

Occupational Stress among Teachers, Feeling of Wellbeing and Coping Strategies

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Abstract

Teachers face multiple transition of life because of impact of modernization, advancement of technology in field of education and demands of fast changing society. The change brings within it not only occupational stress but also internal stress, effecting him physically and leads to inefficiency or disability in correct performance of his duty. Without good teachers the best system is bound to fail whereas with good teachers the worst system can be largely overcome. So, it is important not only to measure occupational stress and use of coping strategies by teachers but also to study its relation with feeling of wellbeing. For this a sample of eighty teachers in the age range on twenty five to forty five years was included in the study through purposive sampling technique from different Govt. Schools of Chandigarh. Occupational Stress Index, Coping Checklist and PGI-Wellbeing scales were used to measure the occupational stress, coping strategies and feeling of wellbeing among teachers. After analysis of data reveal that teacher are high on role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, under-participation and poor peer relations in work related stress. On the other hand teacher use coping strategies like positive cognition, problem solving and distraction. Results of the coefficient of correlation indicate that role overload, unreasonable group and political pressure have negative significant correlation with feeling of wellbeing. Responsibility for persons is also negative significant correlation with avoidance coping strategies. Under-participation has significant positive correlation with negative cognition, problem solving, magical thinking, religious, help seeking and total scores of coping strategies. Powerless ness has positive and significant correlation with distraction, religious, help seeking and total scores of coping strategies. Low status has positive significant correlation with positive cognition and total scores of coping strategies. Total scores of coping strategies have positive significant correlation with feeling of wellbeing. Hence, the study is pioneer in nature that reflects the importance of studying the occupational stress in teachers and there use of coping strategies.

Key words: Education, Occupational stress, feeling of well-being, coping strategies

Introduction

Education has always been linked with society. It has both a personal and a social dimension, like two sides of a coin, they are inseparable. Accordingly the goals and priorities of a nation must be reflected in the objective of the teaching profession and of the teacher, since these are intrinsically and casually linked. Today, the average teacher's perception of his role and responsibility is far too limited. The teacher must actively and fully associate himself as an essential and responsible partner in the great task, which face the nation. A

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teacher has to prepare students for examinations and open to them the world of knowledge, but this will count for little unless he helps them to become persons of character.

Many authorities have recognized the crucial role of teacher in educating the child. According to Professor Humayun Kabir (1956) “Without good teachers even the best system is bound to fall, with good teachers even the worst system can be largely overcome”. If the teachers are misfits or are indifferent to their responsibilities the whole program of education is then likely to be ineffective and largely wasted. Only competent teachers can obtain the desirable educational outcomes. Changes in family structures, movement from joint families to nuclear families, parents working, increasing stress and strains of society, influence of various cultures have further put more obligations on schools and made the teachers’ functions complex and burdensome. Thus through this article on occupational stress among teachers, feeling of well-being and coping strategies is of educational relevance and socially significant.

Selye (1956) first observed and introduced physiological and psychological complexities of stress in many people. And defined stress as “A non-specific response of the body to any demand”. The word ‘stress’ is used constantly in connection with emotional state. Macmillan Encyclopedia (2000) defines stress as a condition of individual under more physical or emotional pressure than they can cope with. With this stress as a word means “to draw tight” and may be used to describe hardship affliction, force, pressure, strain, or strong effort. It has been recognized as an internal load or pressure applied on the individual and viewed as persons response to a disturbance.

On the other hand stress at work has become a common phenomenon of modern lifestyles. With the changing scenario number of Indian and foreign psychologists have worked on the area of occupational stress (Pestonjee, 1992; Srivastava and Singh, 1981). Occupational stress has been defined as the general patterned, unconscious mobilization of the individual’s energy when confronted with any organizational demand (Quick and Quick, 1984). Lazarus (1991) defined occupational stress as a process, involving a transaction between an individual and his or her work environment. Humphrey (1998) defined work stress as an incompatibility between the individual and his or her work environment. But more specific definition provided by NIOSH (1999) of work stress as being the harmful and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.

According to Pearlin and Schooler (1978) coping is a behavior that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experience. Coping strategies refer to the efforts made to “master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress” (Weiten et al., 2011). George (1981) describes coping as the behavior individuals use to prevent, alleviate or respond to stressful situations. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) refer to coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts that are used to manage stressful situation and regulate negative emotions. Folkman & Lazarus, (1980) described generally people use two coping strategies: one is problem-solving strategies those efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events. Research indicates that people use both types of strategies to combat most stressful events. Gupta (2000) coping protects people from being harmed by problematic experiences.

On the other hand work has always been considered as best mixed blessing, if not an absolute curve. Work in an organization provides a large section of the population with life. It also exerts its own pressure and stress which ultimately can have negative consequences. With the onset of industrial revolution, occupational stress as a new concept in the area of education as well. Teachers face multiple life transitions of life because of impact of modernization, advancement of technology in field of education and demands of fast

changing society. The change brings with it not only occupational stress but also internal stress, affecting him physically, and leads to inefficiency or disability in correct performance of his duty, cognitive impairment, and depression lowers their quality of life drastically (Prakash 2000).

According to Raju (2000) attitude towards oneself and profession, degradation of status in the community are some of the problems relating to work, pressure, anxiety, insecurity in job, work satisfaction, relationship with seniors and co-workers isolation, loneliness generation gap etc. are some of the prominent thrust areas resulting in socio-psychological frustrations among teachers. Cohen and Wills (1985) report that the coping style or personal coping resources have a direct effect on the psychological well-being of an individual and may moderate the negative influence of stress on psychological health. Individuals develop and refine a repertoire of workable coping strategies that are compatible with their personal disposition and lifestyle (George, 1981). These become all the more important as the individual enters into professional life. Thus to achieve the objective to successful teacher one has to maintain a good psychological well-being and for this the teacher tries to cope up with the stresses of life transition. This suggests that occupational stress, coping strategies and psychological well-being of teacher are related to each other.

Objectives and Hypothesis

The main objectives are:

1. To study the occupational stress in teachers.
2. To assess the coping strategies used by teachers
3. To study the feeling of wellbeing of teachers

The main hypotheses have been formulated are:

1. There would be a significant relation between different occupational stress in teachers and use of coping strategies.
2. There would be a significant relation between occupational stress in teachers and feeling of wellbeing.
3. There would be a significant relation between use of coping strategies by teachers and their feeling of wellbeing.

Methodology

Sample

For this study eighty teachers in the age range of twenty five to forty five years were selected without any bias through an incidental manner from Govt. Schools in Chandigarh. *Exclusion criteria:* Those teachers were excluded from the study that have past history of a) chronic medical diseases such as asthma, heart diseases, pre-history of hypertension etc. b) having severe family or marital problems.

Tools

Occupational Stress Index- Shrivastava and Singh (1984). The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five-point scale. The items relate to almost all relevant components of the job life which cause stress in some way or the other and measures 'role overload', 'role ambiguity', 'role conflict', 'unreasonable group and political pressure', 'responsibility for persons', 'under participation', 'powerlessness', 'poor peer relations', 'intrinsic impoverishment', 'low status', 'strenuous working conditions', 'un-profitability'.

Coping Checklist- Rao, Prabhu and Subhaskrishnan (1989). The Checklist comprises of 70 items describing a broad range of behavioral, emotional and cognitive responses that may be used to handle stress. The items are scored as yes or no indicative of the presence or absence of a particular coping behavior. The items in the scale have grouped into 9 categories on the basis of the type of questions. These categories are 'Positive cognition' 'Negative cognition',

‘Problem Solving’, ‘Distraction’, ‘Magical thinking’, ‘Avoidance’, ‘Religious’, ‘Help-seeking’, ‘External attribution’.

PGI General Well-being- Verma and Verma (1989). It is a tool to measure positive mental health of Indian subjects it takes very little time to administer. The scale consisted of statements pertaining to well-being, life satisfaction, feeling of belongingness and emotional stability.

Procedure

Every teacher was seated comfortably and informal consent was taken for participation in the study. All three tests were administered to each teacher individually. Responses to the Occupational Stress index, Coping Checklist, and PGI General Well-being were noted down. The tests were administered strictly according to their prescribed manual instructions. Participants were assured that their results and the information obtained would be kept confidential and used for research purpose only.

Statistical Techniques and Analysis of Data

The necessary data for each of the test that was used in the study was collected and scrutinized; scores were tabulated for finding out the nature of test scores all of the variables under consideration. Mean, median, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and Pearson's product moment correlation at significance level of 0.01 and 0.05 levels were seen among all the variables.

Results and Discussion

The present study has been undertaken to assess the occupational stress, coping strategies and feeling of well-being among teachers. The data was collected from eighty school teacher from Govt. schools of Chandigarh. The data has been organized and described to yield the statistics namely mean, median, mode and standard deviation to study the general nature of the data sample for the variables of occupational stress, coping strategies and feeling of wellbeing. To find out the significance relation between the different variables of occupational stress, coping strategies and feeling of wellbeing the Pearson's product moment correlation was calculated.

Table-I exhibits the scores of mean, median, mode standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis for twelve dimensions of occupational stress, i.e., ‘role overload’, ‘role ambiguity’, ‘role conflict’, ‘unreasonable group and political pressure’, ‘responsibility for persons’, ‘under participation’, ‘powerlessness’, ‘poor peer relations’, ‘intrinsic impoverishment’, ‘low status’, ‘strenuous working conditions’, ‘un-profitability’ and total score of all the 46 items of occupational stress of teachers. The mean scores of twelve dimensions of occupational stress are 17.86, 9.69,

Table I: Mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the scores of occupational stress (N=80)

	OS1	OS2	OS3	OS4	OS5	OS6	OS7	OS8	OS9	OS10	OS11	OS12	OS(T)
Mean	17.86	9.69	13.46	11.50	9.27	11.22	9.02	11.71	10.50	7.21	10.15	5.80	127.41
Median	17.50	9.00	14.00	11.00	9.00	10.50	9.00	12.00	10.00	7.00	10.00	6.00	129.50
Mode	17.00	7.00	14.00	10.00	8.00	10.00	6.00	10.00	9.00	6.00	10.00	6.00	130.00
SD	3.90	2.69	2.40	2.80	2.18	3.08	2.59	2.366	2.57	2.47	2.35	1.77	14.34
SK	-.202	.940	.502	.326	.197	.414	.202	.447	.119	.311	.382	-.009	.241
Kt	-.647	.879	2.72	-.781	-.09	-.621	-.965	1.11	-.147	-.027	-.233	-.065	.622

OS1 – Role overload, OS2- Role ambiguity, OS3- Role conflict, OS4- Unreasonable group and political pressure, OS5- Responsibility for persons, OS6-Underparticipation, OS7- Powerlessness OS8- Poor peer relations, OS9- Intrinsic impoverishment, OS10- Low status, OS11- Strenuous working conditions, OS12- Unprofitability, OS(T)- Occupational Stress total score

Table II: Mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the scores of coping strategies scale (N=80)

	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	CS6	CS7	CS8	CS9	CS(T)
Mean	7.75	1.90	5.42	9.51	3.41	2.55	4.13	2.57	.737	38.00
Median	8.00	2.00	6.00	9.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	36.00
Mode	7.00	1.00	7.00	10.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	28.00
SD	2.30	1.07	1.50	3.34	1.75	1.386	2.34	1.27	.688	10.46
SK	.241	.392	-.807	1.07	.288	.303	.139	.207	.397	1.103
Kt	.007	-.479	.053	2.16	-.744	-.779	-.979	-.811	-.838	1.448

CS1-Positive cognition, CS2-Negative cognition, CS3-Problem solving, CS4-Distraction, CS5-Magical thinking, CS6-Avoidance, CS7- Religious, CS8-Help seeking, CS9- External attribution, CS(T)- Coping strategies total score

Table III: Mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the scores of Feeling of wellbeing scale (N=80)

	Fwb
Mean	15.08
Median	16.00
Mode	20.00
SD	4.23
SK	-.627
Kt	-.674

Fwb- feeling of wellbeing is 13.46, 11.50, 9.27, 11.22, 9.02, 11.71, 10.50, 7.21, 10.15, 5.80, and 127.41 respectively. After analysis of data reveal that teachers are high on role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, under-participation and poor peer relations in work related stress. Table-II exhibits the scores of mean, median, mode standard division, skewness, kurtosis for nine dimensions of coping strategies, i.e., 'positive cognition' 'negative cognition', 'problem solving', 'distraction', 'magical thinking', 'avoidance', 'religious', 'help-seeking', 'external attribution' and total scores of all the 70 items of coping strategies. The mean scores of the nine dimensions of the coping strategies are 7.75, 1.90, 5.42, 9.51, 3.41, 2.55, 4.13, 2.57, .737 and 38.00 respectively. From this it can be analyzed that teacher use coping strategies like positive cognition, problem solving and distraction. Table-III exhibits the scores of mean, median, mode standard division, skewness, kurtosis for the feeling of wellbeing scores. The mean score of the feeling of wellbeing is 15.05.

Table-IV shows the Pearson's product moment correlation matrix, calculated among all the twenty four variables. From the inter-correlation table, it can be seen that role over load scores have positive correlations with role ambiguity ($r = .390$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), unreasonable group and political pressure ($r = .358$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), powerlessness ($r = -.229$, $df=78$, $p < .05$), strenuous working conditions ($r = .521$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), unprofitability ($r = .243$, $df=78$, $p < .01$) and total scores of occupational stress ($r = .515$, $df=78$, $p < .01$). The positive correlation between scores of role over load with role ambiguity, unreasonable group and political pressure, strenuous working conditions, unprofitability and total scores of occupational stress shows little bit overlapping between all these variables. Role over load has also negative correlation with powerlessness which shows that the teacher who is high on role overload show low quality of power in their working conditions.

Role ambiguity has positive correlation with role conflict ($r = .344$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), unreasonable group and political pressure ($r = .364$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), intrinsic impoverishment ($r = .44$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), low status ($r = .286$, $df=78$, $p < .05$), strenuous working conditions ($r = .456$, $df=78$, $p < .01$), occupational stress total score ($r = .713$, $df=78$, $p < .01$) and negative correlation with feeling of wellbeing ($r = -.292$, $df=78$, $p < .01$) which shows that teacher high on role ambiguity, i.e., when they are confused from their positions or role in job are low on their feeling of wellbeing.

Role conflict has significant correlation with unreasonable group and political pressure ($r = .378$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), intrinsic Impoverishment ($r = .304$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), Strenuous working conditions ($r = .227$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), occupational stress total score ($r = .522$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Unreasonable group and political pressure has positive correlation with responsibility for persons ($r = .301$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), strenuous working condition ($r = .303$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), and total scores of occupational stress ($r = .481$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$) and negative correlation with poor peer relations ($r = -.237$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$) and scores of feeling of wellbeing ($r = -.310$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). This shows that teachers who are high on unreasonable group and political pressure have low peer relations and low on feeling of wellbeing.

Responsibility for persons has significant negative correlation with under participation ($r = -.48$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), powerlessness ($r = -.46$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), poor peer relations ($r = -.41$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), and avoidance ($r = -.25$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). This shows that teachers who are high on responsibility for persons have low participation in jobs feel low powerlessness feel low peer relations and low tendency of avoidance.

Under participation has positive significant correlation with powerlessness ($r = .737$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), poor per relations ($r = .271$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), intrinsic impoverishment ($r = .292$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), low status ($r = .562$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), total scores of occupational stress ($r = .529$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), negative cognition ($r = .221$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), problem solving ($r = .238$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), magical thinking ($r = .232$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), religious ($r = .318$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .232$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .290$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$).

Powerlessness has positive significant correlations with poor peer relations ($r = .328$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), intrinsic impoverishment ($r = .283$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), low status ($r = .546$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), total scores of occupational stress ($r = .422$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), distraction ($r = .221$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), religious ($r = .307$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .231$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), and total scores of coping strategies. Poor peer relations has positive significant relations with low status ($r = .354$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Intrinsic Impoverishment has positive significant relations with low status ($r = .303$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), strenuous working conditions ($r = .236$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), and total scores of occupational stress ($r = .616$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$).

Low status has positive significant correlations with total scores of occupational stress ($r = .526$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), positive cognition ($r = .318$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .298$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Strenuous working conditions has positive significant correlations with unprofitability ($r = .234$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), and total scores of occupational stress ($r = .625$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Unprofitability has significant positive correlation with total scores of occupational stress. ($r = .319$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$).

Positive cognition has significant positive correlation with negative cognition ($r = .266$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), Distraction ($r = .379$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), avoidance ($r = .365$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), religious ($r = .428$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .312$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), external attribution ($r = .348$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .581$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Negative cognition has positive significant correlation with distraction ($r = .519$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), magical thinking ($r = .427$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), avoidance ($r = .445$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), religious ($r = .428$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .312$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), external attribution ($r = .348$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .641$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$).

Problem solving has positive significant correlation with avoidance ($r = .239$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .287$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .338$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$). Distraction has positive significant correlation with magical thinking ($r = .590$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), avoidance ($r = .614$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), religious ($r = .583$, $df = 78$, $p < .05$), help-seeking ($r = .346$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), external attribution ($r = .346$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r = .894$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$).

Magical thinking has positive significant correlation with avoidance ($r = .459$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), religious ($r = .505$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), help seeking ($r = .391$, $df = 78$, $p < .01$), external

attribution ($r=.238$, $df=78$, $p<.05$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r=.686$, $df=78$, $p<.01$). Avoidance and positive significant correlation with religious ($r=.462$, $df=78$, $p<.01$), help seeking ($r=.391$, $df=78$, $p<.01$), external attribution ($r=.238$, $df=78$, $p<.05$) and total scores of coping strategies ($r=.686$, $df=78$, $p<.01$). Religious has significant positive correlation with help seeking ($r=.462$, $df=78$, $p<.01$), external attribution ($r=.321$, $df=78$, $p<.01$), and total scores of coping strategies ($r=.718$, $df=78$, $p<.01$). Help seeking has positive significant correlation with total scores of coping strategies ($r=.650$, $df=78$, $p<.01$). External attribution has positive significant correlation with total scores of coping strategies ($r=.464$, $df=78$, $p<.01$) and feeling of wellbeing ($r=.269$, $df=78$, $p<.05$).

On the basis of the obtained results it can be stated that teachers are high on dimensions of occupational stress like role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment. According to Humphrey, (1998) work stress as being the harmful physical and emotional responses occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or need or the workers. Teachers who are high on role overload have negative significant correlation with feeling of wellbeing, i.e., teachers who are high on role overload are low on their wellbeing. In occupational stress role ambiguity has also negative correlation with feeling of wellbeing means that teachers who are high on role ambiguity are low on feeling of wellbeing scale. Teachers who are high on unreasonable group and political pressure are low on feeling of wellbeing scale as shown in the result in correlation table.

Responsibility for persons as a dimension in occupational stress has a negative correlation with avoidance in coping strategies. Under participation has significant positive correlation with negative cognition, problem solving, magical thinking, religious, help seeking and total scores of coping strategies. This shows that teachers who are underparticipated on their job work are also high on coping strategies like negative cognition high on magical tricks and dependence on other for taking help on every work. Powerlessness has positive correlations with distraction, religious, help seeking and total scores of coping strategies. This shows that teachers who are high on powerlessness in occupational stress are high on distraction and for most of the work may ask to god or friends to help them in their work. Sahu and Mishra (1995) explored the life stress and coping styles in teachers and found the similar results.

Low status in occupational stress among teachers has positive correlation with positive cognition and total scores of coping strategies. Srivastava (1991) in his study examined the moderating effect of approach and avoidance modes of coping on the relationship of occupational stress and job performance. Further analysis showed that approach mode of coping attenuates whereas avoidance mode of coping intensifies the inverse relationship between occupational stress and job performance. Constructive coping methods which can aid healthy adaptation and adjustment to stressful situations, classified by Moos and Billings (1982, in Weiten et al., 2011). External attribution in coping strategies has a positive correlation with feeling of wellbeing. It also found emotion focused coping is more effective and has a beneficial impact on psychological wellbeing (Van Harreveld et al., 2007). The social manner of emotion focused coping involves sharing feelings with others in the social network. The cognitive manner of emotion focused coping, on the other hand, involves redefining the perception of the situation (Van Harreveld et al., 2007). Pandey and Srivastava (2000) showed that teachers expressed significantly better active coping when in stressful situations.

Conclusion

On the basis of result obtained we can conclude that teachers are high on dimensions of the work related stress like role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment. And teachers

who are high on role overload, role ambiguity and unreasonable group and political pressure are low on feeling of wellbeing. And teachers who are using coping strategies like external attribution are high on feeling of wellbeing. Teachers who are high on under participation are high on negative cognition, problem solving, magical thinking, religious and help seeking in coping strategies. Teachers who are high on powerlessness are high on distraction, religious and help seeking like coping strategies. With such types of studies it can be further conclude that monitoring of stress in the workplace is very important particularly in the educational institutions where the future of our country is built. In stress free environment teachers give more focus on the growth of students. Therefore, coping strategies if taken into account can help in creating a stress free healthy environment in schools and hence allow teachers to adjust not only in their family but also in their schools.

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