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**INDO AMERICAN JOURNAL OF
PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES**<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1069712>Available online at: <http://www.iajps.com>**Research Article****INVESTIGATING THE APPLICATION STATUS OF
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH
LEARNING ORGANIZATION AMONG THE NONACADEMIC
STAFF MEMBERS OF AHVAZ JUNDISHAPUR UNIVERSITY OF
MEDICAL SCIENCESIN, SOUTHWEST IRAN****Kiamars Hajizadeh¹ and Gholamhossein Barekat *²**¹ PhD Student, Department of Educational Administration, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran² Associate Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran**Abstract:**

Introduction: Medical sciences universities are the places where specialized and committed workforces required by the society in such fields as healthcare and treatment are fostered and educated. Thus, the present study aims at investigating the application status of knowledge management and its relationship with learning organization amongst the nonacademic staff members of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences in southwest Iran.

Materials and Methods: The study population of the present descriptive research included all of the nonacademic staff members working in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences. A total of 180 employees were selected based on a simple randomized method as the study sample volume. Two questionnaires, namely the learning organization questionnaire and knowledge management questionnaire, were employed to collect the data. The data extracted were analyzed in SPSS, ver. 21.

Findings: The results of the study hypotheses analyses by the use of one-sample t-test indicated an intermediate score for all of the five components of learning organization, i.e. personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. Also, the results of the correlation coefficient showed that there is a positive relationship between the five learning organization components and the knowledge management. The results of the regression analyses indicated that systematic thinking and mental patterns are the best predictors of knowledge management. The significance level was set as 0.05.

Discussion and Conclusion: Since the scores obtained for organizational learning and knowledge management were in an unacceptable level and the today's world is currently bearing witness to very rapid variations in various areas of science and technology, it is necessary for the nonacademic staff members of the university to have plans for creating learning and knowledge as well as knowledge distribution and transfer in the organization.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Learning organization, Ahvaz, Iran.

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INTRODUCTION:

Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences is a Type One 1700-year-old university belonging to the Ministry of Healthcare, Treatment and Medical Education [1-2]. Every year, a great many of the elites enter Iran's Medical Sciences Universities for continuing education [3, 4 and 5] as well as for being employed as the faculty members [6, 7 and 8]. Medical Sciences Universities are places where specialized and committed workforce required by the society in such fields as healthcare and treatment are trained [9, 10 and 12]. In the today's highly turbulent world in which the organizations' environments are dramatically uncertain and complex, the changes come about in a rather swift pace. The organizations acquiring more awareness of their peripheral environment and the factors extant therein and bring about enough standardization and coordination with the changes and evolutions through relying on their sufficient knowledge and awareness can keep on going forward. New organizations' formation based on what they learn is amongst their essential features. Learning means accumulation, contemplating over and use of complicated knowledge, skills and attitudes in such a manner that the individual or group can become actively adapted to the changing environments [13]. Knowledge management (KM) is a novel approach towards the management of science that includes creation, acquisition storage, distribution, sharing and application of knowledge. Educational systems can play a major role in the establishment of knowledge management because the education system can make use of KM processes to raise human beings rich in knowledge that is because there is a close relationship between learning methods and knowledge creation and this way the informational needs can be identified and shared and defined precisely [14]. Karimi Moneghi et al performed a review study in 2014 aiming at the investigation of KM status and its dimensions. In line with this, the articles existing in the internet resources and Iranian and international scientific databases have been evaluated [15]. Gilavand in a review research dealt with the investigation of KM status in Iran's universities and concluded that the transferring and retrieval of the extant knowledge as well as creation of a possibility for interaction between the researchers can be facilitated and accelerated through implementation of knowledge management that can per se cause the enhancement of research level and increase in science production and consequently assist the universities in accomplishing their goals [16]. This research has been drawn upon the perspective held by Peter Senge, the founder of learning organization. In his Book, called "the fifth discipline", he introduces the learning organization as featuring five aspects. These aspects are: personal mastery, mental model,

shared vision, collective learning and systems thinking. In spite of the fact that each of these factors has been developed independently and separately, each is of a crucial importance for the success of the other. Each of these components guides the organizational structure towards a vital orientation so as to enable it learn in an actual manner and constantly expand its capacity for learning about the most sublime tendencies and aspirations [17].

Based thereon, the present study is seeking to find an answer to this fundamental question as to in what extent the learning organization's components are applied by the staff and managers of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences? What is the type of and the extent to which the indicators of learning organization, i.e. personal mastery, mental patterns, shared ideal, team learning and system's thinking, are related to the knowledge management? The following hypotheses have been proposed based on the foresaid questions:

- 1) The personal mastery (one component of learning organization) is applied in a higher than medium level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 2) The mental model (one component of learning organization) is applied in a higher than medium level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 3) The shared vision (one component of learning organization) is applied in a higher than medium level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 4) The team learning (one component of learning organization) is applied in a higher than medium level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 5) The system's thinking (one component of learning organization) is applied in a higher than medium level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 6) There is a significant relationship between the use of personal mastery (a component of learning organization) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 7) There is a significant relationship between the use of mental model (a component of learning organization) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 8) There is a significant relationship between the use of shared vision (a component of learning organization) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 9) There is a significant relationship between the use of team learning (a component of learning organization) and knowledge management in

Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.

- 10) There is a significant relationship between the use of system's thinking (a component of learning organization) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 11) There is a manifold relationship between the use of learning organization's five disciplines (personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences.
- 12) In the competitive environment governing the universities and the efforts that are made by the universities for the generation of science and acquisition of better ranks in doing so, knowledge management offers an appropriate strategy for making optimal use of the individuals' knowledge and intellectual faculties in the universities [15]. Since the universities are struggling to preserve their position and acquire superior scientific ranks amongst the national and international universities, the current research paper deals with an investigation of the application status of KM and its relationship with the learning organization amongst the nonacademic staff members of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences in southwest Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present study is an applied research in terms of its objective because it is seeking to evaluate the extent to which the learning organization components are applied and that how are they correlated with the KM in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences in southwest Iran. The present study is a descriptive research in terms of the study method it has used and it has been conducted based on a correlation method because the researcher, besides studying the extent to which the components of learning organization have been utilized in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, is looking for determining the type and the intensity of the relationship between learning organization components with knowledge management. The study population included all of the nonacademic staff members and managers of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences that reaches in number to 800 individuals who have been working in the university during 2014-2015 academic years. According to the study population volume and based on the nature of the present study, a sample volume of 200 individuals were selected. Simple randomized method was applied herein as a result of which a total of 180 staff members answered to the questions posited in the questionnaires. The data collection instrument included the learning organization questionnaire

designed based on Peter Senge's model of learning organization and KM questionnaire that was confirmed in its validity by a group of specialists. Learning organization questionnaire, developed by Nyffe (2001), has been arranged to assess five aspects, namely personal mastery (6 questions), mental model (6 questions), shared vision (4 questions), system's thinking (4 questions) and team learning (4 questions). The questionnaire contains 24 items that are scored based on Likert's five-point scale from completely disagree to completely agree (1-7). The questionnaire reliability in the study performed by Nyffe (2001) was obtained equal to 0.85 based on Cronbach's alpha method. In the present study, as well, a reliability coefficient equal to 0.91 was obtained for the questionnaire and the reliability coefficients of the five components were 0.82, 0.75, 0.80, 0.60 and 0.87, respectively, which is suggestive of the questionnaire's high precision. The instrument used herein to measure the KM was a questionnaire that was designed through taking advantage of the studies related to KM and investigation of other similar questionnaires [18]. To prepare the questions inserted in the questionnaire based on the studied performed in this regard and evaluation of the main concepts of the KM structure as well as study of the suggested patterns, first of all, any component that was envisaged to be possibly of significance in KM was prepared and finally certain choices were made based on the selected indicators and were eventually formed into questions. The questionnaire contains 25 closed questions. The questionnaire components were knowledge creation (7 questions), knowledge sharing (6 questions), knowledge application (5 questions) and knowledge storing (7 questions). The questionnaire was scored based on Likert's 5-point scale from completely disagree to completely agree (1-5). A reliability coefficient of 0.91 was reported by Khamedata (2009) for the questionnaire [18]. In the present study, as well, the questionnaire's reliability coefficient was found equal to 0.96 which is reflective of the high precision of the questionnaire.

After undergoing the necessary administrative stages and determining the study sample volume, the researcher, considering the study objective and the necessity for selecting the nonacademic staff members and managers, attended the Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and briefly interviewed the participants for their method of cooperation with the research. After selecting the study sample volume, a total of 200 individuals, the aforementioned questionnaires were administered to the study subjects and they were again collected after several days. The study subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire by giving them the necessary explanations and instruction in regard of

the questionnaire completion. In the end, 180 questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher and these formed the basis of the study evaluations. To analyze the data, there was made use of descriptive statistics like frequency, frequency percentage, mean and standard deviation, as well as the inferential statistics methods including the one-sample t-test, Pierson correlation coefficient and multiple regression coefficients. The data were analyzed in SPSS software, ver. 21. The significance level was set to 0.05 for the examination of the study hypotheses.

FINDINGS:

The mean and standard deviation of the learning organization were 82.55 and 21.32, respectively. Also, the mean and standard deviation of the knowledge management were 61.52 and 19.87, respectively. To test the study hypotheses, one-sample t-test was utilized the results of which are summarized in the following table. As it is seen in the table, the mean value obtained for the personal mastery is significantly lower than the estimated mean (24). Therefore, considering Hypothesis One, it can be stated that the personal mastery has been applied in a level below intermediate in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and thus the hypothesis should be rejected ($t=-8.85$ and $P=0.001$). As it is observed in the table, the mean value obtained for the mental model is significantly lower than the estimated mean (24). So, considering the Hypothesis Two, it can be stated that the mental model has been applied in a level lower than intermediate in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and thus the hypothesis is rejected ($t=-13.85$ and $P=0.001$). As it is discernible from the table, the mean value obtained for the shared vision is significantly lower than the estimated mean (16). Thus, considering the Hypothesis Three, it can be stated that the shared vision has been applied in a level lower than intermediate in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of

Medical Sciences and thus the hypothesis is rejected ($t=-5.01$ and $P=0.001$). As it is seen in the table, the mean value computed for the team learning is significantly lower than the estimated mean (16). So, considering the Hypothesis Four, it can be stated that the team learning has been applied in a level lower than intermediate in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and the hypothesis is accordingly rejected ($t=-2.99$ and $P=0.003$). As it is observed in the table below, the mean value obtained for the system's thinking is significantly below the estimated mean (16). Thus, considering the Hypothesis Five, it can be stated that the system's thinking has been applied in a level lower than intermediate in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences so the hypothesis is subsequently rejected ($t=-0.39$ and $P=0.17$).

Table (2) presents the results pertaining to the correlation coefficients of the relationship between the learning organization's components and criterion variable (knowledge management). The figures given in table (2) indicate that there is a positive and significant correlation between the personal mastery component of the KM ($r=0.341$). Therefore, Hypothesis Six is confirmed in a $P<0.001$ significance level. Also, there was found a positive correlation between the components of mental model and KM ($r=0.609$). Thus, Hypothesis Seven is confirmed in $P<0.001$ significance level; furthermore, there was also figured out a positive correlation between shared vision and KM ($r=0.551$). So, the Hypothesis Eight is confirmed in $P<0.001$ significance level. Also, there was found a positive correlation between the team learning component and KM ($r=0.609$). So, Hypothesis Nine is confirmed in $P<0.001$ significance level; moreover, there was found a positive correlation between system's thinking and KM ($r=0.551$). Thus, hypothesis 10 is confirmed in $P<0.001$ significance level.

Table 1: the results of one-sample t-test for comparing the mean values of the study sample volume regarding the learning organization components with the population's estimated mean

Component	Number of items	Estimated mean	Sample mean	Std. deviation	t-value	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Personal mastery	6	24	18.96	7.63	-8.85	179	0.001
Mental model	6	24	18.59	5.23	-13.85	179	0.001
Shared vision	4	16	14.17	4.87	-5.01	179	0.001
Team learning	4	16	14.99	4.49	-2.99	179	0.003
System's thinking	4	16	15.82	5.85	-0.39	179	0.17

Table 2: correlation coefficients of the relationship between the learning organization's components and criterion variable (knowledge management)

Criterion variable \ Predictor variable	Knowledge management		
	r	N	P
Personal mastery	0.341	180	0.001
Mental model	0.466	180	0.001
Shared vision	0.435	180	0.001
Team learning	0.364	180	0.001
System's thinking	0.586	180	0.001

Table 3: the results of multiple regression analyses pertaining to the interaction of learning organization components with knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences based on simultaneous entering method

Model	ss	df	MS	FP	RS	MR
Regression	27366.27	5	4573.25	21.9	0.384	0.622
Residuals	43332.59	174	249.03	0.001		
Variables	B	Beta		t	P	
Personal mastery	0.112	0.04		0.60	0.54	
Mental model	0.610	0.16		1.86	0.06	
Shared vision	0.506	0.12		1.16	0.24	
Team learning	0.545	0.12		1.21	0.22	
System's thinking	1.67	0.49		5.45	0.001	
Fixed value	100.43	-		-	-	

Table (3) summarizes the results of multiple regression analysis pertaining to the interaction between the learning organization components (personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences based on the simultaneous entering method. Corresponding to the information inserted in table (3), the multiple correlation coefficient for the linear combination of the predictor variables of the learning organization components (personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences is $MR=0.622$ which is statistically significant in a $P=0.001$ significance level. Therefore, the predictor variables account for nearly 38% of the variance pertaining to KM. The beta coefficients pertaining to the predictor variables and their significance levels are also seeable from the table. According to t-statistics, it can be observed that the value of beta belonging to the relationship between the predictor variable "system's thinking" orientation and KM is statistically significant but the relationships with the other components are not found statistically significant. Also, stepwise regression method was utilized to determine an appropriate prediction equation by the use of the smallest likelihood

collection from the strongest combination of the predictor variable.

Table (4) gives the results of multiple regression analysis pertaining to the interaction of the learning organization components (personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) and KM in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences based on a stepwise method. As it is demonstrated in table (4), corresponding to the results obtained from the stepwise regression method, system's thinking and mental model are respectively the predictors of the KM inter alia the learning organization's components (personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) as the predictors of the staff knowledge management and a prediction equation through only blending the two predictor variables can be obtained based on which the multiple correlation coefficients for linearly combining the predictor variables were $MR=0.616$ and $RS=0.380$ which are found statistically significant in $P<0.001$ level. Comparing the values obtained for the determination coefficients through hierarchical regression method, $RS=0.384$, and through stepwise method, $RS=0.380$, it can be understood that the combination of the two predictor variables, i.e. system's thinking and mental model", produces the strongest combination of predictor variables for the elaboration of staff's knowledge management variance.

Table 4: the results of multiple regression analysis pertaining to the interaction between the learning organization's components and knowledge management in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences based on stepwise method

Statistical index	Multiple regression (MR)	Determination coefficient (RS)	F-ratio P-likelihood	β and B regression coefficients		Fixed value (a)
				1	2	
1) system's thinking	0.856	0.344	F=93.31 P<0.001	B=1.99 β = 0.58 t=9.66 P=0.001	-	93.05
2) Mental Models	0.616	0.380	F=54.13 P<0.001	B=1.6 β =0.47 t=6.8 P=0.001	B=0.839 β =0.221 t=3.18 P=0.002	102.47

Considering the non-standardized coefficients column (B) and the fixed value column based on a simultaneous entering method, the prediction of the knowledge management score (y') of the staff members is possible from the scores of the variables "personal mastery", "mental model", "shared vision", "team learning", and "system's thinking" (X), respectively, according to the following predictor equation:

$$y' = 100.43 + 0.11 (X1) + 0.61 (X2) + 0.50 (X3) + 0.54 (X4) + 1.67 (X5)$$

According to the non-standardized coefficients (B) and fixed value columns based on stepwise method, the knowledge management score prediction (y') of the staff is respectively possible from the scores of the system's thinking and mental model (X) through the following equation

$$y' = 102.47 + 1/6 (X1) + 0.83 (X2)$$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The materials mentioned in the findings' section indicated that the mean values obtained for personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking in the present study are significantly lower than the estimated mean as a result of which the Hypotheses 1-5 are rejected. It means that the learning organization's

indicators are applied in a lower than intermediate level in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences. In elucidating this finding, it can be stated that the method by which the organizations

are designed and managed, the way the individual jobs are specified and described and, more importantly, the style taught to the individual regarding how to think and how to communicate have all caused the emergence of fundamental inabilities in terms of learning. Also, the findings of the current research paper showed that there is a positive correlation between the personal mastery, mental model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking with the knowledge management. Therefore, hypotheses 6-10 are confirmed. This latter finding is consistent with the results obtained in the studies by Yaghoubi et al (19). Hovland et al (20), Loermans (21) Hong (22), Zahbion (23), Nadi (24), Beigi (25), Bahramian (26) and Bryant (27). In clarifying the results of this latter finding, it can be said that the real learning organizations actively manage the learning process based on principled designing and not based on chance and in a haphazard manner. The learning organization carries out learning process management through the following five substantial activities: systematic problem-solving, experimenting based on novel methods used by the other organizations, and rapid and effective transferring of knowledge in the organization's

body via creating systems and processes supporting these activities and institutionalizing them in the organization's daily operation context. The organizations can more effectively manage learning. One component of the learning organization that was found having a positive relationship with knowledge management in the present study was the use of system's thinking. This activity is the foremost and the most fundamental undertaking for managing the organizational learning process. System's thinking includes a perceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that are developed during long years. Although instruments are new, the individuals are capable of rapid learning if the individuals think based on a system. The individuals apply the system's thinking in their evaluation of the whole organizational forces. In system's thinking, the individuals, in lieu of exploring the details of a status, usually direct their thoughts from details towards dynamicity and this leads to the creation of some sort of ability for the individuals so that they can discern the mutual relationships in any situation. System's thinking enables individuals to think in practice. Utilizing the system's thinking approach to the process improvement, the actions are less frequently conducted in an uncoordinated and irregular manner the result of which is the maximization of learning organizations' privileges. Another component having been found positively correlated with knowledge management is the use of team learning. In elaborating this finding, one should pay attention to the point that team learning is essentially different from group teaching. That is because this type of learning includes something more than acquisition of group skills. Team learning underlines the self-managerial learning, creativity and free flowing of ideas. The successful team learning system insures that that the teams will share their negative and positive experiences with the other groups in the organization; consequently, they seriously enhance the companies' intellectual growth. When a team is learning well, not only the group members gain remarkable results but also the individual members will have progresses more accelerated in pace than ever before. A perfectly task-oriented and coherent team is capable of accomplishing the assigned duties a lot better than what is done individually and solitarily. The team members can become prominent figures through creating more solutions, achievement of higher objectives and more eminent innovations. Enji figured it out that when teams really learn works together, they will be capable of yielding extraordinary results. The findings by Murray and Musa (2005), as well, confirm this result. Also, the use of individual capabilities has a significant effect on the advancement of knowledge management. It is generally opined that "the

organizations can only learn via their members, although individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning, no learning takes place without it. Thus, the individuals' ability and commitment for learning is the main factor. The individual learning opportunities include self-managerial learning, learning from peers and computer-aided learning, daily work-related experiences, specialized duties in projects and personal discretions. Personal mastery and competency incorporates a system in which the individual constantly clarifies and deepens his or her personal attitudes, concentrates his or her energy and power, expands his or her patience and tolerance and finally perceives the realities in a just and unbiased manner. Keeping this definition in mind, the personal mastery and competencies form the underlying premise of the learning organization. Lastly, the shared vision in organizations can improve the learning and the knowledge management via encouraging and promoting the individual discretion, establishment of communication and acquisition of support, adoption of a discretion as a continuous process, blending of endogenous and exogenous perspectives and distinguishing of positive and negative vistas. Corresponding to the information given in the sections on findings, the multiple correlation coefficient of the linear combination of the predictor variables in the relationship between the learning organization's components (Personal Mastery, Mental Model, shared vision, team learning and system's thinking) and knowledge management is statistically significant in Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences. In clarifying this result and the importance of the system's thinking and mental models, it can be stated that system's thinking offers a conceptual framework making more vivid patterns enabling the individuals discern how to effectively change the system. Enji (2004) points out that system's thinking moves along the mental path empowering it to see the mutual relations, the causes and the chains of effect and giving it clearer vision of the change processes and instantaneous images. Lanham and Vineyard (2005) believe that system's thinking is a key aspect of learning cycle's systematic process. Also, in regard of the importance of mental models, it can be asserted that many of the best ideas contain attitudes and propel innovations in the organizations and they will never have the chance to be posited and proposed due to the inherent conflict with the dominant mental patterns. The learning organizations' leaders should learn the skills of revealing and testing the mental models without instigating the defensive processes. In line with this, Senge highlights that working with mental models commences via investigating the internal thoughts, learning how to unravel the internal images of the world and, finally, by

surfacing and preserving them so as to be subjected to scrutinizing evaluation. Mental models encompass the ability to perform an informative conversation balancing the research, investigation and support and this is the situation in which the individuals offer their thoughts in an effective manner and acquire an open thinking style in respect to the others' influences. In compliance with the findings of the present study, it can be stated that the system's thinking variables and mental models are the best predictors of knowledge management. That is because the organizational learning and knowledge management scores were not in an acceptable level and the today's world is bearing witness to very rapid changes in the various areas of science and technology. The nonacademic staff members of the universities are recommended to devise plans for learning as well as creating, distributing and transferring knowledge in their organizations. The study population and the study sample volume limitations render it somewhat difficult to generalize the results obtained herein. Also, according to the idea that the present study is a descriptive research, it is constrained in terms of not having deduced a cause and effect relationship. Based on the results of the present study, it is suggested that further future research is required to identify the factors giving rise to the learning organization's growth, particularly in regard of the aforementioned university. Also, the current research paper suggests comparing the learning organization's status in governmental and nongovernmental institutions in another study.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Ethical issues were completely observed by the authors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

None declared

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