

Effects of Staff Appraisal on Academic Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Kangundo Sub-County, Machakos County Kenya

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Abstract: The objective of the study was to determine the effects of staff appraisal on academic performance of public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-County. The study used descriptive research design. Data collection was done through the use of questionnaires. Sample size consisted of 74 head of departments (HODs), 18 deputy principals and 18 principals of public secondary schools from the total population of 152 and stratified random sampling technique was employed. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between the academic performance and the independent variables. The study found that academic performance was statistically influenced by staff appraisal.

Key Words: Academic Performance, Staff Appraisal, Public Secondary Schools

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The practice of strategic decision making in organizations is what is referred to generally as strategic management. Thus, strategic human resource management practices cannot be discussed without discussing the issue of strategic management itself. The development of the field of strategic human resource management within the last two decades has been dramatic¹ and it grows larger every day.

According to data from the studies conducted by⁶ in Australian large companies strategic human resource management was shown to play a major role however, it has undergone substantial changes since the early 1980s. Some researchers have studied strategic human resource management in a particular country, such as strategic human resource management in Australia, USA, Japan, and Korea. For instance,¹² have studied strategic human resource management in Australian business by focusing on introducing the reader to a multi-perspective approach to understanding and studying management and organizations. On the other hand, the study of²⁴ focuses on the strategic human resource management of Asian Countries such as Thailand, China, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia. Most research is aimed at understanding how management is practiced in a particular country since this is essential in adapting to and managing enterprises in that country. Several research studies have mentioned the differences in strategic human resource management between Eastern and Western countries. For example, studies such as⁵ identify the different nature of competitiveness between East and West.

Being located in the same geographic area does not mean that countries strategic human resource management practices in neighboring countries will be the same.³ has identified differences in strategic human resource management in developing countries. These differences might be the result of environmental factors such as political, economic, social demographic or cultural factors⁵. Since no organization has unlimited resources, strategists must decide which alternative strategies benefit the firm most⁹. Thus, a strategy “reflects managerial choices among alternatives and signals organizational commitment to particular products, markets, competitive approaches, and ways of operating the enterprise”²⁵. Furthermore, different organizations in different environments are likely to emphasize different aspects of the strategic human resource management process²⁶.

¹⁰ asserts “it is individual who think strategically not organizations and in order to think strategically individuals require a supporting context to manage the strategic conversations that occur within it and therefore, strategic planning systems can play an important role in this process”. Thus, companies can have formalized strategic planning systems and they also can encourage the strategic thinking capabilities inside their organizations. This study aims to investigate both the strategic planning and the strategic thinking capabilities of

public secondary schools in Kenya. However, the major priority of this research is to investigate the strategic human resource management practices which are currently playing a major role in management of public secondary schools. This study sought to establish utilization of strategic human resource management practices on academic performance in public secondary school management with reference to secondary school in Kangundo sub-County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Empirical evidence from ²³ pinpoints the key practices that school leaders should engage in when managing schools. Several of these practices, such as establishing goals and expectations, strategic resourcing and planning mirror the core components of strategic human resource management. Public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-County have been performing dismally. For example, in national examination, data from the Kangundo sub-county education office, shows that, the performance index has ranged between 3.731 to 4.49 out of a maximum of 12 (2009-3.731, 2010-4.236, 2011-4.236, 2012-4.247, 2013-4.49) which is below average and low compared with other sub-counties and nationally as well. Strategic HRM practices have been known to improve the quality of management services in organizations. Evaluation of performance is a core human resource element and when not properly entrenched in school management, it can cause low performance. It is therefore necessary to assess in this study staff appraisal on academic performance employed in schools in Kangundo Sub-County.

1.3 Objectives of the study

To determine the effects of staff appraisal on academic performance of public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Locke's Goal Setting Theory

The goal setting theory presupposes that particular goals tend to influence acts which are difficult and acceptance of it produces higher achievements than goals which are easy to achieve ²⁷. ²⁷ look at goal setting from the angle that goals which are specific generate much higher output compared to those goals which are generalized as the writers admit that the intensity of the set goals serves as a catalyst for internal inducement.

If the goals are constantly held as an acceptance factor of motivation, then it can be deduced that no matter how difficult the goals are the performance of the outcome will be higher. In effect, it is likely that goals which are easy are most likely to be accepted, but in a situation where a difficult task is accepted, the worker is believed to demand a higher level of performance to try and accomplish the task.

In ¹⁴ goal-setting theory is a process theory that centers on how people decide on goals and react to them with reference to the end result of this process theory. Again, employees' involvement in goal setting is seen as irregular with the existing principles of partaking in union representation as well as the change that exists in different management cultural settings such as taking part in setting goals may be influenced by the generally existing company norms. ¹⁷ initially define what is entailed in goals before goal setting, as the actual or eventual objectives that workers try to achieve from employment. The authors in their book Organisational Behaviour continue with goal setting as a method of stimulating employees and explaining to them their respective roles by organising work objectives.

Goals express a discipline and give ways for agreeing on how much effort to put into work when goals vary. In order for goals to be productive there should be the necessity to clarify the goals to be achieved, as goal seeking theory is also of the view that, definite and direct relationship is present in goal difficulty and performance, which means that difficult objectives indicate more effort and performance than goals or objectives that are not difficult to achieve. Moreover, objectives which are demanding beyond individual's limit will not cause the person to generate performance levels of high competence. In another development participation is deemed to have its results as it adds to employee perception of direction and equality in the process ¹³.

²⁹ identify two actors of goal setting theory, as difficulty and performance, and participation and performance and elaborate that goals describe circumstances such as individual engagement and the psychological factors included in meeting and achieving goals. ²⁹ explains that goal content and performance centre on the connection that exists between goal difficulty and performance, adding that an acceptable level of performance and total commitment, difficult goals lead to effort and performance higher than goals that are easy. This means that efficiency grows with the degree of goal difficulty, which suggests that employee wanting to reach the goal is committed to accomplishing it. Participation and performance state that allowing participation in the process of setting goals there exists a rise in an employee's ability in understanding control and equity, which afterwards leads to high goal performance ²⁹.

2.2 Staff Appraisal Strategy and Performance

Conducting regular performance appraisal is an important work force development strategy for organizations such as schools. Given the challenges of working in the education sector, (teaching profession), performance appraisals offer a valuable opportunity to recognize and reward staff's efforts and performance, detect key barriers and facilitation to work practice and identify professional development needs and opportunities as noted by ⁷. Vroom's expectancy theory suggests that the expected reward (financial and non-financial) will motivate or be the basis of the employee's performance. However this should be tailored to suit the employees efforts invested in the performance therefore review assessments were not given the recognition they deserve hence the research. ¹¹ in his work; In-Service Training Programs and their effects on the performance of staff at the Uganda Revenue Authority, emphasized the need for on-job training, short seminars and team building workshops as programs that increase the employees performance.

However, what was not considered by him was the fact that all the above should have a basis of individual focus such as suggested by the review forms. It should be put to record that most studies have undermined the importance of the employee involvement in the designing of the seminars, workshops, and any other training to such an extent that they feel part of the process.

In fact according to ²⁸, the performance appraisal process offers employees the opportunity to receive structured, constructively framed feedback about their work and growth potential. According to ²¹, appraisal and improvement are critical to developing and maintaining a strong capable workforce. Structured performance incorporates the institutions vision and mission into the overall evaluation of the employee. ¹⁹ contend that, performance appraisal systems utilize standard assessment criteria, dimensional ratings, structured rating scales and explicit individual-peer appraisal. These components help to minimize subjective impressions and conscious or intentional biases. Sophisticated technologies for performance evaluations (for example on line ratings and development plans, 360 degree feedback) are well developed and increasingly common in both large and small institutions.

On the other hand, ¹⁸ assert that accurate and reliable performance appraisals help organizations to support and reward their most capable employees. When used in conjunction with performance improvement systems, a structured performance appraisal system conveys meaningful feedback in a useful format, helps refocus employees who are performing below expectation and facilitates career development plans for all employees.

The performance appraisal systems increase the fairness and transparency of the evaluation process and guide individuals and supervisors towards targeted improvement strategies. They also protect both the employee and the institution from potential bias and ensure that employees receive fair and accurate feedback. However these should be tailored to suit the necessary employee aspirations as noted by the department or organization at large; something hardly existed in the above reviewed literature thus more investigations were needed in this arena.

2.3 Academic performance

Academic performance as the dependent variable has been measured using different proxies in various studies. ⁴ used test scores and graduation rates; ² Academic performance is also determined by other factors apart from the ones discussed in this study. Empirical evidence has found that parents education play a very significant role in predicting scholar achievement. ⁴ found that socio-economic status as well as family structure plays a significant role in the academic performance of the offspring. Studies have found that the birth order plays an important role for children's academic performance. Teachers' provision of individualized attention to weak students had a significant effect on academic achievement in secondary schools ¹⁵ while ²⁰ established that cognitive ability is one important determinant of academic achievement.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research problem was studied through the use of a descriptive research design. According to ⁸, a descriptive study is concerned with finding out the what, where and how of a phenomenon. This study therefore able to generalize the findings of all the organizations. This method is concerned with intense investigation of problem solving situations in which problems are relevant to the research problem.

3.2 Target Population

Target population in statistics is the specific population about which information is desired. The targeted population of this study comprised of Public Schools Administrators in Kangundo Sub County which are 25 Principals, 25 Deputy Principals, 92 H.O.D's in 23 Sub County Schools and 10 H.O.D's in 2 County Schools totaling to 152.

Table 3.1: Target population

Administrator Category	No. per School	No. of Schools	Target Population
Principals	1	25	25
Deputy Principals	1	25	25
H.O.D's (Sub county Schools)	4	23	92
H.O.D's (County Schools)	5	2	10
Grand Total			152

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination

Sampling techniques provide a range of methods that facilitate to reduce the amount of data need to collect by considering only data from a sub-group rather than all possible cases or elements. Stratified random sampling was used because the population of study is non homogeneous and different categories of school administrators have different characteristics. It ensured equitable representation of the population in the sample. The different categories of school administrators formed a strata. Randomly administrators from each category in any of the schools were picked to make sample size. Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample size. The formula takes into accounts confidence levels and margin error and is suitable because nothing about the behavior of the population is known.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n = number of samples

N = Total Population

e = Error of tolerance

$$n = \frac{152}{1 + 152(0.05)^2} = 110$$

Table 3.2: Sample Size

Category Administrators	Target population	Proportion	Sample size
Principals	25	16.5%	18
Deputy Principals	25	16.5%	18
Heads of Departments(HODs)	102	67%	74
Total	152	100 %	110

3.4 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study used a survey questionnaire administered to each member of the sample population. The questionnaire had both open and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions provided more structured responses to facilitate tangible recommendations. The closed ended questions were used to test the rating of various attributes and this helped in reducing the number of related responses in order to obtain more varied responses. The open-ended questions provided additional information that may not have been captured in the closed-ended questions. The researcher administered the questionnaire individually to all respondents of the study. The researcher exercised care and control to ensure all questionnaires issued to the respondents were received and achieve this, the researcher maintained a register of questionnaires, which were sent, and received. The questionnaire were administered using a drop and pick later method. Secondary data was collected for this study. This data was useful for generating additional information for the study from already documented data or available reports. This basically implies that the incorporation of valuable statistical data in the study.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Descriptive analysis technique was utilized which involved use of descriptive statistics and tabulations. Descriptive statistics used included frequencies and percentages. The tabulations were basically pie charts, bar graphs and the associated proportions utilized in generating the graphs. In addition the estimated equations were also included.

4.2 The effects of staff appraisal on academic performance of public secondary schools

The number of respondents who stated that staff appraisal affect the academic performance of school was 83 (75.45 per cent) out of the total 110 respondents interviewed. Thus, three-quarters of the respondent's regarded staff appraisal affected academic performance. The males who reported that staff appraisal affected

academic performance were 55 representing 50.00 per cent of all the respondents while female respondents regarding the staff appraisal had an effect on academic performance were 28 (25.45 per cent).

Table 4.3: effect of staff appraisal on academic performance

	Gender		Highest education level attained				Form four	Total
	Male	Female	Postgraduate	Degree	Diploma			
Yes	<i>f</i>	55	28	8	67	6	2	83
	<i>%</i>	50.00	25.45	7.27	60.91	5.45	1.82	75.45
No	<i>f</i>	14	13	2	24	1	0	27
	<i>%</i>	12.73	11.82	1.82	21.82	0.91	0.00	24.55
Total	<i>f</i>	69	41	10	91	7	2	110
	<i>%</i>	62.73	37.27	9.09	82.73	6.36	1.82	100.00

After further disaggregating the data by the highest level of education of the respondents interviewed with a view of establishing whether education level was related to the effect of staff appraisal on academic performance. The respondents who noted staff appraisal affected academic performance and had attained form four level of education were two, while those who had attained diploma education were six (5.45 per cent) of all the 110 respondents interviewed. The respondents who had attained degree and post-graduate level and viewed staff appraisal had an effect on academic performance were 67 (60.91 per cent) and eight (7.27 per cent) of the total number of respondents interviewed respectively. This shows that none of the respondents who had attained secondary education level specifically form four level did not support the effect of staff appraisal on academic performance.

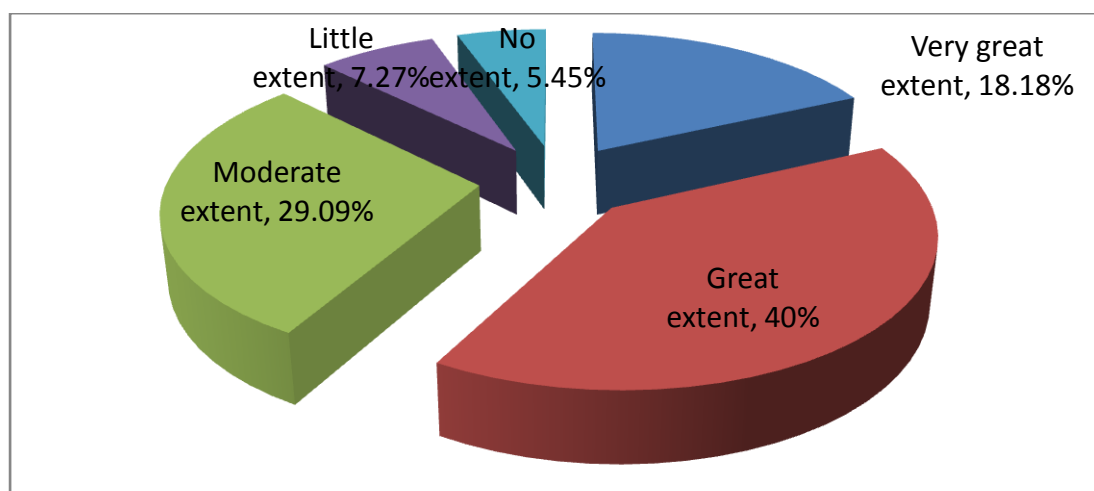


Figure 4.1: Extent of staff appraisal on academic performance

Regarding the extent of staff appraisal effect on academic performance 20 (18.18 per cent) of the interviewed respondents said that staff appraisal affects academic performance to a very great extent, while 44 (40.00 per cent) of the respondents noted that academic performance was affected to a great extent by staff appraisal. The interviewed respondents who stated that staff appraisal affected academic performance to a moderate extent were 32 (29.09 per cent). Only eight and six respondent representing 7.27 per cent and 5.45 per cent of the respondents respectively viewed the effect of staff appraisal on academic performance was to a little extent and no extent respectively. Hence, about two-thirds (58.18 per cent) of the respondents revealed that academic performance was affected to a great extent by staff appraisal.

The study proceeded to establish the different aspects of staff appraisal on a measure of academic performance namely subject performance. Frequent evaluation of staff affected subject performance positively according to 29.09 per cent of the respondents interviewed who strongly agreed with this assertion. This was compounded by another 47.27 per cent of the respondents who still agreed with this assertion. Hence, 76.36 per cent of the respondents agreed that subject performance was positively affected by frequent evaluation of staff. Thus more than three-quarters of the respondents said that staff appraisal as measured by frequent evaluation of

staff affected academic performance as proxied by subject performance. This was in line with the findings deduced in a study by ¹⁶.

Providing feedback after evaluation by the organization reportedly affected subject performance positively according to 33.64 per cent of the respondents interviewed who strongly agreed. A further 43.64 per cent agreed with this contention. Hence 77.28 per cent of the respondents were for the idea that staff appraisal as captured by provision of feedback after evaluation by the organization affects academic performance positively as proxied by subject performance.

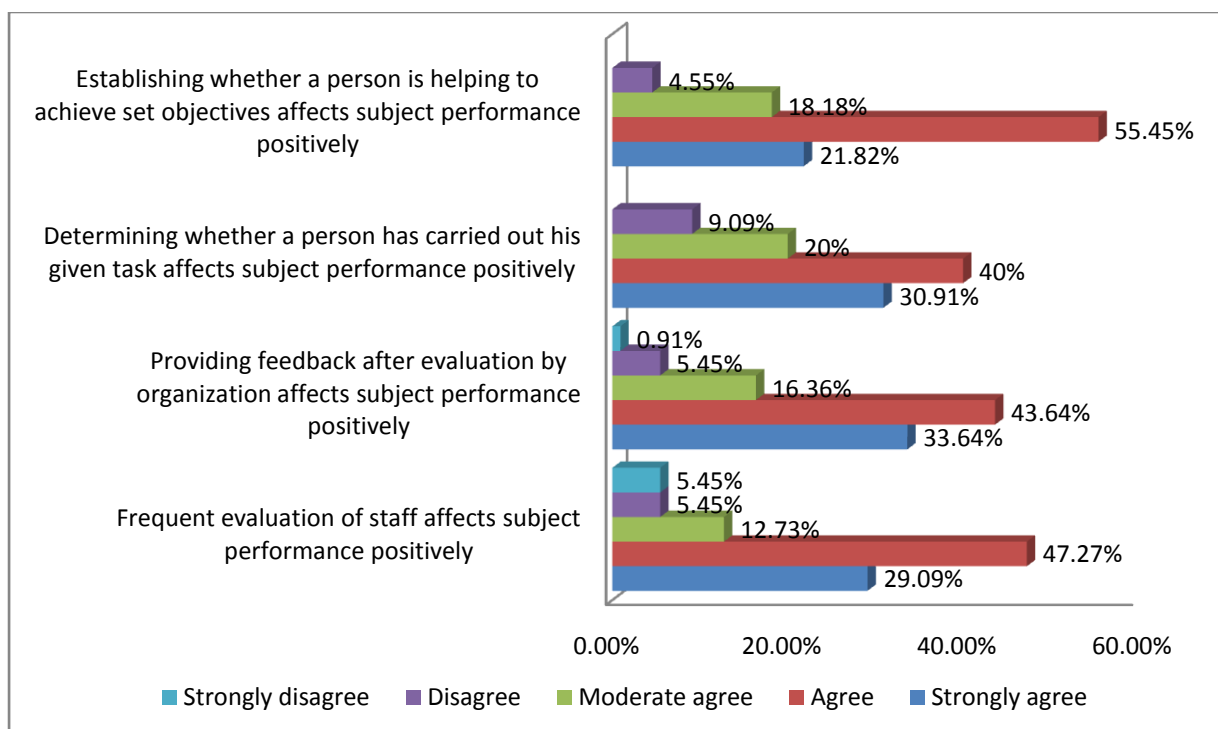


Figure 4.2: Effects of different aspects of staff appraisal on subject performance

Determining whether a person has carried his/her given tasks affects subject performance positively based on 30.91 per cent and 40 per cent of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. Hence 70.91 per cent of the respondents interviewed were for the suggestion that subject performance was positively affected by determination of whether a person has carried his/her given tasks.

Establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives was deemed to affect subject performance positively according to 21.82 per cent) of the respondents who strongly agreed with this suggestion. Moreover 55.45 per cent agreed with this assertion hence, based on 77.27 per cent of the respondents, staff appraisal as proxied by establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives positively affected subject performance.

Hence based on the responses of the interviewees frequent evaluation of staff; providing feedback after evaluation by the organization; determining whether a person has carried his/her given tasks; and establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives affects positively subject performance. However, this is deduced before controlling for other factors which affect subject performance.

Table 4.4: Correlation matrix

	Academic performance	Staff appraisal	Gender	Age	Education level	Length of service
Academic performance	1					
Staff appraisal	0.5611*	1				
Gender	0.1372	0.0352	1			
Age	0.0708	-0.0073	0.1378	1		
Education level	0.0405	-0.0471	0.0832	0.0057	1	

Length of service	0.0159	- 0.0024	0.1294	0.8005 *	- 0.0096	1
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Note: * indicates 5 % level of significance

The correlation matrix in table 4.4 shows that Academic performance is positively and significantly correlated to staff appraisal.

Table 4.5: Regression model results

Academic performance	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value
Staff appraisal	0.4468*	3.98	0.000
Gender	0.1645	1.31	0.194
Age	0.0219	1.78	0.079
Education level	0.0690	0.33	0.741
Length of service	-0.0122	-1.01	0.316
Constant term	-0.5172	-1.19	0.236
Number of observations	110		
F(8, 101)	9.73		
P-value	0.0000		
R-squared	0.4354		
Adjusted R-squared	0.3906		

Note: * indicates 5 % level of significance

The regression model results in table 4.5 shows that Academic performance is positively and significantly affected by staff appraisal, as deduced at the five per cent level of significance. This implies that the academic performance increases with improvement in staff appraisal, supporting the assertion of ²² who contends that staff motivation is indispensable in accounting for improved academic achievement. The table further illustrates the F-statistic of 9.73 which is a test for joint significance shows that the included independent variables jointly affect academic performance since the associated probability value (p-value) of 0.000 is less than 0.05. The adjusted R-squared of 0.3906 shows that 39.06 per cent of the total variation in the dependent variable (academic performance) is accounted for by the included independent variables.

More than three-quarters of the respondents said that staff appraisal as measured by frequent evaluation of staff affected academic performance as proxied by subject performance. 77.28 per cent of the respondents were for the idea that staff appraisal as captured by provision of feedback after evaluation by the organization affects academic performance positively as proxied by subject performance. 70.91 per cent of the respondents interviewed were for the suggestion that subject performance was positively affected by determination of whether a person has carried his/her given tasks. Based on 77.27 per cent of the respondents, staff appraisal as proxied by establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives positively affected subject performance.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academic performance is positively correlated to staff appraisal. In addition staff appraisal is statistically significant at the five per cent level of significance. The regression model results shows that academic performance is positively and significantly affected by staff appraisal. This implies that the academic performance increases with improvement in staff appraisal. The F-statistic of 9.73 which is a test for joint significance shows that the included independent variables jointly affect academic performance since the associated probability value (p-value) of 0.000 is less than 0.05. The adjusted R-squared of 0.3906 shows that 39.06 per cent of the total variation in the dependent variable (academic performance) is accounted for by the included independent variables. This means that there are other important variables which explain the variation in academic performance, apart from the included variables in this study. Frequent evaluation of staff; providing feedback after evaluation by the organization; determining whether a person has carried his/her given tasks; and establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives affects positively subject performance.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; In order to realize better academic performance, there is need for frequent evaluation of staff and provision of feedback after evaluation by the organization, in addition to determining whether a person has carried his/her given tasks and establishing whether a person is helping to achieve set objectives. There is need for a research to be conducted to ascertain the other important variables which explain the variations in academic performance, apart from the variables included in this study.

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