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Research Article

Implementing a Love-Based Curriculum to Prevent Adolescent Radicalization in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) as a preventive educational framework for adolescent radicalization within Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative descriptive field design was applied in selected Madrasah Aliyah in Banten Province. Participants comprised school principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students selected purposively on the basis of their involvement in curriculum planning, classroom implementation, and character-building activities. Data were obtained through interviews, classroom observations, document review, and contextual analysis of relevant policy and scholarly literature. The material was analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data display, content interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis identified four interrelated implementation domains: a humanistic-religious pedagogical orientation, integration of love-based values across Islamic Religious Education subjects, consistent habituation through school routines, and the strengthening of religious moderation within a safe and respectful school climate. These domains may support empathy, constructive belonging, dialogical learning, respect for difference, and resistance to hate-based narratives. The findings do not establish a causal reduction in radical attitudes; rather, they position KBC as a contextually relevant whole-school framework whose preventive potential depends on teacher modeling, institutional consistency, family engagement, and critical religious and digital literacy. Further multi-site and outcome-oriented research is needed to assess its longer-term effects.

Keywords: Adolescent Radicalization; Islamic Religious Education; Love-Based Curriculum; Religious Moderation; School Climate.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescent radicalization is not a single event, a fixed personality type, or a condition that can be explained by one cause. It is more accurately understood as a process shaped by interactions among personal experiences, group dynamics, social identities, perceived injustice, and opportunities for ideological engagement [1], [2], [3]. This process-oriented understanding is especially important in educational settings because it discourages simplistic profiling and directs attention toward the relational and contextual conditions in which young people interpret identity, belonging, grievance, and moral responsibility.

Adolescence involves intensive identity exploration and a growing need for recognition, certainty, dignity, and meaningful group membership. The quest for personal significance can increase the attraction of narratives that promise status, moral clarity, or heroic purpose [4]. Experiences of humiliation, uncertainty, and significance loss may also strengthen preference for closed and unequivocal explanations [5]. Meta-analytic evidence nevertheless shows that youth radicalization is associated with multiple risk domains rather than a single predictor [6], while systematic reviews emphasize that the same factor may operate differently across individuals and contexts [7]. Mental-health concerns may coexist with radicalization, but they should not be treated as a sufficient explanation or as a basis for stigmatizing adolescents [8].

Digital environments have expanded the speed, scale, and interpersonal reach of extremist communication. However, the internet should not be treated as an autonomous cause of violent extremism. Its influence is mediated by prior grievances, offline relationships, identity needs, and patterns of participation [9]. Online spaces can normalize hostile language, connect users with ideologically similar communities, and facilitate repeated exposure to emotionally charged material. Research on extremist online behavior also indicates that participation patterns are heterogeneous, which cautions against assuming that exposure automatically leads to violent action [10]. Educational prevention therefore requires both attention to digital vulnerability and recognition of the broader social context in which online content is interpreted.

The literature on preventing violent extremism increasingly supports educational approaches that build resilience, civic capacity, critical reflection, and social connection instead of relying only on surveillance or punitive responses [11], [12]. A whole-school approach is particularly relevant because belonging, curriculum, teacher-student relationships, school rules, and institutional culture operate together [13]. At the same time, school personnel may have difficulty distinguishing developmental conflict, ordinary dissent, and genuine indicators of radicalization [14]. Preventive policy must therefore avoid turning educators into security agents and should instead strengthen inclusive educational environments, proportionate support, and cooperation with appropriate community services [15]. The Attitudes-Behaviors Corrective framework further underscores that radical beliefs, intentions, and actions are related but distinct, so prevention should not equate controversial attitudes with violent behavior [16].

Empathy, self-esteem, positive identity, and constructive social ties are frequently discussed as potential protective resources. A longitudinal evaluation of adolescent resilience training found that interventions focused on self-esteem and empathy can contribute to

preventive capacity, although effects depend on implementation and context [17]. A recent multilevel meta-analysis likewise identified protective factors across individual, family, peer, school, and community levels, reinforcing the need for prevention that is relational rather than narrowly individual [18]. Within schools, these findings support pedagogies that help students experience dignity, dialogue, emotional regulation, and meaningful membership.

In Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education has a strategic position because it connects religious knowledge, ethical formation, and citizenship within a religiously and culturally diverse society. Research on religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education indicates that tolerant and balanced values must be visible not only in textbooks but also in classroom practice and school culture [19]. Studies of madrasah-based learning similarly show the importance of institutional integration and consistent educational environments in strengthening religious moderation [20]. The development of integrated Islamic schools also demonstrates that educational institutions actively shape young Muslims' identities, social aspirations, and interpretations of religious commitment [21]. In addition, evidence on religious schemas and tolerance in Indonesia suggests that how religious categories are cognitively organized can influence attitudes toward socially alienated groups [22].

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia launched the Love-Based Curriculum in July 2025 as a value-oriented framework that emphasizes common humanity, affection, responsibility, and ecological awareness across educational levels [23]. The accompanying guidance presents love for God and the Prophet, knowledge, self and others, the environment, and the homeland as interconnected orientations for educational practice [24]. KBC is therefore not merely an additional subject; it is intended to animate curriculum, pedagogy, relationships, and school culture.

Despite its normative relevance, the preventive contribution of KBC requires clearer analytical organization. Existing discussion can easily become aspirational unless the curriculum is linked to observable educational practices and plausible protective mechanisms. This study therefore aims to analyze how KBC is implemented within Islamic Religious Education in selected Madrasah Aliyah in Banten Province and how its reported components may contribute to the prevention of adolescent radicalization. The analysis focuses on curricular integration, humanistic-religious pedagogy, habituation, religious moderation, teacher modeling, and the wider school environment. The study does not test causal effectiveness; it develops a field-informed interpretation of KBC as a preventive educational framework.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive field design. The design was selected to examine how the Love-Based Curriculum was understood and implemented in educational practice and how participants connected its values with the prevention of adolescent radicalization. The study was interpretive rather than experimental; it sought to describe curriculum-related processes, meanings, and educational practices without estimating a causal effect.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in selected Madrasah Aliyah in Banten Province, Indonesia. The participating groups comprised school principals, vice principals responsible for curriculum affairs, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. These groups were included because they represented complementary positions in curriculum planning, classroom enactment, character formation, and student experience. The source manuscript does not provide the names or exact number of participating madrasas and individuals; consequently, no additional numerical information is introduced in this revised version.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct knowledge of, or involvement in, KBC-related planning and practice. Educational leaders were selected because of their institutional responsibility for curriculum implementation; teachers were selected because of their role in integrating love-based values into Islamic Religious Education; and students were selected because they participated in the relevant learning and character-building activities. Data collection continued according to the principle of information saturation described in the original study, that is, until additional participation was no longer expected to produce substantively new information.

Data Sources and Collection

Primary data were collected through interviews with educational leaders and Islamic Religious Education teachers, classroom observations, and documentation of curriculum-related and school-based activities. Student perspectives formed part of the participant base described in the original manuscript. Documentary material included relevant school records, learning materials, policy documents, and written sources related to Islamic Religious Education, adolescent radicalization, religious moderation, and KBC. Note-taking was used to organize information from interviews, observations, and documents. Scholarly literature and Ministry of Religious Affairs documents were used as contextual sources for interpretation rather than as substitutes for field data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and qualitative content analysis. The analytical process involved organizing the collected material, reducing it into relevant units, grouping related meanings, displaying the emerging categories, and drawing interpretive conclusions. This process is consistent with qualitative content analysis, in which textual material is systematically coded and organized into higher-order categories [25]. Interpretations were compared across interviews, observations, and documents so that conclusions were not based on one source alone. The final presentation was organized around recurring implementation domains and their relationship to the study objective. Attention was also given to transparent and coherent thematic reporting, as recommended for trustworthy qualitative analysis [26].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Curricular Orientation and Preventive Logic

The analysis organized the reported implementation of KBC into four interrelated domains: humanistic-religious pedagogy, integration of love-based values across Islamic Religious Education subjects, habituation through recurring school practices, and the strengthening of religious moderation within a safe and respectful institutional climate. These domains were not presented as isolated programs. They formed a value chain in which curriculum content, teacher conduct, classroom interaction, and school routines were expected to reinforce one another.

KBC was understood as an orientation that places affection, dignity, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence at the center of education. Its value structure included love for God and the Prophet, love of knowledge, love for oneself and others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland. In the reported educational logic, these values were expected to move students beyond the memorization of religious concepts toward ethical practice. The preventive relevance of KBC therefore rested on how values were experienced in relationships and routines, not only on whether they appeared in lesson plans.

Integration Across Islamic Religious Education Subjects

The implementation narrative showed that love-based values could be integrated into the principal fields of Islamic Religious Education rather than taught as a separate topic. Qur'an-Hadith learning emphasized compassion, brotherhood, and responsible interpretation; Fiqh emphasized worship, mercy, mutual respect, and the purposes of Islamic law; Aqidah Akhlak emphasized faith expressed through honesty, empathy, and courtesy; and Islamic Cultural History emphasized examples of tolerance and peaceful social organization. Table 1 reorganizes the examples contained in the source manuscript into a concise instructional map.

Table 1. Integration of Love-Based Values Across Islamic Religious Education Subjects

Subject	Love-based learning focus	Illustrative learning activity	Intended educational outcome
Qur'an-Hadith	Compassion, brotherhood, and contextual understanding of relevant verses.	Read and discuss Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 10 and relate its message to harmonious friendship at school.	Students connect scriptural meaning with brotherhood, respect, and daily social conduct.
Fiqh	Worship as an expression of divine mercy, discipline, and care for others.	During congregational prayer activities, the teacher emphasizes patience, mutual respect, and assistance among peers.	Students understand and practice worship without rigid or disrespectful interaction.
Aqidah Akhlak	Faith expressed through peaceful, honest, empathetic,	Students enact situations involving respectful	Students relate faith to noble character,

Subject	Love-based learning focus	Illustrative learning activity	Intended educational outcome
	and courteous behavior.	communication with teachers, parents, and peers.	empathy, honesty, and affection.
Islamic Cultural History	Historical examples of tolerance, coexistence, and peaceful leadership.	Study the Charter of Medina and discuss the values relevant to a multicultural society.	Students identify peace-oriented lessons from Islamic history and apply them to social diversity.

The table illustrates that the same value orientation can be translated differently according to disciplinary content. The integration is strongest when teachers connect textual knowledge with ethical reasoning and concrete interpersonal behavior. It is weakened when love is treated only as a slogan or when classroom interaction contradicts the values expressed in the lesson.

Humanistic-Religious Classroom Practice

A second implementation domain concerned the manner in which learning was conducted. The humanistic-religious approach combined recognition of student dignity with accountability to Islamic ethical and spiritual values. In practical terms, the teacher was expected to create a warm and non-discriminatory atmosphere, listen to student perspectives, allow reasoned differences, connect religious evidence with real situations, and evaluate attitudes as well as knowledge. Table 2 condenses the classroom examples reported in the original manuscript.

Table 2. Humanistic-Religious Pedagogy in Classroom Practice

Learning dimension	Humanistic emphasis	Religious anchoring	Illustrative classroom practice
Classroom atmosphere	Warmth, appreciation, safety, and non-discrimination.	Prayer, greeting, and noble character as shared orientation.	The teacher opens respectfully and reminds students that good conduct is an expression of faith.
Teacher-student interaction	Empathic listening and space for different experiences or views.	Opinions are related to relevant Qur'anic or hadith principles.	Students describe worship experiences and discuss them without ridicule or coercion.
Learning method	Cooperation, participation, and dialogical inquiry.	Prophetic examples and religious evidence guide reflection.	Group discussion links Q.S. Al-Maidah: 2 with practical cooperation at school.
Content relevance	Material is connected to students' social reality.	Religious knowledge is interpreted with ethical purpose.	The Charter of Medina is discussed in relation to friendships across ethnic and religious differences.

Learning dimension	Humanistic emphasis	Religious anchoring	Illustrative classroom practice
Assessment	Attention to empathy, honesty, cooperation, and responsibility.	Islamic conduct is recognized as part of learning.	The teacher values honesty and responsible participation alongside cognitive achievement.
Character formation	Respect for self, others, and the surrounding community.	Character development is linked to the aims of Islamic Religious Education.	Students reflect on worship, responsibility, and the contribution of religious practice to inner peace.

The central finding in this domain was the need for consistency between message and method. A lesson about compassion loses credibility when delivered through humiliation, exclusion, or one-way indoctrination. Conversely, dialogical teaching can demonstrate that religious commitment and intellectual openness are compatible. The teacher's conduct thus becomes part of the curriculum experienced by students.

Habituation and School Culture

The third domain was habituation, understood as the repeated practice of values until they became recognizable features of school life. Reported examples included prayer and Qur'an reading, greetings and courteous interaction, charity, environmental care, disciplined attendance, class responsibility, social service, and reflective activities. These practices extended KBC beyond formal lessons and provided opportunities for students to experience care, cooperation, and responsibility in routine situations.

Habituation was not described as mechanical repetition. Its educational value depended on explanation, modeling, reflection, and non-coercive guidance. Teachers were expected to correct inconsistency through persuasive and compassionate support rather than humiliation. The weekly arrangement shown in Table 3 is an illustrative synthesis of the program components presented in the source manuscript.

Table 3. Weekly Habituation Program Aligned with Love-Based Values

Day	Habituation activity	Love-based value	Character orientation
Monday	Flag ceremony, joint prayer, and motivation related to responsibility for the homeland.	Love of the homeland and care for others.	National commitment, discipline, and responsibility.
Tuesday	Qur'an reading before lessons and congregational dhuha prayer.	Love of God and the Qur'an.	Religiosity, consistency, and self-discipline.
Wednesday	Greeting and courtesy routines, followed by discussion of Prophetic examples.	Love of the Prophet and fellow human beings.	Friendliness, politeness, and communication.

Day	Habituation activity	Love-based value	Character orientation
Thursday	Class charity and prayer for parents, teachers, and people in need.	Love for parents, teachers, and vulnerable members of society.	Generosity, gratitude, and social care.
Friday	Congregational worship and a Clean Friday environmental program.	Love of cleanliness and the environment.	Cooperation and ecological responsibility.
Saturday	Islamic extracurricular activities and weekly reflection on attitudes.	Self-respect, creativity, and fellowship.	Confidence, creativity, and self-reflection.

The reported program also assigned complementary responsibilities. Teachers functioned as models, facilitators, and motivators; students were expected to participate actively and reflect on their conduct; and schools were expected to involve parents and the surrounding community. Qualitative evaluation focused on observation of behavior, teacher notes, and student reflection rather than on a separate written examination.

Religious Moderation and the Proposed Preventive Pathway

Religious moderation operated as a cross-cutting orientation across curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture. It was expressed through balanced interpretation, respect for difference, rejection of violence and hate speech, national commitment, and willingness to engage in dialogue. Within Islamic Religious Education, moderation did not mean weakening religious conviction. It referred to practicing conviction without demeaning others and to interpreting religious obligations in ways that protect dignity, justice, and social peace.

The source manuscript proposed that KBC contributes to prevention through four mutually reinforcing pillars: humanistic-religious values, cultivation of positive character, strengthening of religious moderation, and a healthy and peaceful learning environment. These pillars were linked to a desired outcome in which adolescents are less receptive to hate-based and violent narratives and more prepared to act as agents of peace. Because the present study did not measure changes in radical attitudes or behavior, this pathway should be interpreted as a conceptual and field-informed model rather than as evidence of causal effectiveness.



Figure 1. Proposed contribution pathway of the Love-Based Curriculum to the prevention of adolescent radicalization.

Discussion

School Belonging as a Protective Educational Condition

The preventive logic of KBC is consistent with research showing that school belonging is produced through interactions among students, peers, teachers, families, institutional practices, and wider social settings [27]. Meta-analytic evidence identifies teacher support, positive peer relations, and a supportive school environment as important correlates of belonging [28]. School belonging is also related to motivational, social-emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes in secondary education [29]. In this light, the emphasis of KBC on appreciation, non-discrimination, dialogue, and shared routines can be understood as an attempt to make school membership meaningful. This matters because extremist groups may exploit perceived rejection or disconnection by offering identity, recognition, and certainty. KBC can only provide an alternative form of belonging when students experience its values consistently rather than encounter them only in formal statements.

Social-Emotional Learning, Empathy, and Character Formation

The affective orientation of KBC also overlaps with the evidence base for social-emotional learning. A major meta-analysis found that universal school-based social-emotional learning interventions can improve social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance [30], while follow-up evidence indicates that benefits may persist after the intervention period [31]. A contemporary meta-analysis covering a substantially expanded evidence base similarly supports the value of well-implemented universal social-emotional learning [32]. Reviews further emphasize the importance of inclusive adaptation [33], educator competence [34], attention to educational equity [35], and continued development of the field beyond isolated classroom programs [36].

These findings clarify why KBC requires more than moral exhortation. Teachers need competence in emotional communication, conflict-sensitive facilitation, and reflective assessment. Students need structured opportunities to practice perspective taking, emotion regulation, cooperation, and responsible decision making. Emotional intelligence is associated with academic performance and adaptive learning processes [37], but empathy should be treated as multidimensional rather than assumed to emerge automatically from religious instruction [38]. Intergroup contact can reduce prejudice when it is organized under supportive conditions [39], although evidence on prejudice-reduction programs also warns that effects vary and that poorly designed interventions may produce limited or temporary change [40]. Longitudinal evidence showing that empathy can reduce anti-immigrant prejudice in adolescence further supports sustained, developmentally appropriate engagement [41].

Religious Education, Moderation, and Meaningful Conviction

KBC is particularly relevant to Islamic Religious Education because it seeks to connect conviction with ethical relationships. Religious education can contribute to adolescent well-being and connectedness when it supports moral development, constructive coping, respect for diversity, and social participation [42]. However, this contribution is not automatic. Religious content may be delivered in ways that are dialogical and humane, or in ways that intensify rigid boundaries and exclusion. The results of this study suggest that KBC is most credible when teachers integrate scriptural understanding, ethical purpose, classroom dignity, and school-

wide practice. In this configuration, moderation is not added after religious learning; it is embedded in how religious knowledge is interpreted and enacted.

Digital Literacy and Resistance to Manipulative Narratives

The original manuscript correctly positioned digital communication as an important context of adolescent vulnerability, but prevention should move beyond general warnings about social media. Evidence indicates that digital media literacy interventions can improve discernment between reliable and false information [43]. Assessments of civic online reasoning show that students often need explicit instruction in evaluating sources, corroborating claims, and examining the credibility of digital evidence [44]. Inoculation-style interventions can also build psychological resistance to common misinformation techniques [45], while research comparing multiple literacies indicates that information literacy is especially important for identifying false news [46]. KBC can incorporate these insights by connecting ethical responsibility in communication with practical source-evaluation skills. Students should learn not only that hate speech and misinformation are morally harmful, but also how emotionally manipulative content is constructed, circulated, and verified.

Implementation Responsibilities and Limits of Inference

The preventive potential of KBC depends on coordinated implementation. Teachers and counselors require clear referral pathways when a student needs specialized psychosocial support; clinical models addressing violent extremism show the value of multidisciplinary and culturally responsive services [47]. Structured extracurricular interventions can also create prosocial identity, teamwork, and meaningful participation, although their effectiveness depends on design and evaluation [48]. Community prevention additionally benefits from responsible bystander and practitioner reporting systems that distinguish credible concern from stigma or rumor [49]. These studies support a layered model in which ordinary educational prevention, targeted support, and specialized services are connected but not conflated.

The present findings should therefore be interpreted as an implementation framework rather than proof that KBC reduces radicalization. The field material describes values and educational practices, but it does not include a comparison group, longitudinal follow-up, or validated measures of radical attitudes and behavior. The strongest contribution of the study is conceptual and organizational: it shows how KBC can be translated into curriculum integration, classroom interaction, habituation, moderation, and school-climate practices. Future evaluation should examine whether these practices are implemented consistently and whether they are associated with measurable changes in belonging, empathy, tolerance, critical literacy, and rejection of violence.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the Love-Based Curriculum as a field-informed educational framework for preventing adolescent radicalization within Islamic Religious Education. The analysis indicates that KBC is most coherent when it functions as an integrated orientation rather than as an additional topic. Its implementation involved four connected domains: humanistic-religious pedagogy, integration of love-based values across Islamic Religious Education

subjects, repeated habituation through school routines, and the strengthening of religious moderation within a safe and respectful institutional climate. Together, these domains seek to connect religious knowledge with empathy, dialogue, responsibility, national commitment, environmental care, and rejection of violence. The study also clarifies that preventive education should not rely on profiling students or treating controversial opinions as evidence of violent intent. KBC is better understood as a whole-school effort to provide constructive belonging, ethical meaning, critical reflection, and consistent adult modeling. Its relevance lies in creating educational experiences through which students can practice conviction without hostility, difference without exclusion, and identity without dehumanizing others. Teachers, school leaders, families, and communities all influence whether these values become visible in daily practice. The findings do not demonstrate that KBC causally reduces radical attitudes or behavior. No experimental comparison, standardized outcome measure, or longitudinal assessment was available. The study therefore concludes that KBC has preventive potential and contextual relevance, but its effectiveness remains an empirical question. Future research should use multi-site, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs and should assess implementation fidelity alongside outcomes such as school belonging, empathy, religious moderation, information literacy, tolerance, and rejection of violence. With careful implementation and evaluation, KBC can provide a constructive framework for Islamic Religious Education that is intellectually serious, spiritually meaningful, socially inclusive, and responsive to the challenges faced by adolescents in digital and plural societies.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in selected Madrasah Aliyah in Banten Province, and the source manuscript does not report the exact number or identity of participating institutions and individuals. The findings are therefore context-bound and should not be generalized to all madrasas or secondary schools. Second, the qualitative design relied on interviews, observations, and documents, which support depth of interpretation but do not establish causal effects. Third, the manuscript does not report standardized measures of radical attitudes, tolerance, empathy, school belonging, or behavioral change; consequently, the proposed preventive pathway remains interpretive. Fourth, the study provides no longitudinal evidence showing whether KBC practices are sustained or whether their influence persists over time. Fifth, digital environments and policy implementation continue to change, which may affect how adolescents encounter ideological content and how schools respond. Future research should report participant and site characteristics more completely, include explicit ethical and consent information, use validated outcome instruments, examine implementation fidelity, and compare multiple institutional contexts through longitudinal or mixed-method designs.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

D. I. conceptualized the study, developed the research design, coordinated field data collection, conducted the descriptive and qualitative content analyses, and drafted the manuscript. R. F. contributed to the theoretical framework, supervised the research, advised on the integration of the Love-Based Curriculum with Islamic Religious Education and adolescent-radicalization prevention, and critically revised the manuscript. S. N. contributed to data collection, data organization, and validation of the emerging categories, supported the analysis, and reviewed the methods and results. I. contributed to the pedagogical and madrasah contextualization, supported data collection and interpretation, and critically reviewed the manuscript. Z. B. M. A. contributed to the broader educational and comparative perspective, advised on the interpretation of the findings, and reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version and agree to be accountable for the integrity of the work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used ChatGPT for language refinement during manuscript preparation. The authors subsequently reviewed, verified, and edited the generated text and accept full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the article.

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