

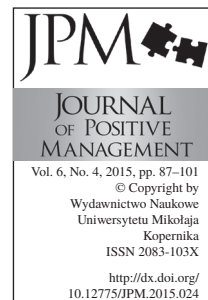
# WORK LIFE BALANCE AS A FACTOR INFLUENCING WELL-BEING

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## Abstract

The purpose of the paper is identifying features that are common for work-life balance and well-being.

The first part of the article treats about well-being and its determinant. Next authors are presenting work-life balance and factors influencing the issue. The paper considers both described concepts in the context of positive organizational scholarship (POS), which is focused specifically on the study of positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members (Cameron and Spreitzer, 2011).

There is also an author's tool described (Work-Life Balance Barometer®). This example of a research tool was analyzed in terms of finding common measures for both phenomena.

The method used for the aim of the article is a critical literature review including foreign articles and polish literature from the last 10 years. Authors selected publications that are presenting an issue of work-life balance and well-being.

Findings are showing that work-life balance and well-being are strongly connected and has many common areas which can be researched. Conclusions are devoted to indicate directions of further research in the area.

The originality of the paper results from presenting a research tool (Work-Life Balance Barometer®) which is accessible on-line in two languages on Sensorium24.com. The idea of the barometer is conducting longitudinal research. The first edition of the Work-Life Balance Barometer® ended on 31th of December 2015.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, well-being, determinants, Work-Life Balance Barometer®

**Paper type:** Conceptual

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## 1. Introduction

The question on the issues that are important in people's lives is very necessary and crucial for scholarships of management sciences. Popular topic of many research are work-life balance and well-being. Though understanding of both categories is clear we still cannot say much about the linkage between them. Studies on well-being are quite recent and this topic is still in its infancy (Lyubomirsky et

al., 2005), as well as studies on well-being in organizational settings. Research on well-being in organizational settings is still facing two major challenges – conceptual confusion surrounds psychological well-being (Danna and Griffin, 1999), and the uncertainty about the superiority of concurrent hedonic, eudaimonic, and integrative approaches. Work-life balance is the issue which has been well described and examined by scientists of organizational psychology, sociology and management. Many articles presents sets of determinants of work-life balance where there are organizational and individual factors as well. The aim of this paper is presenting a work-life balance issue as a factor influencing well-being. Authors through characterizing well-being and work-life balance search common variables that allow do research on the issues. The article is a conceptual paper ended with recommendations for further research.

## **2. Conceptualizations of psychological well – being**

Psychological well-being is a concept gaining more and more attention in organizational sciences. Academics and practitioners advocate the importance of developing the optimal psychological health of workers rather than merely trying to heal mental illness (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012). Scholars generally acknowledge that mental or psychological health comprises two major dimensions (Achille, 2003; Keyes, 2005; Keyes and Lopez, 2002) – the negative dimension is usually called psychological distress, while its positive counterpart is often labeled psychological well-being (Keyes, 2006).

Current research on well-being has been derived from three main research perspectives: eudaimonic, hedonic and integral approach (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2001).

The eudaimonic approach focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning. The eudaimonic approach considers psychological well-being in terms of optimal functioning, meaning, and self-actualization (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The most frequent operationalization for this approach is Ryff's model, consisting of six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

The hedonic approach studies psychological well-being in terms of happiness and life satisfaction (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012). This approach defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance. Although there are many ways to evaluate the pleasure/pain continuum in human experience, most research within the new hedonic psychology has used assessment of subjective well-being (SWB) (Diener and Lucas, 1999).

The main operationalization of this approach is based on indicators of positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). Positive affection

includes positive feelings such as confidence, interest, hope, pride, and joy while negative affection includes negative feelings such as rage, hate, guilt, and sadness. The affective component refers to emotions experienced in life with the idea that “life is good” if an individual experiences more positive than negative emotions. The life satisfaction dimension is a cognitive component of subjective well-being (Myers and Deiner, 1995). If people have more experiences that give pleasure; they are considered to have more subjective well-being. The cognitive component refers to individual’s reflective judgment that his or her life is going well and is usually assessed with measures of life satisfaction.

Characterized components of subjective well-being: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood, together often summarized as happiness.

Some researchers have suggested an integrative approach to psychological well-being as a viable third alternative. In an attempt to reconcile the dual perspective of psychological well-being, R. M. Ryan and E. L. Deci have suggested that it would be optimal to consider psychological well-being as integrating these two research trends, since each perspective sheds a different light on the construct (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012). Although such an integrative approach is appealing, little is known about its validity and superiority (Keyes et al., 2002), and empirical support for it remains scarce (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012).

As it was mentioned above, psychological well-being is a concept gaining more and more attention in organizational sciences. However, despite this recent interest, context-free measures of psychological well-being are preferred in this field. For many years no adequate conceptual framework has been devoted specifically to psychological well-being at work (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012).

Lately, to better structure our understanding of psychological well-being and its application at work, Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie conceptualized psychological well-being through five dimensions, namely (Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie, 2012):

- interpersonal fit at work,
- thriving at work,
- feeling of competency at work,
- desire for involvement at work,
- perceived recognition at work.

This conceptualization proposing a fresh look at the concept within an organizational context.

It’s extremely important how we define well-being cause it influences our practices of government, managing, teaching, therapy, parenting, and preaching, as all such endeavors aim to change humans for the better, and thus require some vision of what “the better” is.

### 3. Selected factors influencing well-being

#### *3.1. Socio-demographic and individual factors influencing well-being*

There are numerous factors enhancing or increasing individuals' well-being. In the literature, particularly subjective well-being was investigated based on demographic factors such as age, education, gender, and socioeconomic status. In a recent studies significant relationships between subjective well-being and some demographic variables such as age, living conditions, academic achievement, family composition, and parental education were reported (Eryilmaz, 2012). On the other hand, studies in the USA do not ascribe much significance to the relationship between demographic factors and subjective well-being (Huebner et al., 2004; McCullough et al., 2002).

Subjective well-being is also related with psychological factors such as internal locus of control and self-esteem, positive transitions during early adolescence from primary to junior high school, peer relations, and lack of stressful life events, somatic diseases, family structure and relationships (Eryilmaz, 2012).

Among individual factors influencing well-being personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism are particularly important. It's empirically proven that neuroticism is the trait most strongly associated with negative affect as an indicator of poor well-being, while extraversion is associated with positive affect indicating higher well-being. As for other traits from the five-factor model, researches have shown that agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively associated with well-being, but less strongly than neuroticism and extraversion, while, for openness to experience, effects were the smallest although also in direction of positive association with well-being (Butkovic et al., 2012).

However, it has to be noted, that the relationship between personality and well-being is dynamic and therefore should be examined within aging perspective (Butkovic et al., 2012).

Last but not least, individually chosen strategies are crucial for increasing personal well-being.

Strategies for increasing subjective well-being were first conducted by Fordyce (1977, 1983). In the first phase of his empirical study, Fordyce determined eight strategies that increase individuals' subjective well-being. In the second phase, he increased the number of strategies to 14. In the third phase of the study, he concluded that the most effective strategies were (Eryilmaz, 2012):

- positive and optimistic thinking,
- dealing with new activities,
- having a life full of activities,
- participating in more social activities,
- improving extravert personality traits,
- decreasing negative thoughts.

A number of strategies were found positively related to increased subjective well-being (Tkach and Lyubomirsky, 2006). Researches indicates that people, in their pursuit of happiness, employ strategies such as having positive relations with other, giving respect and love to others, seeking delectation, having positive academic experiences, having romantic relations, retaining happiness, and controlling negative feelings (Eryilmaz and Yorulmaz, 2006).

### ***3.2. Contextual factors influencing well-being***

Among factors influencing well-being satisfaction of needs is indicated as an important variable which affects subjective well-being. Although needs are individual, their satisfaction occurs in certain situational contexts, thus they are described underneath.

The self-determination theory proposes that individuals in different contexts exhibit three important psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence means that concerning the individual's success in difficult matters and their efforts until he or she gets the desired result. Secondly, the need for relatedness means to form trust based on mutual respect. Finally, the need for autonomy refers to the individual's making a choice and having initiative (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Eryilmaz, 2012). Authors of the SDT point that fulfillment of these needs is essential for psychological growth (e.g. intrinsic motivation), integrity (e.g. internalization and assimilation of cultural practices), and well-being (e.g. life satisfaction and psychological health), as well as the experiences of vitality and self-congruence (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Need fulfillment is thus viewed as a natural aim of human life that delineates many of the meanings and purposes underlying human actions (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Specification of basic needs defines not only the minimum requirements of psychological health but also delineates prescriptively the nutriments that the social environment must supply for people to thrive and grow psychologically (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Thus, SDT describes the conditions that facilitate or undermine well-being within varied developmental periods and specific social contexts such as schools, workplaces, and friendships (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Through satisfying employees' needs work can be a source of sustenance, wealth, joy, deep meaningfulness and well-being. Thus, scholars should undertake considerable effort to recognize the relationship between work (organizational context) and well-being.

Barker, Caza and Wrzesniewski maintain that work influences well-being in three ways (Barker et al., 2014):

- the work contract affects well-being – work is an exchange of effort for compensation and it allows people to meet their basic needs; well-being is also influenced by how people evaluate the fairness of their employment contracts;

- the work itself has psychological and physiological implications for well-being – the relationship between work itself and well-being can be understood through two established approaches to understanding well-being: hedonic and eudaimonic. Hedonic tradition to understanding the influence of work on well-being focuses on the relationship between the job itself and employees' experienced job satisfaction, defined as the subjective judgments employees make about their work situation. In contrast, eudaimonic approaches to understanding the influence of work on well-being focus on how work can shape perceptions of meaningfulness and fulfillment (for example, well-being can be influenced by perceived autonomy, skill variety, task identity or task significance). Moreover, the temporal structure of work may also influence well-being through psychological and physiological means. The positive influence of the temporal structure of work on well-being occurs if the structure of work is compatible with non-work activities and aspirations;
- the work context influences well-being – employees' well-being may be influenced by meeting in the organization the basic human need for belongingness; people in organization have a unique opportunity to create meaningful relationships with those they work with. Not only social environment of work is crucial for experiencing well-being. The physical environment of work is another important in-put to well-being. The effect of the physical work environment on individuals' well-being begins with safety and security of the workplace.

In conclusion, organizations can be significant sources of employees' well-being. However, it has to be known that differentiate interventions are need to be taken by subjects responsible for influencing employees' well-being. Interventions that focus solely on "happiness-at-work" and positive-emotions-boosting programs (based on a hedonic approach to well-being) can be not adequate. It has to be noted that enhancing employees' well-being can also require the modification of working conditions - social or/as well physical (e.g., salary increases, bonuses, improving the workplace environment). Moreover, according to eudaimonic tradition to understanding the influence of work on well-being also interventions focused on the work itself (work design) are necessary.

#### **4. Work life balance as a predictor of subjective well-being**

Work-life balance is a very important and crucial issue discussed by many scientists of management, organizational psychology and sociology. Contemporarily achieving work-life balance is a personal aim of many young people. We can say that a problem of dealing with work and family duties is also a right-on and frequent topic of scientific elaborations. Scientists and practitioners who are

interested in the issue aim to identify circumstances of gaining work-life balance status in people's lives.

Many researchers have generally agreed that work-life balance is related with an individual's psychological well-being and overall sense of harmony in life (Clark, 2000; Marks and MacDermid, 1996). If we are going to present it as a part of well-being idea, it is necessary first to define the category. There is a lot of definitions of work-life balance. One of important features of it is a lack of accordance in defining it and understanding its moral aspects.

The term "work-life balance" can be used interchangeably with: work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, work-family spillover, work-family balance, accommodation, compensation and segmentation (Schädel, 2012).

Using different terms depends on what kind of approach (positive or negative) an author uses to describe the category. The most popular terms are work-family conflict and work-family enrichment (work-family facilitation, synergy). Seeing the areas of human's life as incompatible is more rare way to explain the issue. More authors want to present the problem as a challenge, opportunity that may bring people valuable benefits. Such an approach is more rational and better for people's mental health. One disadvantage of it results from little research on the work-life enrichment (Baral and Bhargava, 2010).

According to Clutterbuck work-life balance is „a state of a person who manages the potential conflict between different requirements concerning his/her time and energy in the way of satisfying needs of welfare and self-realization (Clutterbuck, 2005)". The general idea presented by the author was precised by identifying following rings of time and space:

- a) internal ring – a space and time for an individual,
- b) second ring – a space and time for close relatives,
- c) third ring – a space and time for working,
- d) external ring – a space and time for other people.

All areas influence on people's lives. However, people perceive differently particular rings, a balance of investing time and energy in each is perceived subjectively. It makes research and searching for solutions in the area more difficult (Clutterbuck, 2005).

Popular approach to the issue of work-life balance leads through the social exchange theory which explains how employees achieve task performance and commit to their organizations. According to Blau, a social exchange occurs when both parties value the exchange relation based on mutual trust and reciprocity (Blau, 1964). One of the important parameter of the exchange is an employees' perception of their own well-being and organization as contributing more than it promised to provide. There is a strong intention among employees to repay their organization by increasing their efforts to the organization (Wayne et al., 1997).

Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully. The distinction between work and life is problematic for example due to the instance of work-related time, including travel-to-work, which cannot be considered as leisure, but equally cannot be considered work in the sense of paid employment (Wheatley, 2012). Guest (2002) argues, that a balance between work and life does not refer to an equal weighting of the two, but rather searching for an acceptable, stable relationship. Because of subjectivity in perceiving the issue the desired point may differ considerably between individuals. What more, a balance is dynamic and changing through employees' needs or employer's demands.

Work-life balance means finding a rhythm that will allow them to combine their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations (Hughes and Bonzonielos, 2007).

Kesting and Harris present organizational understanding of work-life balance that emphasizes having by people a measure of control over when, where and how they work (Kesting and Harris, 2009).

Authors McDowall and Lindsay focus on two variables: individual's effectiveness and his/her satisfaction of roles fulfilling (McDowall and Lindsay, 2014).

One of the authors who deal with the issue, Reiter presents its diversity. They presented a taxonomy by D. R. Forsyth that is very good in the ethics context. The typology is based on two dimensions: idealism and relativism. In the matrix built on these two criteria there are four types of definitions: situation, absolutist, subjectivist and exceptional (Reiter, 2007). The classification is very useful and helps to explain better the meaning of work-life balance. Nonetheless there is still a need of organizing knowledge and doing research in the area.

In the science of management work-life balance is often linked with organizational practices. Researchers take into consideration interdisciplinary character of work-life balance and explain causes of dealing with the issue. Moreover they do research on gender in organizations and try to distinguish carrier models that are specific because of gender (man's carrier and mommy track) (Gatrell et al., 2013).

The most frequently barriers and lacks in research till now have been as follows:

- defining work-life balance,
- interpretation of work-life balance in organizations,
- focusing only on employees that are lacking of time and are in good economic situation,
- not considering parent-employees' needs.

The title of the paper touches on the issue of relations between work-life balance and well-being which is an important direction of future research.



Work is a life domain distinct from other domains such as leisure, friends, and family: the workplace involves specific parameters leading to unique experiences for individuals. Most individuals spend at least half of their waking hours at work, making this life domain a primary focus for most (Morin, 2004). In much of the developmental lifecycle people are likely to be engaged in varied, rich, and complex relationships with the world of work – whether preparing for it, entering into it, or contemplating their exit from it (Barker et al., 2013). In recognition, that work is a domain of life that shapes how people experience not only their lives in the workplace but their lives in a broad sense, scholars have invested effort in understanding the relationship between work and well-being. While some have studied the impact of work on life domains such as family and leisure, others have examined the role that these life domains play in the general experience of work (Barker et al., 2014).

The literature on work-to-family conflict suggests that how people manage work and family roles has major implication for well-being, job performance and family functioning (Gareis et al., 2009). Traditionally, the interface between work and family has been viewed in negative terms. For many years scholars have given empirical proofs that work influences psychological and physical distance within families and that failure to balance competing priorities of work and family life results in decreased well-being.

Fortunately, the relationship between work and family roles and well-being wasn't always described only in negative terms. Some research has supported the concept of work-family enrichment – what means that experiences gained from one role improve the quality of life in the other role (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

The impact of job and organizational features on employees' well-being is well proven. In the literature principal characteristics of a job have been widely shown to be associated with employee well-being. A job that is psychologically "good" scores well on at least some of these features: opportunity for personal control, opportunity for skill use and acquisition, externally-generated goals, variety, environmental clarity, contact with others, availability of money, physical security, valued social position, supportive supervision, career outlook and equity (Warr, 2013).

Although, numerous studies have focused on employees' well-being (Buss, 2000; Lyubomirsky, 2001), relatively little scientific research has focused on the positive impact of work life balance on employees well-being. The Table 1 shows results of searching phrases "work-life balance" and "well-being" in the Ebscohost® and Proquest® scientific papers bases. Only 18 articles from 53 papers found in the papers bases presents results of research, where the link between "work-life balance" and "well-being" is emphasized.

The work life balance of an individual is one of the factors which affect their satisfaction or happiness with life as a whole which can be measured through the construct of subjective well-being.

|                  | “work-life balance”<br>(in abstract) | “well-being”<br>(in abstract) | “work-life balance”<br>and<br>“well-being”<br>(in abstract) |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Ebscohost</b> | 954                                  | 25904                         | 34  |
| <b>Proquest</b>  | 269                                  | 3218                          | 19  |

**Table 1.**

Results of searching papers on work-life balance and well-being (years 2006–2016)

Source: Own elaboration based on searching papers in Ebscohost and Proquest bases.

Some scholars revealed that work life balance is affected by the level of conflict between the work and life interface. More than family work conflict, it is the work family conflict, which affects the work life balance. Work life balance has also been found to influence subjective well-being. The literature also indicates that conflict between work and life can lead to lower loyalty to the organization, reduced job satisfaction and reduced feelings of well-being (Singh and Amanjot, 2013).

Individuals’ perceptions of work life balance may be affected by many factors, for example their value system, personality, socialization, attitudes, beliefs, expectations or motivation. On the other hand, organizations are also responsible for maintaining a satisfactory relationship between the employee and the workplace. Some intervention which can be undertaken to enhancing work life balance are characterized in the literature, for example: flexible work schedules, compressed work weeks, work sharing, telecommuting, provision of day care and elder care centers, part time work, enhanced job mobility, flexible leave arrangements, satisfaction surveys, training and development support, health and safety programs and other employee support programs (Singh and Amanjot, 2013).

There are research tools that authors who deal with the issue of work-life balance are using to examine it. K. Hoffmann prepared a questionnaire destined for systematic research on work-life balance. The tool is called Work-Life Balance Barometer® ([www.sensorium24.com](http://www.sensorium24.com)). The mechanism of the barometer is based on the algorithm that allows to assess a particular respondent among others who have fulfilled the questionnaire. The result for the respondent is a number of points. The higher the score the more the respondent is similar to others in perceiving work-life balance in his or her life. What is interesting about the solution is including in it a set of individual and organizational factors that influence work-life balance. The Table 2 presents the questions’ content of the Work-Life Balance Barometer®.

The Table 2 also presents varied factors influencing work-life balance (individual, social and organizational). It has to be noted that many of them are also determinants of well-being perception. Organizational factors influencing both work-life balance and well-being were bolded in the text of Table 2.

|                               | <b>Work-life balance aspects</b>   | <b>Work-life barometer® questions' content</b>  |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Per-ception</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual assessment of work-life balance</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understanding the work-life balance term</li> <li>assessment by using a 5-point scale</li> <li>difficult situations that respondent was posed in</li> </ul>  |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ways to achieve work-life balance</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a general attitude towards balancing work and private life</li> <li>individual actions taken to improve relations between work and non-work life</li> </ul>  |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>opinions on women and men situation in the area of achieving work-life balance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an accordance with statements concerning:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– postponing career plans due to the commitment to family life,</li> <li>– difficulties that women meet in the area of work-life balance,</li> <li>– women's and men's work effectiveness that are having small children</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Individual factors</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expectations and needs in the work-life balance area</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual responsibility for work-life balance actions</li> <li>opinion on the statement that employers should include work-life balance tools in their rewarding systems</li> </ul>  |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>socio-demographic features of respondents</b></li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an age, sex, position, size of the company that a respondent works for, sort of sector where an employer of respondent operates</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Organisational factors</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>working hours</b></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>importance for respondent</li> <li>flexibility</li> <li>satisfaction with working hours</li> </ul>   |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>salary</b></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>importance for respondent</li> <li>elements of salary</li> <li>work-life balance tools in the salary</li> <li>satisfaction with obtained salary</li> </ul>   |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>relations with superior</b></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>importance for respondent</li> <li>frequency of contacts with a superior</li> <li>satisfaction with relations with a superior</li> <li>superior's behaviours in specific situations that an employee has to manage (an illness of a child or other family member, care for a small child etc.)</li> </ul>                                      |
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>work content</b></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>importance for respondent</li> <li>routines in doing tasks</li> <li>satisfaction with work content</li> </ul>  |

**Table 2.**  
Determinants of  
work-life balance  
perception

Source: Own  
elaboration based  
on the Work-Life  
Barometer®, www.  
sensorium24.com.

Analysing information presented above we can tell that many factors that were described as influencing work-life balance, are also related to well-being. It is significant that identical organizational variables (work itself, social relations, temporal structure or motivational systems) influencing both work life balance

and well-being. Thus, organizational support seems to be crucial for keeping their employees lives well-balanced.

## 5. Conclusions

Results of the literature review done for the paper shows that there are many arguments possible to use for explaining the link between well-being and work-life balance. The most important things that are necessary to mention here are as follows:

- there is a need of taking individual perspective of well-being and work-life balance as a starting point to organizational view on the issues,
- big amount of factors that determines both well-being and work-life balance lead to the problem of organizing them and searching for common categories,
- building work-life balance programs in organization is strongly related to motivational systems that have specific structures – every change in the area needs to be properly organized and implemented so employees are aware of it, understand and know the aim of it,
- for organizational environment researchers it is necessary to go beyond context-free measures of well-being when analyzing work related well-being,
- there is a need of integrated (individual and organizational) approach in research on well-being and work-life balance,
- there is a need of identifying potential moderators and mediators of the relationship between work life balance and well-being.

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