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Determinants of social status among farmers in rural Punjab: Role of income, education and landholding

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Abstract

The current research focuses on analyzing the socio-economic factors and determinants of social status of farmers in the chosen rural regions of Punjab consisting of SAS Nagar (Mohali), Fatehgarh Sahib and Rupnagar districts. Ten villages (Bajheri, Deh Kalan, Mehmadpur, Mandlan, Karimpura, Kalaundi, Dugri, Kotli, Dohlan Majra, and Dumna) were selected to conduct the study. The study is founded on first hand data gathered by 61 farmers in the field surveys conducted under the Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) programme and a structured questionnaire was used.

The survey concentrates on the main variables which include: farming experience, age, level of education, family type, landholding, access to communication tools, extension services, livestock ownership, and awareness of government schemes.

Keywords: Agriculture, extension programme, government schemes, RAWE programme, rural development, socio-economic status

Introduction

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in the Indian economy, although its relative contribution has declined over time. In recent years (2024–25 estimates), Indian economy stands at approximately 17–18% to the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country. Despite being a significant sector, its growth rate, estimated at around 4–5%, remains lower than that of the industrial and services sectors, which have shown comparatively higher growth rates. This indicates a structural shift in the economy from an agrarian base towards industrialization and service-oriented activities. These variables include extension contact, farming experience, agricultural implements, marital status, age, and mass media participation. Variables depicting the crop and cultivated land status such as cropping intensity, area under crops, source of irrigation, and irrigated area were also elected for the socioeconomic status of farmers ^[1].

However, the importance of agriculture cannot be assessed solely on the basis of its contribution to GVA. A large proportion of the Indian population, nearly 45–50% of the workforce, is still dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. This highlights the sector's critical role in providing employment and sustaining rural economies. The economic position included their income, value of land, investment capacity, and value of household material situation. stated the status of agricultural workers in terms of literacy level and economic condition ^[2]. The farmers who are only dependent on agriculture usually find difficulty in fulfilling their needs (Maslow's needs of hierarchy) whereas; farmers engaged in agriculture-related other allied activities such as animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries,

apiculture, floriculture, etc. have better opportunities for satisfying their needs which results in their improvement. ^[3] Furthermore, the structure of Indian agriculture is predominantly characterized by small and marginal landholdings. According to the Agriculture Census (2021–22), about 86% of operational holdings belong to small and marginal farmers, with marginal farmers alone accounting for nearly 68%. The predominance of such small-scale farming limits the capacity for large-scale production, mechanization, and higher income generation, thereby affecting the overall productivity of the sector. With agriculture being the main source of income for most, it is imperative to introduce modern agricultural practices to uplift the socio-economic status of the farmers in the Punjab. ^[4]

Aim and Objectives

To study basic socio-economic conditions of selected villages

To compare agricultural practices and irrigation systems

To identify development gaps and challenges

To suggest measures for rural development

The study is based on primary data collected through village surveys and secondary data from reports and online sources.

The analysis is descriptive and comparative.

Methodology

The materials of this data are collected from the farmers during the village survey which has done by us. This data is regarding the social profile of the farmers of all the villages we had surveyed. We have a questionnaire which has made by us in the starting for easy understanding. We asked

question related to their social life.

Selection of the area

The study was conducted in ten selected villages of Punjab, namely Bajheri, Deh Kalan, Mehmudpur, Mandlan, Karimpura, Kalaundi, Dugri, Kotli, Dohlan Majra, and Dumna. These villages were purposely sampled to depict a common rural situation in the area. Among the key factors that made the choice of these villages is the fact that they are close to the college, and it was very easy to make field visits and gather primary data in these villages. The region was also selected because of the high reliance on agriculture as the main activity. Also, the chosen villages differ in the size of the population and infrastructure, as well as the type of agricultural activities, which makes them fit perfectly in the comparative analysis. This selection helped in understanding the socio-economic conditions and developmental differences among rural communities in Punjab.

Selection of the data

The present study is based on primary data collected through a field survey conducted in ten selected villages, namely Bajheri, Deh Kalan, Mehmudpur, Mandlan, Karimpura, Kalaundi, Dugri, Kotli, Dohlan Majra, and Dumna. A total of 61 farmers were selected as respondents for the study. The data was collected through personal interviews using a well-structured questionnaire designed to gather relevant information regarding socio-economic conditions, agricultural practices, and resource availability. The selection of respondents was done randomly to ensure unbiased representation of the farming community. This method helped in obtaining accurate and reliable data directly from the farmers. From the extensive review it was put forward that the Socio-economic status was a multi-dimensional construct (Tiwari *et al.*, 2005; American Psychological Association, 2007). Hence it was measured in terms of other variables viz., education, occupation, family size, caste, landholding, water availability, livestock status, housing conditions, farm power and material possession [5].

Data Collection Methods

The data was collected directly from farmers through field surveys. Personal interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire to gather information about socio-economic conditions, agricultural practices, landholding, and access to resources. The social position of the individual reflects their living standard and the prestige associated. It includes their caste, cultural and event participation, housing conditions, material possessions in the house, and family size [6].

Tools and Techniques Used

The main tool used for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire, which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire covered aspects such as:

- Demographic details (age, education, family type)
- Landholding pattern
- Awareness of government schemes
- In addition, personal interviews were conducted to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses.

Statistical Tools and Formulas Used

Percentage Method-

Data of various types was analysed and compared using the percentage method.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{N-1}{1} \times 100$$

Frequency Distribution

The information was organized into frequency tables to indicate the number of respondents in each category.

Graphical Representation

Bar Graph - used for comparison

Pie Chart - used for percentage distribution

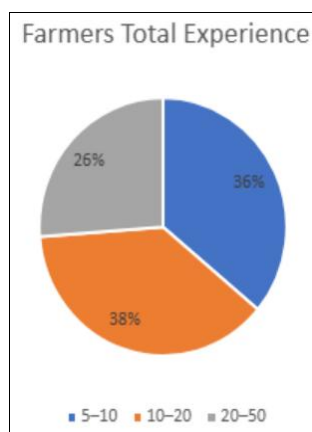
Results and Discussion

Farmers total Experience

The experience analysis of farming among 61 respondents indicates that most of the farmers (23 farmers) are in the 10-20 years of experience category, then 22 farmers are in the 5-10 years category, with a relatively smaller number of 20-50 years category (16 farmers). This distribution shows clearly that the majority of farmers have moderate experience in farming practices. The 10-20 years group of farmers would be likely to have a balanced knowledge of traditional and modern farming practices; hence, not resistant to new farming technologies and advances. Conversely, those farmers who have been in the business over 20-50 years, but in lesser quantity, are still a rich source of traditional knowledge and years of experience in the field. They have a strong understanding of soil, crops and climatic conditions that can greatly help in sustainable farming practices. In the meantime, relatively new entrants in the field of agriculture are farmers with 5-10 years of experience, who are more open to new methods but who do not have a profound understanding of the field. Comprehensively, the existence of a blend of old and moderately old farmers implies a stage of transition in agriculture, where the old ways are in parallel with the new development.

Table 1: Farming Experiences

Parameters	Bajheri n= 11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=6	Mandlan n=5	Karimpura n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	TOTAL N= 61
5-10	3	2	4	2	3	1	2	2	2	1	22
10-20	6	4	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	23
20-50	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	2	16

**Fig 1:** Farming Experiences

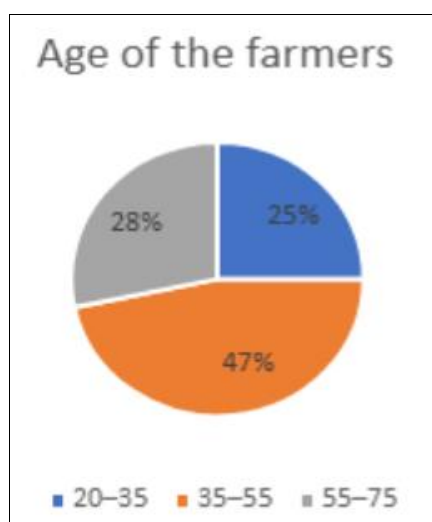
2.Age of the farmers

The age distribution of the respondents indicates that most respondents are between 35-55 years (28 farmers), then

there are 55-75 years (17 farmers), and 20-35 years (15 farmers). This denotes that middle aged farmers are the main labor force in the farming sector. Age: These farmers are usually active, experienced, and able to cope with physical and managerial aspects of farming. The presence of older farmers can be discussed as the reflection of the traditional agricultural practice and experience in time. But the fact that there are fewer farmers of younger age implies that there is waning interest of the young people in agriculture which may be attributed to migration to urban areas or occupational preference. The long term consequences of this trend on the sustainability of agriculture might be that failure to engage younger generations in it would significantly affect its sustainability in the long term. Thus, it is necessary to have policies and programs that would attract the youth to agriculture, including development of skills and integration of technology.

Table 2: Family Size

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=6	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
20-35	3	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	15
35-55	4	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	28
55-75	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	17

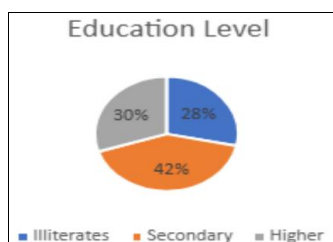
**Fig 2:** Family Size

3. Education Levels of the farmers

The level of education of the respondents shows that most of them have received secondary (25 farmers) education, then higher education (18 farmers), and 17 farmers are illiterate. This shows that although a significant portion of farmers is educated up to a certain level, complete literacy is yet to be achieved. The more educated a farmer is (secondary and higher education), the more they understand and embrace better agricultural technologies, government schemes and modern farming methods. Education is also essential in the decision-making process, risk management and resource utilization. Nevertheless, the illiteracy of farmers can be seen as an obstacle to the implementation of new methods and reduce their access to institutional resources and information. Therefore, the enhancement of agricultural productivity and awareness can be greatly facilitated through the provision of literacy and education programs to farmers.

Table 3: Education Qualification

Parameters	Bajheri n= 11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=6	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
Illiterates	2	1	3	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	17
Secondary	5	4	1	1	4	1	3	2	2	2	25
Higher	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	18

**Fig 3:** Education Qualification

4. Type Family

The study reveals that joint families (36 farmers) are more common than nuclear families (25 farmers) in the selected villages. This is an indication of the old rural set up where extended families co-exist and share responsibilities. Joint families have a number of benefits in agriculture that include access to labor, distribution of resources and making joint decisions. Such a system minimizes reliance on contracted workers and contributes to effective management

of farms. Conversely, nuclear families can experience issues of shortage of labor and increase in dependence on externalities. Strong social bonding and cooperation among

the members of a family is signified by the prevalence of joint families, which favors agricultural activities.

Table 4: Age Group of Farmer's

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=6	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
Joint Family	7	4	4	2	4	3	3	4	2	1	36
Nuclear Family	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	1	3	4	25

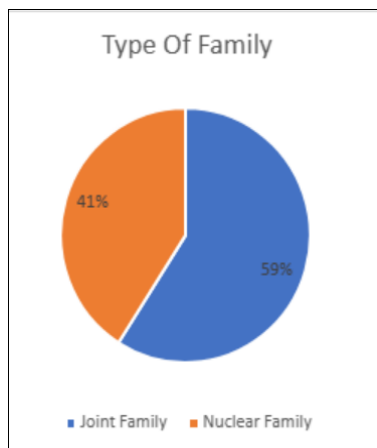


Fig 4: Age Group of Farmer's

5. Types of farmers

The landholding distribution of farmers depicts that most of them are medium (30 farmers), then large (21 farmers) farmers, and there are only 9 marginal farmers. This implies that moderate land resources are available to most farmers, and can sustain stable agricultural production. The medium and large farmers tend to be better placed in terms of investing in modern technologies, irrigation plantations, and farm inputs, thus increasing productivity. Marginal farmers however are usually vulnerable to risks, have low income and limited resources. The imbalance in land distribution implies that there should be policies that could help small and marginal farmers to enhance their lives. It is important to note that the size of land that farmers cultivate on is between 5 to 15 acres with majority being less than 5 acres (Anjana & Sidhu, 2022) ^[7]

Table 5: Land Holding of Farmer's

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
Marginal (<1 hectares)	2	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	9
Medium (2-10 hectares)	5	2	4	2	4	2	3	2	2	4	30
Large (more than 10 hectares)	4	4	1	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	21

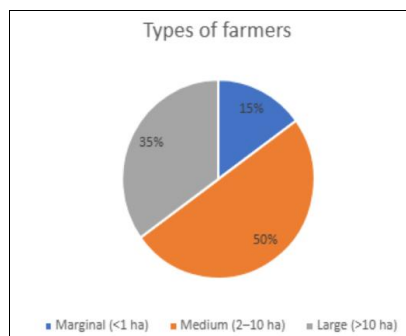


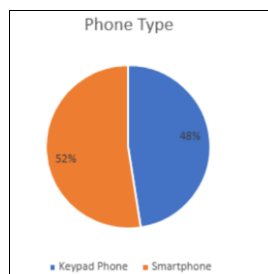
Fig 5: Land Holding of Farmer's

6. Telecommunication

The data reveals that 32 farmers have access to smartphones, and 29 have access to keypad phones, which is an indication of a slow but steady transition in rural regions towards digitalization. The rising popularity of smart phones gives farmers access to information and weather forecasts online, prices of goods in the market and government schemes. This can go a long way in enhancing decision-making and productivity. But with the availability of keypad phone users, it is indicated that digital penetration still remains incomplete and it has to be increased to improve digital literacy of farmers.

Table 6: Mobile and Internet Connectivity

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpura n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N= 61
Keypad Phone	5	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	29
Smart Phone	6	4	2	2	5	2	3	2	4	2	32

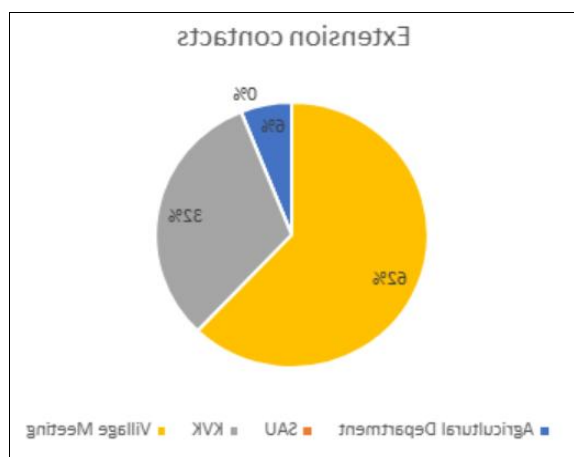
**Fig 6:** Mobile and Internet Connectivity

7. Extension contacts

The analysis indicates that village meetings (41 farmers) are the main source of agricultural information, then KVKs (21 farmers) but only a few farmers use the agricultural department and none of them use SAUs. This shows that informal communication channels are significant in dissemination of information. Nonetheless, the restricted contact with the formal institutions underscores a deficiency in the extension services, which must be tackled in order to enhance knowledge transfer.

Table 7: Extension Contact

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N= 61
Agricultural Department	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
SAU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KVK	3	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	21
Village meeting	8	6	4	3	4	1	2	3	3	2	41

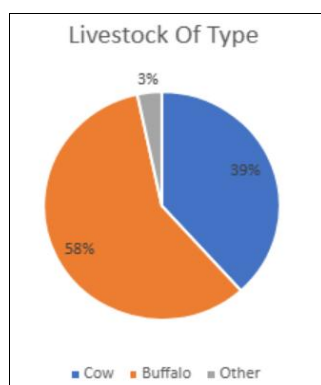
**Fig 7:** Extension Contact

8. Livestock and poultry

Majority of the farmers were found to be having low livestock possession (47.00%). The average livestock owned was found to be two animals which include either cow or buffalo. [8] The data reveals that buffaloes (35 farmers) are more commonly owned than cows (23 farmers), indicating the importance of dairy farming in the study area. Animal housing pattern was observed as an important variable in determining the SES of farmers especially dairy farmers [9]. Livestock provides an additional source of income and supports agricultural activities. Very few farmers own other livestock, showing limited diversification. Livestock plays a significant role in not only providing a source of income for these farmers but also in improving their overall socioeconomic status and livelihoods [10].

Table 8: Livestock Information

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N= 61
Cow	5	4	3	0	2	1	2	0	4	2	23
Buffalo	6	3	2	5	4	3	4	5	0	3	35
Other	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2

**Fig 8:** Livestock Information

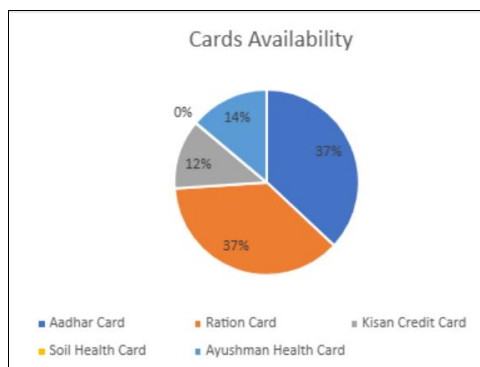
9. Cards Availability

The study shows that all farmers possess Aadhar and ration cards, while fewer have Kisan Credit Cards (20 farmers) and Ayushman cards (23 farmers). None of the farmers has

a Soil Health Card, which means that they are not aware of the soil management practices. This underscores loopholes in the use of government schemes.

Table 9: Card Availability

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
Adhar card	11	7	5	5	7	4	6	5	5	5	61
Ration Card	11	6	5	5	7	4	6	5	5	5	61
Kisan Credit Card	3	1	2	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	20
Soil Health Card	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ayushman Health Card	6	4	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	0	23

**Fig 9: Card Availability**

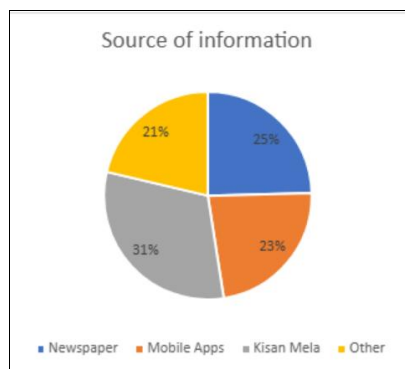
10. Source of information

The primary sources of information to farmers are Kisan Melas (21 farmers) and newspapers, with less farmers

utilizing mobile apps. This demonstrates that traditional sources are the most dominant, although modern sources are slowly coming out.

Table 10: Source of Information

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=5	Mandlan n=5	Karimpur n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n=5	Dumna n=5	Total N=61
Newspaper	0	2	0	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	15
Mobile apps	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	0	2	2	14
Kisan Mela	6	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	19
Other	3	3	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	13

**Fig 10: Source of Information**

1 Government schemes awareness

There is a high level of ignorance and outreach since only 23 farmers are knowledgeable on government schemes and

38 farmers are not. This highlights the need for effective extension programs

Table 11: Government Schemes

Parameters	Bajheri n=11	Deh kalan n=7	Mehmudpur n=6	Mandlan n=5	Karimpura n=7	Kalaundi n=4	Dugri n=6	Kotli n=5	Dohlan majra n= 5	Dumna n=5	Total N= 61
Yes	10	3	2	0	2	0	1	3	2	0	23
No	1	4	4	5	5	4	5	2	3	5	38

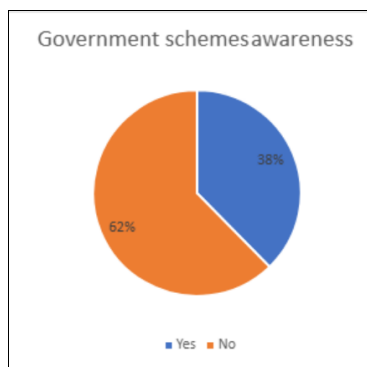


Fig 11: Government Schemes

Conclusion

The current study gives a holistic knowledge about the socio-economic conditions and determinants of social status among farmers in ten sampled villages in Punjab in the districts of SAS Nagar (Mohali), Fatehgarh Sahib, and Rupnagar. According to the primary data obtained on 61 farmers, the results indicate that agriculture remains the primary livelihood source with majority of the farmers being middle-aged, and with a moderate experience in farming.

The research emphasizes that education level, size of landholding and access to resources are important factors that can define the social status of farmers. Most of the farmers are classified as medium landholding which helps to maintain relatively steady agricultural production, and marginal farmers are more susceptible to the lack of resources. Joint family systems are also a positive factor in farming since people can have access to labor, and their decisions are shared.

Even though there is a slow transition to the modernization, which is seen in the rising use of smartphones, traditional sources of information, including village meetings, and Kisan Melas remain predominant. This shows that there is increased adoption of digital, but not establishment. The literature also reveals that a big gap in extension services and limited contact with formal agricultural institutions is also a limiting factor in the transfer of scientific knowledge to farmers.

In addition, understanding and usage of government schemes are low by a significant number of farmers, which indicates that more outreach and awareness efforts are necessary. Raising livestock, especially the buffaloes and cows, is significant in supplementing the source of income and improving the livelihood insecurity.

Finally, the research confirms the fact that a focus on educational enhancement, the enhancement of extension activities, digital literacy, and awareness of government programs are crucial in improving the socio-economic situation of farmers. Income stability and resilience can also be enhanced through adoption of diversified and sustainable farming practices including integrated farming systems. The results of this research may guide the policymakers and development agencies to develop specific interventions that would facilitate inclusive and sustainable rural development in Punjab.

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