

ACADEMIC STRESS AND GRATITUDE TO PROMOTE STUDENT WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Research in education is developing very rapidly and widely, not only examining the cognitive domain but also starting to develop into the affective domain, such as research on student well-being. This study aimed to examine the correlation between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being. The approach used in this research is correlational quantitative. The research scale is given offline and online using a google form. Respondents in this study were 602 students of Madrasah Aliyah Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. The instruments used are the academic stress, gratitude and student well-being scale. The results of data analysis with multiple regression analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being (p -value < 0.001 ; r 0.655), meaning that the hypothesis is accepted, with the effective contribution of academic stress and gratitude simultaneously on student well-being by 42.9%. Academic stress were negatively and significantly associated with student well-being when the gratitude variable was controlled ($p < 0.001$; Beta -0.521), and gratitude were positively and significantly associated with student well-being when the academic stress variable was controlled ($p < 0.001$; Beta 0.302). Furthermore, in qualitative data, the researcher found that some students felt stressed with the workload from school because they did not understand the subject matter, communication with teachers was not fluent, anxious and sad, afraid to disappoint parents, and dizzy and frustrated in thinking about the subject matter. The researcher recommends that schools organize training that can reduce academic stress and increase student gratitude, so that student well-being can increase.

Keywords: Student Well-Being, Academic Stress, Gratitude

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INTRODUCTION

Education research is currently developing very rapidly and widely, not only examining the cognitive domain but starting to develop into the realm of student affection, for example, research on student well-being. Student well-being is defined as a positive, holistic and sustainable psychological condition reflected in a positive emotional state, resilience, and satisfaction with oneself, social interactions and experiences at school (Noble, McGrath, Wyatt, Carbines, & Robb, 2008). Students who have well-being are seen to have positive attitudes and emotions towards school, positive academic self-concept, are happy with the activities carried out, feel free from anxiety at school, have no physical complaints or illness at school, and

have no social life problems in schools (Hascher, 2007). If all these things are fulfilled, it will make it easier for students to follow lessons or activities at school, and the national education goals will be achieved.

Student well-being is still not widely studied, especially in Indonesia, even though its role is very important in students' success in developing cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Student well-being is an important indicator of the risk of stagnation and problematic careers at school. Decreased well-being sooner or later results in lower academic achievement and can lead to retention, and if accumulated over the years, can progress to the point where students may leave school or become dropouts (Kindekens et al., 2014).

Gräbel (2017) found a positive

relationship between well-being and academic achievement. High levels of emotional and psychological well-being correlate with high academic achievement levels. Well-being appears to function as a contributing factor to academic achievement. Students who are satisfied with their lives and have more positive emotions than negative emotions have better academic achievements (Hamdana & Alhamdu, 2015a). Research conducted by Berger et al. (2011) found a significant correlation between socio-emotional well-being, self-esteem, social integration and positive perceptions of the school's social climate with academic achievement. It means that the social-emotional well-being felt by students will be able to improve student academic achievement because students feel comfortable being in school. Good student well-being can improve academic achievement, either directly or indirectly. For example, higher levels of student well-being positively affect academic achievement by increasing student motivation, engagement, and attendance and reducing problem behaviours (Noble, McGrath, Wyatt, Carbines, Robb, et al., 2008). Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and persistence in practising religion are also predictors of academic performance in students. Students with lower levels of cynicism, who were more emotionally and cognitively engaged in their studies, appeared to perform better. Furthermore, students who firmly practice their religious beliefs have higher academic achievements than students who are less steadfast in practising their religion. Spiritual strength or steadfastness in practising religion and ongoing cognitive and emotional involvement in doing academic assignments are valuable resources for students in their academic performance (Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013).

Several research results also show the influence of student well-being on emotional and social aspects. For example, students with psychological well-being as seen from their independence, ability to adapt or master the environment, individual growth and development, purpose in life, and self-acceptance have low levels of depression (Turashvili & Japaridze, 2012).

The explanation above shows how important well-being is for students, but several studies have found that student well-being is still low and indicates that students at school experience problems. Several studies found that 49% of the 84 students of one of the senior high schools in Bandung had low student well-being. It shows that almost half of the research respondents negatively perceive school life so that they do not feel prosperous while at school. Feelings of being unwell at school result in students not concentrating on learning, not paying attention to teachers, talking to friends while studying, and not being optimal in doing school assignments (Setyahadi & Yanuvianti, 2017). Sahenda et al. (2017) also researched the level of student well-being in junior high school students and found that 50% still had low well-being. The dominant low aspect is an attitude of optimism and satisfaction. Low optimism can be seen in the lack of students' desire to use their abilities to develop their potential so that students do not excel. Student satisfaction at school is also low, so students are not motivated to engage comprehensively with activities at school. Hamdana and Alhamdu, (2015) also found that 14% students had negative or low subjective well-being, which was characterized by students being less satisfied with their lives, and more negative emotions than positive emotions.

The results of the preliminary research that the author conducted using the interview method with one of the Guidance and Counseling teachers at one of the Madrasah Aliyah in Pekanbaru found that students experienced several problems related to student well-being. Some students do not have the motivation to learn, often skip school, feel uncomfortable at school, feel that parents are playing favorite because twin students are sent to different schools, misunderstandings between students and teachers or school leaders, lack of confidence in students who are in regular classes compared with students in special class (smart class is a class specially prepared for students who will take part in the Science Olympiad), there is a sense of pressure in meeting the target score at school, which causes students to experience psychosomatic.

All of this data illustrates that students experience problems related to well-being (Interview with one of the Guidance and Counseling teachers, 24 December 2020)

Several factors affect student well-being, including student-teacher interaction patterns, stress levels, sense of belonging, sports activities, and gratitude for example, the cooperative interaction between teachers and students manifested in the teacher's behavior gives attention and hope to students and gives responsibility to students so that students become diligent in going to school because they feel happy and comfortable. On the other hand, authoritarian teacher-student interactions can reduce student's well-being (van Petegem et al., 2008). Neely et al. (2009) also found that involvement, social support, affection, and stress levels influence students well-being. Furthermore, Skead & Rogers (2014) added that high stress, anxiety and depression levels in students impact student well-being. Moreover, students who like to do sports activities and have a feeling of belonging show low levels of stress, anxiety and depression, ultimately improving their well-being.

Dhull & Kumari (2015) revealed that academic stress is an unpleasant psychological situation due to high expectations for education from parents, teachers, peers and family members, parental pressure on academic achievement, the education system and exams, and workload. These academic problems such as lots of homework, competition with other students, failure and poor relationships with other students are the most common source of stress for students.

Furthermore, gratitude can also affect the student's well-being. Tian et al. (2016) found that students' gratitude was significantly correlated with student well-being. This gratitude will increase daily life's positive emotions, happiness, and hope (Watkins, Khathrane Woddward, et al., 2003). This gratitude also affects student behaviour at school. Students with high gratitude are more likely to respect their teachers and parents at school (Wood et al., 2010) and are happier (Ng et al., 2015). Wicaksono & Susilawati (2016) found that gratitude and prosocial behaviour

affect psychological well-being. Individuals who have gratitude understand the meaning of their lives, marked by individual acknowledgement of the blessings that Allah has given. Being grateful for these blessings and using them to gain the pleasure of Allah will make students feel happier.

In Islam, the word Syukr (gratitude) comes from Arabic, which expresses gratitude, glory, and praise to Allah SWT as His creator or creation through words, actions or both (Ali et al., 2019). According to Islamic teachings (Qur'an and Hadith), Muslims are ordered to do two different concepts of gratitude, patience and gratitude, which must be considered and done at all times.

Muslims are commanded to be patient in any situation with faith in Allah SWT. It is because he never burdens the believers more than they can bear. (Al-Baqarah: 286), and Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, (even) as much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward. (Al-Nisaa: 40). Every test or trial can reduce sin if a believer shows patience (Sabr) and gratitude (Syukr) in the temptation. (Ali-Imran: 135).

This gratitude is a noble behaviour that is admired and praised in the Al-Quran and Hadith because this gratitude is an acknowledgment and belief in the blessings of Allah SWT to any situation experienced in life, both desirable and undesirable situations. In his book "Bidayatul Hidayah," Al-Ghazali states that every Muslim must meet three conditions to meet the criteria of gratitude, namely 1). Believe that Allah is the only source of the blessings of life; 2). Accept and be satisfied with what Allah has given him, and 3) Not use Allah's mercy for things Allah SWT has forbidden.

In Surah Ibrahim (14) verse 7, Allah SWT says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

Artinya:

“And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed, ‘if you are grateful, I will surely increase you (in favor); but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe’” (7) (RI, 2022).

The explanation above illustrates that academic stress experienced by students is correlated with student well-being. Students who experience academic stress have symptoms of feeling uncomfortable and depressed while at school, worrying about failing to achieve academic achievement, poor interpersonal relationships with teachers and other students, feeling difficulty while studying at school and inadequate learning facilities will make students feel less prosperous. The low well-being of students is reflected in bad moods and negative attitudes towards school, poor social interactions with teachers and schoolmates, less resilient, less optimistic, and low satisfaction with the school experience. On the other hand, students who are grateful to Allah SWT and are grateful to those who do well and support them will feel happy and optimistic in carrying out their duties at school. Even though there are many school assignments that have piled up, they will still feel grateful to be able to go to their favorite school so that they become tough and feel satisfied in that school.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers are interested in researching the correlation between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being for Madrasah Aliyah students. There are three hypotheses in this study: 1). there is a correlation between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being of Madrasah Aliyah students; 2). there is a correlation between academic stress and student well-being of Madrasah Aliyah students, and 3). there is a correlation between gratitude and student well-being for Madrasah Aliyah students.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this research is correlational quantitative. The research scale is given offline and online using a google form. Respondents in this study were students of Madrasah Aliyah Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia.

Variables and Variable Operational Definitions

There are three variables in this study:

1. Student Wellbeing Variable

The operational definition of student well-being is a condition in which students have a positive emotional perception and atmosphere towards the school, teachers, employees, and friends. It can be seen in a positive mood, persistent, self-satisfied, ability to interact socially well, and have a good experience at school so that student's academic, social and emotional functions develop optimally.

2. Academic Stress Variables

The operational definition of academic stress is feelings of worry, anxiety, depression, lethargy, and fatigue, as well as other unpleasant feelings associated with school academic activities, including worrying about bad grades on exams, anxiety about exams, and fear of failure, caused by expectations of education from parents, teachers, peers, and family members, parental pressure for academic achievement, current education system and examinations, heavy homework assignments, competition with other students, failure and poor relationships with other students.

3. Gratitude Variables

The operational definition of gratitude is gratitude, appreciation, positive attitude, and praise to Allah SWT and His creation which is done either by word deed or both. Gratitude to Allah SWT manifests in acknowledgment and belief in Allah's SWT blessings to any desirable and undesirable situation.

Research Instruments

The research instruments in this study have four psychological scales, namely:

1. Student Well-being Scale

The Student Well-being Scale was modified from the scale compiled by Hascher (2007), which has six dimensions: 1). Positive attitudes and emotions toward school in general, 2). Enjoyment at school, 3). Positive academic self-concept, 4). No worries about school, 5). The absence of physical complaints at school, and 6). No social problems at school.

2. Academic Stress Scale

The Academic Stress Scale is based on five dimensions of academic stress compiled by

Phillips et al. (2020), namely 1). Personal Inadequacy, 2). Fear of failure, 3). Interpersonal difficulties with teachers, 4). Teacher – Pupil Relationship/ Teaching Methodology, and 5). Inadequate Study Facilities.

3. Gratitude Scale

The Gratitude Scale is based on three dimensions of gratitude compiled by Ali et al. (2019), namely 1). Shukr Bi'l-Qalb, 2). Shukr Bi'l-lisan, and 3). Shukr Bi'l-Badan Wa'l-Arkan.

4. Open questions

The researcher gave an open question to express students' emotional condition during the last month with the question: please tell us how you felt while studying last month!

Research Participants

The participants in this study were students from three Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN 1, 2, and 3) in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. The number of students in MAN 1 is 1050 students, MAN 2 is 907 students, and MAN 3 is 567 students. The sampling technique was cluster random sampling, in which the researcher randomized the class to be selected as participants in this study. The selection of students to become participants does not have certain criteria; class selection is carried out to facilitate researchers in collecting data in the field.

Data analysis technique

The research data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, partial, and descriptive qualitative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Result of categorization of student well-being variable

The student well-being variable was measured using a student well-being scale consisting of 50 valid items with a score of each item ranging from 1 to 5. The hypothetical minimum score the subject might get is $1 \times 50 = 50$, and the maximum score is $5 \times 50 = 250$. The range of scores is $250 - 50 = 200$, the mean score is $(50 + 250) / 2 = 150$, and the Standard Deviation (SD) is $(250 - 50) / 6 = 33.33$.

In the following table, the hypothetical and empirical data on the Madrasah Aliyah Student Well-being scale will be described:

Table 1. Hypothetical and Empirical Data on Madrasah Aliyah Student Wellbeing

Figure	N	Min	Max	Mean (μ)	Standard Deviation
Hypothetically	50	50	250	150	33,33
Empirically	50	110	248	180.80	22,85

Based on table 1 above, the researcher categorizes the subject data as in table 2 below:

Table 2. Categorization of Student Wellbeing in Madrasah Aliyah

Categorization	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very low	$X \leq 100,5$	0	0%
Low	$100,5 < X < 133,34$	13	2,16%
Moderate	$133,34 < X < 166,67$	145	24,09%
High	$166,67 < X < 199,5$	308	51,16%
Very high	$199,5 < X$	136	22,59%
TOTAL		602	

The table above shows that 2.16% of students have student well-being in the low category, 24.09% moderate, 51.16% high, and 22.59% very high.

Academic stress scale categorization results

The academic stress scale consists of 35 valid items with a score of each item ranging from 1 to 5. The hypothetical minimum score the subject will likely get is $1 \times 35 = 35$, and the maximum score is $5 \times 35 = 175$. The range of scores is $175 - 35 = 140$, the mean score is $(35 + 175) / 2 = 105$, and the Standard Deviation (SD) is $(175 - 35) / 6 = 23.33$.

The following table describes the hypothetical and empirical data on Madrasah Aliyah students' academic stress scale:

Table 3. Hypothetical and Empirical Data on Academic Stress Scale for Madrasah Aliyah Students

Figure	N	Min	Max	Mean (μ)	Standard Deviation
Hypothetically	35	35	175	105	23,33
Empirically	35	36	166	98,13	22,18

The categorization of academic stress data for Madrasah Aliyah students can be seen in table 4 below:

Table 4. Categorization of Madrasah Aliyah students' Academic Stress

Categorization	Value	F	Percentage (%)
Very low	$X \leq 70$	64	10,64%
Low	$70 < X < 93,34$	174	28,90%
Moderate	$93,34 < X < 116,67$	244	40,53%
High	$116,67 < X < 139,4$	104	17,26%
Very high	$139,4 < X$	16	2,66%
TOTAL		602	

The table above shows that 10.64% of students have low levels of academic stress, 28.90% low, 40.53% moderate, 17.26% high, and 2.66% very high.

Gratitude scale categorization results

The gratitude scale consists of 38 valid items, with a score of each item ranging from 1 to 5. The hypothetical minimum score the subject will likely get is $1 \times 38 = 38$, and the maximum score is $5 \times 38 = 190$. The range of scores is $190 - 38 = 152$, the mean score is $(38 + 190) / 2 = 114$, and the Standard Deviation (SD) is $(190 - 38) / 6 = 25.33$.

The following table describes hypothetical and empirical data on Madrasah Aliyah Students' gratitude scale.

Table 5. Overview of Hypothetical and Empirical Data on Gratitude Scale for Madrasah Aliyah Students

Figure	N	Min	Max	Mean (μ)	Standard Deviation
Hypothetically	38	37	190	114	25,33
Empirically	38	66	175	149,63	15,57

The categorization of the gratitude data of Madrasah Aliyah students can be seen in table 6 below:

Table 6. Categorization of Gratitude for Madrasah Aliyah Students

Categorization	Value	F	Percentage (%)
Very low	$X < 76,01$	0	0%
Low	$76,01 < X < 101,34$	1	1,17%
Moderate	$101,34 < X < 126,67$	38	6,31%
High	$126,67 < X < 151,99$	254	42,19%
Very high	$151,99 < X$	309	51,33%
TOTAL		602	

In the table above, it is found that there are no students who have gratitude in the very low category, only 1.17% in the low category, 6.31% moderate, 42.19% high, and 51.33% very high.

Hypothesis of Test Results

At this stage, the researcher tested the hypothesis by analyzing the correlation between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being using multiple linear regression analysis. We analyze the correlation between academic stress and student well-being and the correlation between gratitude and student well-being using partial analysis. It was done to determine whether academic stress and gratitude were significantly correlated with student well-being to further serve as a guide in preparing stress and gratitude management training modules to improve student well-being.

The results of the correlational analysis are presented in the following table:

Table 7. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Correlational Analysis

R	R Square	P Value (Significance)	Description
0,655	0,429	0,001	Very Significant

Based on the multiple linear correlation analysis above, it was found that there is a very significant correlation between academic stress and gratitude with student well-being (p-value < 0.001 ; $r 0.655$), meaning that the first hypothesis is accepted. Furthermore, the practical contribution of academic stress and

student well-being is 42.9%, and 57.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

In addition, the researcher conducted a partial analysis to determine the correlation of each variable on student well-being if one of the variables was controlled.

Table 8. Results of Partial Correlational Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Partial
1 (Constant)	167.20	8.260		20.246	.000			
Academic Stress	-.537	.033	-.521	-16.488	.000	-.585	-.559	-.509
Gratitude	.443	.046	.302	9.548	.000	.412	.363	.295

a. Dependent Variable: Student Well-being

Based on the results of the partial analysis above, it was found that there was a very significant negative correlation between academic stress and student well-being when the gratitude variable was controlled ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation between gratitude and student well-being when the academic stress variable was controlled ($p < 0.001$). Based on the analysis results above, it can be concluded that this study's second and third hypotheses are accepted.

At this stage, the researcher also found that some students had high academic stress scores, low gratitude scores, and low well-being scores. In addition to the quantitative data above, the researcher also found qualitative data from open-ended questions on the research scale. The researcher found that some students felt stressed with the workload from school because they did not understand the subject matter, communication with teachers was not fluent, anxious and sad, afraid to disappoint parents, and dizzy and frustrated in thinking about the subject matter. Here are some examples expressed by students:

“During this semester, I did not understand much of the subject matter, and also, many

teachers, when I text messaged, did not respond even though I used polite language, and then when they entered class, they said they did not receive any text message” (Student S)

“I am anxious, sad, worried, stressed, and uncontrollable. Nevertheless, I am grateful for all that God has given to me. I hope I can get through all of this” (Student DMJ)

“Very stressed, thinking about the value of being afraid of being low, afraid of disappointing parents, feeling dizzy and frustrated in trying to understand lessons that are difficult to understand” (Student AD)

Discussion

In this study, researchers used multiple linear regression analysis because there are two independent variables (academic stress and gratitude) and to determine the direction and effective contribution of academic stress and gratitude to student well-being.

This study aims to determine the correlation between academic stress, gratitude, and the student's well-being at Madrasah Aliyah in Pekanbaru Riau. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that there was a very significant correlation between academic stress and gratitude with the student's well-being at Madrasah Aliyah Pekanbaru, where academic stress had a negative correlation with student well-being. It means that the higher the academic stress on students, the lower the student's well-being score; vice versa, the lower the student's academic stress, the higher the student's well-being. Furthermore, it was found that gratitude positively correlates with student well-being, meaning that the higher the gratitude, the higher the well-being of the students, and the lower the gratitude, the lower the well-being of the students. Therefore, academic stress and gratitude affect student well-being by 42.9%, which is a significant influence. Furthermore, academic stress and gratitude affect students' well-being at MAN Pekanbaru, Riau.

The results of this study confirm the results of research conducted by Clabaugh et al. (2021), which found that students with high

academic stress had low emotional well-being and vice versa. Coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacts student learning processes at school, it also contributes to increased stress on students. It is because of the short study time and changing learning methods. For example, sometimes students study online, and sometimes offline. The lack of communication between students and teachers due to limited meeting time and the number of assignments the teacher gives also affects students' stress levels and well-being. Academic stress experienced by these students will harm students' ability to learn and do assignments, academic achievement, and physical and psychological health (Pascoe et al., 2020). Students with high academic stress will show low self-confidence and are less able to appreciate their abilities or have low self-esteem, and experience psychological disorders (Glozah, 2013).

Some students stated that they felt less confident in their abilities and anxious, as expressed by the following students:

I often feel worried, anxious, and restless when I am studying, and I do not feel confident about something even if I cannot understand the lesson easily (S-378)

I often feel worried, anxious, and restless when I am studying, and I do not feel confident about something even if I cannot understand the lesson easily (S-301)

I often feel worried, anxious, and restless when I am studying, and I do not feel confident about something even if I cannot understand the lesson easily (S-304)

Lately, I have been feeling like... I am confused about the answer, like I am confused when I go to school suddenly it is the end of the odd semester, I do not think I am studying maximally, I do not know why even though I have tried my best when I check my grades, I am thankful because it reaches the standard. I do not know or lately feel like I am not myself. I always try to do things that I'm not myself, I was never insecure, overthinking, etc., but now, every time I see people I'm always

insecure, not grateful for Allah's blessings, I feel like a lost person (S-313).

The results also found that gratitude has a positive correlation with student well-being. The ability to appreciate or be grateful for experiences in life can increase positive emotions, involvement with the school, positive relationships with others, meaning in life, physical and psychological health, and general well-being (Tantomo & Suparman, 2021). Being grateful to Allah SWT for the blessings that have been given can increase happiness (Mujidin et al., 2021) because grateful people usually have positive thoughts and emotions.

As stated by some of the following students:

I feel grateful because the teachers have taught me much knowledge. Moreover, I am also happy because my classmates are kind to me. Hopefully, in the future, our class will be more solid (S-534)

I am pretty happy with my friends who are in my environment, but this past month my days have been filled with school assignments and some tests or practice, but I am still grateful (S-543)

During this last month, I feel grateful to Allah SWT because Allah still gives me an excellent understanding because lesson is getting more difficult to understand (S-565)

My learning is quite good, and also I am very grateful if I get high scores in class. But sometimes I find it challenging to study, but it is an obstacle in life because I believe failure is a delayed success (S-79)

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that there is a very significant correlation between academic stress, gratitude, and student well-being. Academic stress is negatively correlated with student well-being, which means that the higher the academic stress, the lower the student's well-being. On the contrary, the lower the academic stress, the higher the

student's well-being. Furthermore, gratitude positively correlates with student well-being, which means that the higher the gratitude, the higher the student's well-being and the lower the gratitude, the lower the student's well-being.

The uniqueness of this study from previous research is on the gratitude variable, the researchers compiled a research scale using the dimensions of gratitude from an Islamic perspective, namely shukr bi'l-qalb, shukr bi'l-lisan, and shukr bi'l-badan wa'l-arkan. In addition, researchers also complement research data with qualitative data so that researchers can understand deeply the problems that can interfere with student well-being at school.

SUGGESTION

Based on this study's results, schools should reduce students' academic stress and increase students' gratitude so that student well-being can increase.

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