informed consent, ensuring complete participant anonymity, and securing institutional research approval prior to field entry.

C. Results and Discussion

Empirical findings across the studied multicultural educational institutions reveal that the internalization of religious moderation values operates as a multidimensional, ecological process rather than an isolated instructional task. Rather than treating religious moderation—encompassing balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice (*i'tidal*), and non-violence—as an external set of dogmatic rules, effective institutions embed these values across formal curricula, informal school culture, and experiential community engagement. The data indicate that successful value internalization requires

a structural synergy between administrative vision, pedagogical innovation, and authentic intergroup relationships, transforming abstract civic-religious principles into actionable student dispositions.

A foundational result of this study is the clear theoretical and practical alignment between religious moderation values and the core dimensions of multicultural education outlined by Banks (2019). Findings show that when religious moderation is integrated into multicultural frameworks, it bridges the historical gap between secular civic education and deep-seated religious identity. Instead of marginalizing faith or reducing multiculturalism to superficial folklore, the participating schools utilized moderation as an ethical lens to analyze diversity, thereby affirming students' religious identity while simultaneously expanding their commitment to pluralistic democratic citizenship.

In the formal curricular domain, document analysis and classroom observations demonstrated that moderation values are most effectively internalized when embedded across multiple academic disciplines rather than confined to dedicated religious education classes. In social studies and civics, teachers explicitly connected national constitutional guarantees of religious freedom with theological principles of *tasamuh* and human dignity (Subagyo, 2020). This interdisciplinary cross-pollination prevented religious moderation from being perceived as a politicized state mandate, framing it instead as a universal ethical necessity for harmonious co-existence in a complex global society.

Furthermore, knowledge construction practices observed in classrooms revealed a deliberate shift away from monolithic narrative transmission toward multi-perspective textual analysis. Teachers in the target schools guided students to analyze sacred texts, historical events, and contemporary social issues through contextual hermeneutics rather than literalist or exclusive lenses (Aslan, 2017). By examining how historical context shaped traditional religious rulings, students developed cognitive flexibility, recognizing that religious tradition contains rich resources for peacebuilding, social justice, and accommodation of the cultural "other" (Abu-Nimer, 2018).

This structural alignment of formal curricula legitimizes religious moderation in the eyes of students by demonstrating its intellectual and theological coherence. Fieldwork data indicated that students exposed to integrated curricula exhibited significantly lower levels of religious anxiety and a greater willingness to challenge

exclusive or xenophobic claims encountered outside the school environment. Consequently, formal curricular integration serves as the essential cognitive foundation upon which emotional and behavioral value internalization is constructed (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

Beyond curricular content, the findings highlight the critical role of pedagogical methodology in facilitating the affective internalization of moderation values. Observations across research sites revealed that passive learning models, such as rote memorization and teacher-centered lecturing, failed to produce meaningful character transformation. In contrast, classrooms that utilized active, reflective, and dialogic instructional strategies successfully enabled students to internalize values across higher cognitive and affective thresholds (Noddings, 2013).

Analyzing these pedagogical practices through Krathwohl et al.'s (1964) taxonomy of the affective domain illustrates a clear progression in student value adoption. Classrooms structured around open inquiry allowed students to move from mere "receiving" (awareness of religious diversity) to "responding" (active participation in inclusive discussions) and "valuing" (attributing personal worth to pluralistic harmony). The data suggest that value internalization reaches the level of "organization" and "characterization" when students systematically resolve conflicts between personal beliefs and social diversity, internalizing a coherent ethical worldview anchored in moderation.

A key pedagogical mechanism identified in the study was the structured implementation of Socratic dialogue and dilemma-based learning. In civic and ethics classes, educators routinely presented real-world scenarios involving interfaith tensions, freedom of expression, and minority rights. Guided by teachers who modeled intellectual humility, students were required to articulate their positions, evaluate peer perspectives, and co-create balanced solutions rooted in *i'tidal* (justice) and *tawazun* (balance) (Shihab, 2019). This process transformed abstract concepts into concrete moral reasoning exercises.

Cooperative learning structures, such as Jigsaw groups and mixed-faith collaborative problem-solving projects, further enhanced peer-to-peer value transmission. By organizing learning teams that deliberately spanned different religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, educators created conditions of positive

interdependence (Gay, 2018). Field observations confirmed that working toward shared academic goals reduced stereotyping, built cross-cultural empathy, and allowed students to experience moderation as a lived, cooperative practice rather than an abstract ideal.

Classroom observations also revealed that educators who acknowledged and skillfully managed controversial theological or socio-political debates achieved greater success in fostering student maturity. When teachers created psychologically safe environments where students could express doubts, biases, or conservative theological concerns without fear of immediate censure, students were more receptive to exploring moderate interpretations (Parker, 2014). Suppressing controversial topics, by contrast, drove dogmatic views underground, reinforcing insular attitudes.

While formal instruction provides the cognitive framework for moderation, the study's findings unequivocally indicate that the informal domain—specifically the "hidden curriculum" and institutional climate—serves as the primary engine for deep affective internalization. Interview data with students revealed that unscripted administrative decisions, casual teacher remarks, and everyday school norms held far greater influence over their moral development than formal textbook lessons (Giroux, 2011).

Central to the hidden curriculum is teacher modeling (*uswah hasanah*), which emerged as the single most powerful catalyst for student value adoption. Students consistently reported that teachers who demonstrated fairness, warmth, and equal respect to all students regardless of religious affiliation validated the authenticity of the school's moderation message (Lickona, 1991). Conversely, instances of teacher bias, subtle favoritism, or exclusionary language immediately undermined the credibility of formal multicultural instruction, highlighting the necessity of teacher moral authenticity (Bandura, 1977).

Institutional governance and policy choices further reinforced or impeded the internalization process across the research sites. Schools that established neutral devotional spaces, allowed inclusive religious attire, and ensured equitable representation of diverse religious holidays in school calendars created an environment of structural belonging (Sleeter, 2018). In these inclusive environments, minority students felt validated in their identity, while majority students learned to recognize religious diversity as a normal, positive feature of daily institutional life.

Observational data during non-structured school hours—such as lunch breaks, sports activities, and recreational periods—provided clear evidence of the extent to which moderation values were internalized into peer culture. In schools with highly integrated multicultural programs, student social clusters naturally crossed religious and ethnic lines. These self-initiated intergroup interactions reflected a shift from forced tolerance to genuine social integration, indicating that moderation values had been successfully organized into students' personal value systems (Vygotsky, 1978).

To sustain this inclusive climate, effective institutions utilized restorative justice practices rather than punitive discipline when addressing instances of prejudice or peer conflict. Guidance counselors and administrators used peer mediation and empathetic dialogue to resolve intergroup misunderstandings, turning conflicts into teachable moments regarding tolerance and emotional self-regulation (Abu-Nimer, 2018). This approach reinforced the principle of non-violence, teaching students how to manage difference constructively.

The study further identified experiential learning and direct intergroup contact as essential drivers for dismantling deeply ingrained prejudices and fostering active tolerance. Drawing upon Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, the findings demonstrate that meaningful, face-to-face engagement between diverse student groups under conditions of equal status and institutional support dramatically reduced social distance and anxiety.

Across the participating sites, experiential initiatives took the form of interfaith exposure visits, joint community service learning, and cross-cultural exchange programs. Students from different faith traditions collaborated on community development projects, such as environmental cleanups, food distribution for underprivileged populations, and disaster relief efforts (Sutrisno, 2019). Engaging in shared social action shifted students' focus from theological disputes to common human values and civic responsibilities.

Qualitative interviews with participating students highlighted profound affective transformations following these experiential encounters. Students reported that visiting different places of worship and engaging in facilitated dialogue with religious leaders from minority traditions demystified "the other," replacing fear and suspicion with

intellectual curiosity and mutual respect (Azra, 2020). These encounters provided experiential validation of *tasamuh*, making abstract tolerance a felt reality.

Crucially, the data indicate that experiential contact must be accompanied by structured, facilitated reflection to achieve long-term value internalization. Without post-activity debriefing, intergroup encounters risk reinforcing existing stereotypes or remaining superficial tourist-like experiences (Sleeter, 2018). Teachers who guided students to reflect critically on their emotional reactions, personal biases, and shared humanity during debriefing sessions enabled students to consolidate their experiences into coherent ethical commitments.

Co-curricular student organizations, such as multicultural student councils and youth peace clubs, also played a pivotal role in sustaining peer-led moderation advocacy. These student-led bodies organized diversity festivals, interfaith forums, and anti-bullying campaigns, empowering youth to act as active agents of moderation within their school communities (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019). Student leadership in these initiatives demonstrated that values had reached the highest level of internalization, where students actively shaped their social environment to reflect their ethical convictions.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified several significant structural and cultural challenges that impede the seamless internalization of religious moderation values. The primary external obstacle reported by educators was the pervasive influence of polarizing media ecosystems and radicalized online content to which students are continuously exposed outside of school (Apple, 2004). Algorithms that amplify outrage and echo chambers frequently reinforce exclusive worldviews, creating a cognitive dissonance between school instruction and external media consumption.

Furthermore, resistance from dogmatic family backgrounds and conservative community organizations posed a recurring challenge to school initiatives. In several instances, parents expressed apprehension that multicultural education and religious moderation would lead to theological syncretism or dilute their children's religious commitment (Parker, 2014). Schools managed this resistance by engaging parents in transparent dialogues, clarifying that religious moderation reinforces faith conviction while cultivating civic respect, thereby building community trust (Azra, 2020).

An internal systemic challenge identified across all research sites was the teacher competency gap regarding cross-cultural religious pedagogy and conflict management. Many educators, despite expressing commitment to moderation, lacked formal training in handling sensitive theological questions or facilitating difficult conversations about religious difference (Niyozov, 2010). This gap underscores the urgent need for comprehensive pre-service and in-service professional development programs focused on religious literacy, critical pedagogy, and multicultural conflict resolution.

Based on these empirical findings, this study synthesizes the internalization of religious moderation values into an integrated, multi-tiered framework. This framework posits that value internalization is achieved through the continuous interaction of four core pillars: (1) Cognitive Alignment via interdisciplinary, multi-perspective curricula; (2) Pedagogical Engagement through dialogic and reflective instruction; (3) Affective Modeling within an inclusive school climate and hidden curriculum; and (4) Experiential Validation via structured intergroup contact and community action.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that internalizing religious moderation values within multicultural education is not merely a defensive strategy against radicalism, but a transformative educational effort that enhances the moral and civic fabric of pluralistic societies. When educational institutions systematically align their formal instruction, institutional culture, and community engagement around balance, justice, and tolerance, they succeed in transforming schools from passive transmitters of academic information into proactive incubators of social peace, civic unity, and ethical citizenship.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that the internalization of religious moderation values within multicultural education operates as a holistic, multi-tiered process that successfully bridges religious identity with pluralistic civic values. By embedding core moderation principles—specifically balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice (*i'tidal*), and non-violence—into multicultural frameworks, educational institutions transform abstract ethical concepts into lived student dispositions. The findings demonstrate that effective value internalization requires structural synergy across formal interdisciplinary curricula, dialogic and reflective instructional strategies, and critical knowledge

construction that challenges exclusive narratives and fosters intellectual flexibility.

Beyond formal instruction, the informal educational domain—comprising teacher modeling (*uswah hasanah*), an inclusive school climate, and structured experiential contact—serves as the primary engine for deep affective internalization. Teachers who demonstrate moral authenticity and administrative policies that ensure structural belonging provide the necessary environment for students to organize moderation into their personal worldviews. Furthermore, direct intergroup engagement and service learning dismantle deeply ingrained stereotypes, translating passive tolerance into active empathy and peaceful co-existence, even amidst external pressures from online polarization and social division.

Ultimately, integrating religious moderation values into multicultural education offers a transformative framework for character education in pluralistic societies. To maximize its effectiveness, educational authorities must address systemic implementation gaps by strengthening teacher training in cross-cultural pedagogy and building proactive school-community partnerships. By systematically aligning cognitive instruction, institutional modeling, and experiential validation, educational institutions fulfill their vital civic mission: preparing ethically grounded youth capable of embracing diversity, advocating for social justice, and safeguarding long-term social cohesion.

E. Bibliography

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