Effects of Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism on Donation Intentions: The Moderating Role of Donation Information Openness

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between two subtypes of narcissism (grandiose vs. vulnerable) and donation intentions, while considering the moderating effects of donation information openness. The results of an experimental survey of 359 undergraduate students showed that individuals who scored high on grandiose narcissism showed greater donation intentions when the donor’s behavior was public, while they showed lower donation intentions when it was not. In addition, individuals who scored high on vulnerable narcissism showed lower donation intentions when the donor’s behavior was not public. This study contributes to narcissism and the donation behavior literature and proposes theoretical and practical implications as per narcissistic individual differences. Future research possibilities are also discussed.

Keywords: narcissism; grandiose narcissism; vulnerable narcissism; donation intentions; donation information openness

1. Introduction

Nowadays, it is not only a firm’s social responsibility but also an individual’s prosocial behavior that is crucial to the sustainable development of society [1]. Furthermore, understanding individual differences such as a narcissistic personality is important to contribute to both firms’ and nonprofit organizations’ sustainability. This is because, when a firm’s cause-related marketing (CRM) or a nonprofit organization’s fundraising campaign is based on individual differences, more effective marketing for charitable giving can be implemented, after which we can expect more donations from individuals, which would help to better our world and society at large.

Scholars have investigated individual characteristics, such as personality, religion, gender cognitive ability [2], and regulatory focus [3], in relation to charitable giving. In this research, the authors examined the relationship between one individual personality characteristic—narcissism—and donation behavior.

Although the importance of narcissism in prosocial behavior has been examined in previous research [4–6], there has been little focus on the relationship between the two narcissism subtypes and donation intentions.

Narcissism is defined as the presence of a self-centered orientation, positive feelings of being special and entitled [7], and the relative lack of communal traits and psychological awareness [8], thus leading to aggression and hostility when the self-ego is infringed upon [9]. It is often assumed that narcissism is associated with antisocial behavior because of traits of low empathy and low morality [8]. However, prosocial behavior may be exhibited for various reasons, such as altruism or opportunism, when rewards, such as praise from others, are available [10,11]. Indeed, previous research has suggested that individual characteristics, such as narcissism, may influence prosocial behavior [12,13].
There are two generally accepted distinct subtypes of narcissism—grandiose and vulnerable. Although these two types have commonalities (e.g., self-centeredness and low empathy) [7,14], there are differences between the two. Those individuals with grandiose narcissism tend to have high self-esteem, self-assurance, exploitativeness, extraversion, a strong need for admiration, and low neuroticism [7]. Conversely, those with vulnerable narcissism tend to have relatively low self-esteem, high social avoidance, introversion, and high neuroticism [7,15–17]. Grandiose narcissists are less likely to be influenced by social pressure than vulnerable narcissists are [5]. The potential social influences on donation intention by narcissism type have not been examined in detail. This paper investigates these relationships.

1.1. Literature Review and Hypotheses

1.1.1. Narcissism and Prosocial Behaviors

Past research results on narcissism and prosocial behavior are inconsistent, with positive relationships [18,19], negative relationships [6,13,20,21], or no significant relationships [22] being found. However, to the best of our knowledge, these previous studies were based on grandiose-type narcissism without considering another subtype of narcissism, such as vulnerable narcissism, although there is a potential possibility that both dimensions of narcissism are relatively orthogonal [23]. Thus, we need to consider both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as they may differ according to the conditions under which they lead to more helping nature.

Most previous research has not examined the differences in the relationship between specific subtypes of narcissism and prosocial behavior, with a few exceptions. To be specific, previous research suggests that grandiose narcissism has a positive relationship with adolescents’ prosocial behavior, while vulnerable narcissism has no significant relationship with it [4]. In addition, trait narcissism (similar to grandiose narcissism) has a positive relationship with helping, while narcissistic rivalry has a negative relationship with helping [24]. Additionally, agentic narcissism (similar to grandiose narcissists) has a negative relationship with both subjective and objective prosocial behavior [6]. Therefore, there is an inconsistent relationship between grandiose narcissism and helping behavior; however, each study has used different approaches to measure the helping behavior. In addition, there is no significant relationship between vulnerable narcissism and helping behavior in the preceding literature.

Furthermore, previous studies examined potential moderating factors for the relationship between narcissism and prosocial behaviors. To be specific, donors who have high scores in narcissism exhibit greater donation intentions when appealed to via imagine-self charitable appeals, as imagine-self appeals enable donors who have high narcissism to project themselves into the recipient’s situation and lead to greater empathy and charity [12]. Another research has shown that grandiose narcissism has a positive relationship with less helping under high social pressure, while vulnerable narcissism has a positive relationship with less helping under low social pressure [5]. Although these studies have shown several moderating factors, there is little research to examine the moderating effects of donation information openness as a moderating factor. Based on the self-regulatory model of narcissism [25], more narcissistic people are more likely to behave pro-socially when the situation has the potential to improve their self-image due to admiration from others [4]. Accordingly, donation information openness (i.e., whether one’s prosocial behavior information is public or not) will be a potential factor to influence motivation to donate more to individuals who have high scores in narcissism. In addition, the increased level of appraisal, depending on the donation information openness, will lead to enhanced narcissistic self-esteem [10,19].

Therefore, we believe that examining the moderating effects of donation information openness is important for narcissism and prosocial nature research. Furthermore, as each narcissism type has distinct features of personality (e.g., extraversion for grandiose vs. introversion for vulnerable), considering different subtypes of narcissism on donation behavior...
is necessary. Thus, to fill these gaps, this study investigated the moderating effects of donation information openness between two subtypes of narcissism and donation intentions.

1.1.2. Moderating Role of Donation Information Openness for Grandiose Narcissism in Prosocial Behavior

Donation information openness refers to whether information about one’s donation behavior is publicly available or not. Based on this definition, our hypotheses were developed.

For grandiose narcissists, when they are aware that their donation behavior is more public, they will have greater donation intentions because they tend to help others to improve their self-enhancement appraisal [6,10]. To be specific, when the grandiose narcissists are aware that their prosocial behavior is more open to others, they will be more likely to take the opportunity to demonstrate their charitable behavior to receive greater personal attention and appraisal [10,19]. Therefore, it will increase their narcissistic self-esteem, leading to greater donation intentions. However, when grandiose narcissists are aware that their behavior is less open, they will be less likely to have donation intentions. This is because individuals who exhibit high grandiose narcissism with a strong need for admiration and appraisal from others [7] have little opportunity to show their prosocial behavior to others, thus leading to low expectations of appraisal or recognition. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1a. Grandiose narcissism will predict greater charitable donation intentions when donation information openness is high.

Hypothesis 1b. Grandiose narcissism will predict lower charitable donation intentions when donation information openness is low.

1.1.3. Moderating Role of Donation Information Openness for Vulnerable Narcissism in Prosocial Behavior

Vulnerable narcissists often feel inferior to others and are socially avoidant [26]. As their narcissistic, self-serving behavior is linked with approval from others [27,28], their motivation for helping is related to the goal of being accepted or praised by others [28]. However, as they tend to avoid social relationships because of their weak sense of self and high neuroticism [15–17], individuals with high vulnerable narcissism will be likely to avoid charitable giving. In other words, when individuals who have high scores on vulnerable narcissism are aware that their prosocial behavior is more open to others, they will be less likely to have donation intentions due to the potential risks of the amount of their donation or their efforts being evaluated [15–17].

In addition, when the donor’s behavior is less open, the donor’s intention to donate will also be lower because their motivation to help is mainly based on being accepted or receiving approval from others [28]. Thus, they will have little motivation to help others when their donation behavior is less open due to the little opportunity to be accepted by their good behavior. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 2a. Vulnerable narcissism will predict lower charitable donation intentions when donation information openness is high.

Hypothesis 2b. Vulnerable narcissism will predict lower charitable donation intentions when donation information openness is low.

2. Materials and Methods
2.1. Participants and Procedure

A total of 359 Korean undergraduate students enrolled in a marketing management class participated in the study for course credit (63% male; Mage = 20.5, SD = 1.56,
Range = 18–28). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the high or low donation information conditions.

First, participants read an advertisement encouraging a donation to a fictitious charity organization. The ad was adopted from previous literature for donation behavior research [29]. It provided information about a charity fundraising event titled, “A remedial exercise campaign for the disabled”. Details of the event such as purpose, place, date (e.g., “There will be a remedial campaign for the welfare of people with disabilities on 15th April. They need your love. Please give a charitable donation for them”), and donation particulars were included.

All aspects of the advertisement were the same except for the donation information openness. In high donation information condition, participants read that message their donation behavior will be public (i.e., “If you want to donate, please send it to this account with your personal information such as name and affiliation to release your donation information through the charity organization website and social networking service (SNS)”). In the low donation information openness condition, they learned that their donation information will not be available to the public (i.e., “If you want to donate, please send it to this account. Your donation will be anonymous to protect the donor’s privacy”).

Next, the participants were asked to answer the questions for donation intentions after reading the message in the manipulated article. After a filler task, self-reported grandiose narcissism (NPI-16) and vulnerable narcissism were assessed. Subsequently, they were required to report how much they believe their donation behavior will be released to others. Next, they were asked to answer the control variables by previous research, namely self-esteem [10], involvement with charitable objects [5,30], age, and gender [12]. Specifically, grandiose narcissism tends to have positive correlations with self-esteem [31], while vulnerable narcissism tends to have negative correlations with it [16,17]. Thus, these individual differences need to be controlled to appropriately find the direct relationship between both types of narcissism and donation intentions [10]. Further, involvement with the charitable object is positively correlated with donation intentions because highly involved individuals are more likely to consider the purpose of the charity as important [32]. Therefore, involvement with the object was also measured in the analysis.

2.2. Manipulation Check

We confirmed the success of our experimental manipulation of high (vs. low) donation information openness in the two manipulated fundraising articles. To be specific, the participants in the high (vs. low) donation information openness condition perceived their donation information is significantly more available to the public ($n = 359$, $M_{public} = 5.24$, $M_{not\ public} = 3.66$; $SE = 0.16$, $t(357) = 9.69$, $p < 0.01$).

2.3. Measures

All measures, except for grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism, were based on previous research using each item rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree).

- Grandiose Narcissism (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.73$) was measured by using the 16-items Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI 16) [33,34], which included respondents’ grandiose traits of narcissism in terms of superiority, self-absorption, and entitlement. Each item was answered with a “yes” (1) or “no” (0). The total number of “yes” answers was used for the analysis.

- Vulnerable Narcissism (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.75$) was measured by using Hendin and Cheek’s [15] 10-item Hyper-Sensitive Narcissism Scale (e.g., “My feelings are easily hurt by the slighting remarks of others”) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very uncharacteristic or untrue, and 5 = very characteristic or true) and a well-validated and reliable measure for vulnerable narcissism [5,27,35].

- Donation Information Openness (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.96$) was measured by using three items (e.g., “My donation behavior will be open to others”, “My donation behavior
Donation Intention (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$) was measured by using three items (e.g., “I will donate some money for people with disabilities at the charitable event”) [12].

- Self-esteem (control variable) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.89$) was measured by using 10 items (e.g., “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”) [31].
- Involvement (control variable) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.91$) was measured by using five items (e.g., “Disabled person welfare is important/valuable/relevant/means a lot/involving to me”) [32].
- Gender was dummy coded (“Male” (0) “Female” (1)).

3. Results

3.1. Reliability and Validity Tests for the Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed good measure reliability and validity. A good overall fit was found (CFI = 0.90, NFI = 0.73, RMSEA = 0.06) with all item loadings as standardized estimate values in the CFA analysis being high ($\lambda > 0.61$), positive, and significant ($p < 0.01$). Convergent validity was found for all constructs (AVE for all constructs > 0.50 (0.54–0.98), providing appropriate convergent validity. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ (0.73–0.91) and construct reliability (C.R.) (0.94–0.99) values of all focal constructs confirmed convergent validity. In addition, discriminant validity was assessed based on Fornell and Larcker [37]. Therefore, the square root of each AVE for all constructs is higher than the corresponding latent variable correlations establishing discriminant validity.

3.2. Preliminary Analyses and Correlation Results

The correlation between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism was relatively low ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.38$), representing orthogonal and independent narcissism subtypes. As in previous research [5], age is correlated with donation intention ($r = −0.11$, $p < 0.05$), and gender is correlated with vulnerable narcissism ($r = −0.11$, $p < 0.05$). As expected, self-esteem was positively correlated with grandiose narcissism ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively correlated with vulnerable narcissism ($r = −0.48$, $p < 0.01$). Charity involvement was positively correlated with donation intentions ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, age, gender, self-esteem, and involvement were controlled in the analysis. Descriptive statistics and correlation results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations, means, and standard deviations of study variables.

| Variable                      | M   | SD  | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. Age                        | 20.43 | 1.56 | 0.19 ** |
| 2. Grandiose Narcissism       | 7   | 3.29 | 0   | −0.03 |
| 3. Vulnerable Narcissism      | 2.95 | 0.59 | −0.11 * | −0.08 | 0.07 |
| 4. Involvement                | 4.41 | 1.16 | 0.01 | −0.04 | −0.08 | −0.1 |
| 5. Self-Esteem                | 4.23 | 0.73 | 0.05 | −0.01 | 0.33 ** | −0.48 ** | 0.09 |
| 6. Donation Information Openness | 4.45 | 1.73 | 0.02 | −0.05 | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.1 |
| 7. Donation Intentions        | 4.62 | 1.32 | 0.02 | −0.11 * | −0.02 | −0.07 | 0.45 ** | −0.03 | 0.06 |

Note: $n = 359$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed); M, mean value; SD, standard deviation.

3.3. Regression Analysis and Simple Slope Analysis Results

Hierarchical regression was used to test both the main and interaction effects for the hypotheses, including the control variables. First, a variance inflation factor (VIF) test was used to confirm that there was no multicollinearity. VIF values for all variables did not exceed 3 [38]. The regression analysis included mean-centered predictors for all variables. The results are presented in Table 2. In addition, a simple slope analysis was conducted to test the interaction effects to find specific results.
Table 2. Hierarchical regression models using grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with donation information openness to predict donation intentions.

| Variables                        | Model 1 (β) | Model 2 (β) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| **Control Variables**            |             |             |
| Age                              | −0.10 **    | −0.11 **    |
| Gender                           | 0.03        | 0.03        |
| Involvement                      | 0.45 ***    | 0.43 ***    |
| Self-esteem                      | −0.13 **    | −0.14 **    |
| **Subtypes of Narcissism**       |             |             |
| Grandiose narcissism             | 0.06        | 0.03        |
| Vulnerable narcissism            | −0.09       | −0.12 **    |
| **A Moderating Variable**        |             |             |
| Donation Information Openness    | 0.04        | 0.05        |
| **Interaction Effects**          |             |             |
| Grandiose narcissism x           | 0.15 ***    |             |
| Donation Information Openness x  |             |             |
| Vulnerable narcissism x          |             |             |
| Donation Information Openness    | 0.09 *      |             |
| **Adjusted R-Square**            | 0.20        | 0.24        |
| ΔR-Square                        | 0.20 **     | 0.04 **     |
| F                                | 14.50 **    | 13.25 **    |

Note: beta value (β), n = 359, *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.10 (two-tailed); the dependent variable is donation intentions.

Model 1 included the control variables, the main effects of two types of narcissism, and donation information openness on donation intentions. Model 2 added the interaction terms, each of the two narcissism types with donation information openness. Model 2 was the final model to test our hypotheses. Control variables—age, gender, involvement, and self-esteem—were analyzed in Model 2. Only age (β = −0.11, p = 0.02), involvement (β = 0.43, p = 0.00), and self-esteem (β = −0.14, p = 0.02) had relationships with donation intentions, indicating that younger people, those who are more closely related with disabled people and those who have lower self-esteem had greater donation intentions.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b predicted the moderating effect of donation information openness on the relationship between grandiose narcissism and donation intentions. The hypotheses were supported with the interaction term coefficient being positive and significant (β = 0.15, p = 0.00) in the regression analysis as in Table 2. Additionally, we compared the donation intentions of those respondents exposed to the high donation information openness condition to those in the low donation information openness condition. The analysis showed a significant difference between high versus low donation information openness on donation intentions (F [1, 357] = 1.67, p < 0.05). Subsequently, we performed a simple slope analysis [38] to explain better the interaction effects of donation information openness (high vs. low) on donation intentions. High donation information openness was calculated by adding one standard deviation from the mean value, and low donation information openness was found by subtracting one standard deviation from the mean value. The results showed that respondents exposed to the high donation information openness condition had greater donation intention, therefore grandiose narcissism positively and significantly associated with donation intentions (β = 0.06, p < 0.05). Thus, Hypothesis 1a was supported.

Conversely, for those who were exposed to the low donation information openness condition, grandiose narcissism was negatively and significantly associated with donation intentions (β = −0.09, p < 0.05). Specifically, when participants who had a higher grandiose narcissism perceived high donation information openness, they showed greater donation intentions (t (355) = 2.02, p < 0.05). However, when participants who had a higher grandiose narcissism perceived low donation information openness, they showed lower donation intentions.
intentions ($t(355) = -3.03, p < 0.05$) compared to those who perceived high donation information openness, as shown in Figure 1. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was supported.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b predicted the moderating effects of donation information openness on vulnerable narcissism and donation intentions. The interaction term coefficient was marginally significant ($\beta = 0.09, p = 0.07$) in the regression analysis. Accordingly, we performed a simple slope analysis [36] to support further the hypothesized interaction effects of donation information openness (high vs. low) on donation intentions for vulnerable narcissism. The results showed that for those who perceived high donation information openness in the fundraising campaign, vulnerable narcissism was not significantly associated with donation intentions ($\beta = 0.03, p > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2a was not supported. However, those exposed to the low donation information openness condition had lower donation intentions; therefore, vulnerable narcissism was negatively and significantly associated with donation intentions ($\beta = -0.35, p < 0.05$). Specifically, when participants had higher vulnerable narcissism with low donation information openness, they had lower donation intentions than those who had lower vulnerable narcissism ($t(355) = -2.11, p < 0.05$), as shown in Figure 2. Therefore, Hypothesis 2b was significantly supported.

Figure 1. Interaction effects of donation information openness for grandiose narcissism. Note: $n = 359$; the dependent variable (DV) is donation intentions. High: Mean + 1SD. Low: Mean - 1SD.
4. Discussion

This study examined the moderating effects of donation information openness for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism subtypes on donation intentions. It is important to understand individual differences, such as a narcissistic personality in prosocial behavior, because a firm’s CRM or a nonprofit organization’s fundraising campaign is based on understanding individual differences.

Individuals behave pro-socially because of not only empathic concerns for others but also egoistic aspects of motivations, such as enhancement of self-image as a social strategy [39,40]. Indeed, individuals who have high scores on narcissism tend to help others due to the egoistic motivation to improve narcissistic self-esteem [10,19]. Therefore, it is important to examine which contingency factors influence the prosocial behavior of narcissistic individuals. We suggest that one of the moderating factors is how much one’s donation information is open in public.

The experimental study conducted on 359 university students revealed that participants with high grandiose narcissism were more likely to make donations when their donation information openness was high. This is because the openness for their charitable behavior, donating, may increase their expectation of appraisals, leading to the improvement of their self-enhancement [6,10]. Conversely, when donation information openness was low, they showed lower donation intentions. Further, participants with high vulnerable narcissism were less likely to donate when donation information openness was low.

Thus, only individuals who had high grandiose narcissism were more likely to donate when their prosocial behavior was openly displayed. However, this was not the case with vulnerable narcissists. Furthermore, both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists tended to not make donations when their prosocial behavior was not open to the public.

One possible reason for Hypothesis 2a not being supported is vulnerable narcissists possessing low social desirability [22]. Specifically, similar to grandiose narcissists, although vulnerable narcissists need to get approval from others, this particular type of
narcissism is negatively correlated with self-deceptive enhancement and impression management [22]. Therefore, their donation behavior was not influenced by making their prosocial behavior open to others, as they may tend to be more influenced by their low social desirability characteristics.

Our findings have several theoretical implications, which are enumerated as follows. First, our findings highlight the importance of examining varying subtypes of narcissism constructs when conducting prosocial behavioral research. To be specific, although previous research shows an inconsistent relationship between narcissism and prosocial behavior, there has been little research examining both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism on donation behavior.

To fill these gaps and add more knowledge to this topic, we tried to examine two different subtypes of narcissism on donation intentions as the results may differ according to the conditions under which individuals under each different narcissism decided to help others [23]. Our results showed that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism had both common and different effects on donation intentions. Specifically, donation intentions of individuals who had high grandiose narcissism were influenced by both high and low levels of donation information openness of the donor’s behavior, but individuals who had vulnerable narcissism were influenced only by the low levels of openness.

Second, although previous studies have shown several moderating factors such as imagine-self appeals [12] and degree of social pressure (high vs. low) [5] for the relationship between narcissism and prosocial behaviors, there is little research examining the moderating effects of donation information openness for the relationship between narcissism and donation intentions while comparing two subtypes of narcissism. The current study hypothesized and tested the moderating effects of donation information openness based on the self-regulatory model of narcissism [25], as more narcissistic people tend to behave pro-socially when their donation is beneficial to their self-image management. Thus, we expect that, when their donation behavior is publicly available, they are more likely to donate due to admiration or appraisal from others, leading to higher narcissistic self-esteem [10,19].

The results show that there is an interaction effect of donation information openness between grandiose narcissism and donation intentions. However, individuals who scored high on vulnerable narcissism showed lower donation intentions only when the donation information openness was low. Therefore, individuals who had high grandiose narcissism were influenced by the higher levels of donation information openness for their donation intentions, although individuals who had high vulnerable narcissism were influenced by it when the donation information openness was low.

Our study also has several practical implications. First, although narcissistic people are often deemed to be self-centered and lacking interest in prosocial behavior [12,16], individuals who have high scores of grandiose narcissism may have greater donation intentions when their charitable donation behavior is exposed to others. Although this phenomenon is not represented by vulnerable narcissists, nonprofit organizations’ marketers should develop effective communication channels to appeal to grandiose narcissists’ prosocial behavior to reach higher fundraising goals. Second, both types of narcissists are not likely to donate when their donation information is less open to others. Therefore, nonprofit organizations’ marketers should make information on donors’ prosocial activities visible through diverse methods such as their website, SNS, and news programs to let other people know the narcissists’ charitable behavior.

This study has several limitations. First, this study did not directly measure possible mediators, such as self-enhancement, in the moderating effect of donation information openness between narcissism and donation intentions. Thus, future research needs to investigate potential mediators between these factors.

Second, this study only tested the hypotheses about helping disabled people with charitable donations. Accordingly, if future research examines different types of prosocial behavior, such as informal (e.g., everyday acts of helping, including allowing a stranger
to move ahead inline) and formal prosocial behavior (e.g., volunteering) [13], the external validity of the research will increase.

Finally, this study was conducted by using an experimental method. As future research, revisiting the relationship between narcissism and donation information openness by using other recent methods such as deep learning-based personality detection [41], and multitask learning for personality trait detection by using Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) model is needed. This will provide an opportunity to examine the topic of the current research by using the latest research methods based on artificial intelligence technology.

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