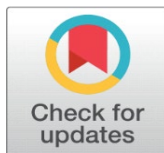
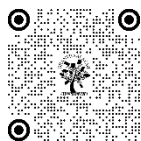


# WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS

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## ABSTRACT

Well-being is an important aspect in the life of an adolescent and are associated with various psycho-social factors. Majority of the studies focus on the psychological factors influencing well-being, however the individual and social factors that can influence well-being are often overlooked. The objective of this study is to find out the influence of individual and social factors on the well-being of adolescents from low socio-economic background. An embedded mixed-method research design was used. The data were collected from 393 adolescents in the age group of 12 to 17 years using convenience sampling technique. The individual and social variables included are age, gender, class, medium of study, interest in study, expectation of love and care and like/dislike of school. The EPOCH adolescent well-being scale (Kern et al., 2016) was used to assess well-being. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, independent sample t- test, regression analysis and qualitative analysis. A significant difference was found in all the selected variables on well-being except expectation of love and care. Further, class, medium of education, interest to study and liking/disliking school were found to be significant predictors of well-being. In addition, the qualitative analysis revealed various themes related to disinterest in studies and liking/disliking of school. The present study found out the crucial role of individual and social factors in improving or decreasing the well-being of adolescents.

**Keywords:** Well-Being, Adolescents, Socio-Demographic, School Environment



## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (2014), adolescence is the period of life between childhood and adulthood for people between the ages of 10 and 19. It is referred to as "the developmental period of transition from childhood to adulthood; it involves biological, cognitive, and socioemotional changes" (Santrock, 2013). Adolescents often work to develop an integrated self-view, which includes their beliefs, goals, identity development, and motivational patterns, during this transitional phase. This stage is characterized by a persistent struggle with regulations, conflicts with parents and teachers, close friendships with others of the same sex, and—most importantly—the desire for independence. At this stage, adolescents begin experimenting with sex, drugs, and friends. They further engage in risky behaviors and argue with authorities. The peer group becomes more significant to them at this point. Given the transitional nature of adolescence, well-being is a crucial developmental concept in this age group, possibly more so than in any other stage. Well-being can be viewed in two perspectives: hedonic and eudaimonic perspective. The hedonic perspective places value on one's emotional health, which is indicated by the presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect, and one's subjective assessment of their life to have more pleasant than unpleasant aspects. Whereas the psychological and social aspects of well-being are focused in the eudaimonic perspective (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In the eudaimonic perspective, well-being includes acquiring potential skills, enhancing strengths, and realizing one's potential. This

enables people to lead life to its fullest and perform at their highest levels both as individuals and as members of society (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Keyes, 2006). Well-being is linked to self-perceived health, longevity, healthy behaviors, mental & physical illness, social connectedness, and productivity (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Diener et al., 2009; Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Even among the 17 sustainable developmental goals set by the United Nations Member states (2015), the third important goal is optimal health and well-being. This demonstrates the vital role of well-being in a person's life. Further, well-being among adolescents is more important as this stage is full of upheaval and challenges. Generally, well-being is studied in relationship with psychological constructs such as self-esteem, resilience, optimism etc. Whereas, the role of individual and social factors influencing well-being of an adolescents is often overlooked. Well-being can be affected by various socio-demographic factors such as ethnicity, birthplace, discipline, and parent's education level and parental involvement (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Tayefi et al., 2019). Further, according to Brown and Larson (2009), peer relationship is an important source of influence on adolescent's emotional well-being. In addition, a study conducted across 73 countries among 566,829 adolescents found that there exists a gender gap on mental health among adolescence, where girls have poor mental health compared to boys (Campbell et al., 2021). Similarly, there is a vital connection between school environment and well-being of the adolescents. The ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) demonstrates an interconnected succession of ecosystems that the child interacts with, ranging from the immediate environment (microsystems) to the broadest environment (macrosystems). Family and schools come in the microsystems of a child, to which the child has direct interaction. As a result, socio-economic status and school environment can have major impact on adolescents' level of well-being. From the review of the literature, it was found that there is a dearth of studies that talks about the influence of individual and social factors on the well-being of adolescents, especially adolescents from low socio-economic background. Thus, the objective of the present study is to find out the influence of certain individual and social variables on the well-being of adolescents from low socio-economic background.

## **2. METHOD DESIGN**

An embedded mixed method research design was used. It is a comprehensive design that uses both quantitative and qualitative data and findings from both type of data substantiate each other.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The male and female adolescents in the age group of 12 to 17 years studying in Greater Chennai Corporation schools in Chennai district were chosen as sample of the study. The adolescents with any kind of physical and/or psychological disability were not included. A total of 409 data were collected, among which 393 data were found to be valid. The remaining data sheet found to have either missing information or incomplete responses. Out of 393 respondents 163 were female and 230 were male participants. Apart from this qualitative data was collected from 55 adolescents' students who were identified based on their response for disinterest in study and like/dislike of school.

## **SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND TECHNIQUE**

The corporation schools in Chennai are spread across eleven zones. From the list of schools, eleven schools were selected using simple random lottery method from each zone. From the selected schools, the data were collected from the students who were present on the day of data collection using convenience sampling technique.

## **3. MEASURES INFORMATION SHEET**

The information sheet consisted the following information: Age, gender, class, medium of study, their interest in study, expectation of love and care from others and their like/dislike of school. In addition to this, an open-ended question related to reasons for disinterest in studies and like/dislike of school was collected as part for qualitative data.

## **EPOCH ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING SCALE**

EPOCH adolescent well-being scale was developed by Kern et al., (2016) which consists of 20-item that measure well-being of adolescent across five dimensions: Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness and Happiness. The response was based on five-point Likert scale from 1= almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often and 5=almost always.

## ETHICAL CONCERNS

The study was carried out considering the ethical guidelines that to be followed in social science researches. The participants of the study were informed prior that their participation in the study is only on voluntary basis. Further, they have the right to withdraw participation at any point of the study. The informed consent forms were obtained from all the participants of the study. The assent of each participant as well as permission from head of the institution was obtained. Further, to maintain the anonymity, no personal information was collected to avoid personal identity of an individual.

## 4. PROCEDURE

The permission from Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) was obtained to collect data from the corporation schools in Chennai. After getting permission, eleven school was selected from the list of the schools. The researcher visited all the selected school and met the head of the school and debriefed about the study. After consultation with the teachers, a convenient date and time was fixed for data collection. Before the data collection, the participants were informed about the nature of the study and informed consent was obtained from those who were willing to participate in the study. The data collection was done in groups of 20 to 30 students in one session which took around 25 to 30 minutes.

## 5. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21. The data was tested for normality and found to be normally distributed. Further, descriptive statistics, independent sample t test, linear regression and thematic analysis were carried out.

## 6. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics was used to determine the mean, standard deviation and to estimate percentage distribution. Among the 393 sample 37.4% study in class 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard and 62.6% study 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standard. And majority of the participants are from Tamil medium (53.4%), while 46.6% are from English medium of study. Further 41.2% reported they do not expect any love and care from others whereas, 58.8% of adolescents expect love and care from others. In addition, majority of adolescents reported that have interest in study (73.0%) and like their school (71%), while 27% and 28% of adolescents reported to have disinterest in study and do not like their school respectively.

From Table 1, it can be seen that there is a significant difference in all socio-demographic variables except expectation of love and care from others. The mean difference between 12 to 14 years and 15 to 17 years age group indicate that younger adolescents found to have better well-being compared to older adolescents. Similarly, adolescents in their lower-classes (6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>) exhibit better well-being compared to higher class (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>). Further, the gender difference depicts that male adolescents found to have better well-being compared to female adolescents. While comparing the medium of study, the adolescents who study in Tamil medium found to have better well-being than adolescents from English medium of study. Further, the mean difference shows that adolescents who are interested in study and like their school shows higher level of well-being compared to those who are not interested in study and dislike their school. Apart from this, there was no mean difference between adolescents who expect love and care and do not expect love and care indicating both group experience similar level of well-being.

**Table 1**

*Independent Sample t Test based on Individual and Social variables on Well-being of adolescents*

| Variable            |                                      | Well-being |        |        |       |        |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                     |                                      | n          | M      | SD     | t     | p      |
| Age                 | 12 to 14 years                       | 291        | 63.392 | 9.388  | 3.145 | 0.02*  |
|                     | 15 to 17 years                       | 102        | 59.980 | 9.537  |       |        |
| Gender              | Male                                 | 230        | 60.948 | 9.848  | 4.008 | .000** |
|                     | Female                               | 163        | 64.706 | 8.632  |       |        |
| Class               | 6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup>   | 147        | 65.905 | 8.412  | 5.867 | .000** |
|                     | 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> | 246        | 60.476 | 9.601  |       |        |
| Medium of education | Tamil                                | 210        | 63.510 | 8.550  | 2.246 | .025*  |
|                     | English                              | 183        | 61.355 | 10.455 |       |        |
| Interest to study   | Yes                                  | 287        | 65.007 | 8.507  | 9.475 | .000** |
|                     | No                                   | 106        | 55.736 | 8.878  |       |        |
|                     | Yes                                  | 231        | 62.831 | 9.410  | .729  | .467   |

|                                  |     |     |        |       |       |        |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Expect love and care from others | No  | 161 | 62.118 | 9.700 |       |        |
| Liking/disliking school          | Yes | 281 | 64.459 | 8.802 | 6.550 | .000** |
|                                  | No  | 112 | 57.607 | 9.574 |       |        |

\*\* $P < 0.01$  \* $P < 0.05$

Linear regression analysis was performed to find out the predictors of well-being among adolescents. The variable expectation of love and care from others was excluded in the regression analysis as it did not show any significant difference in independent sample t test. From Table 2, it can be seen that class, medium of study, interest in study and like/dislike of school were found to be significant predictors of well-being among adolescents expect age and gender. The  $R^2$  value indicate that 52% of variance in wellbeing could be explained by the predictors.

**Table 2**

*Linear Regression results for Predictors of Well-being of Adolescents*

| Variable            | B      | SE    | t      | p      |
|---------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| Age                 | -.186  | 1.084 | .172   | .864   |
| Gender              | .942   | .882  | 1.072  | .285   |
| Class               | -4.486 | .982  | -4.567 | .000** |
| Medium of education | -2.369 | .881  | -2.688 | .007** |
| Interest to study   | -6.672 | 1.071 | -6.228 | .000** |
| Like School         | -3.161 | 1.049 | -3.012 | .003** |
| $R^2$               | .520   |       |        |        |
| F                   | 23.895 |       |        |        |
| n                   | 393    |       |        |        |

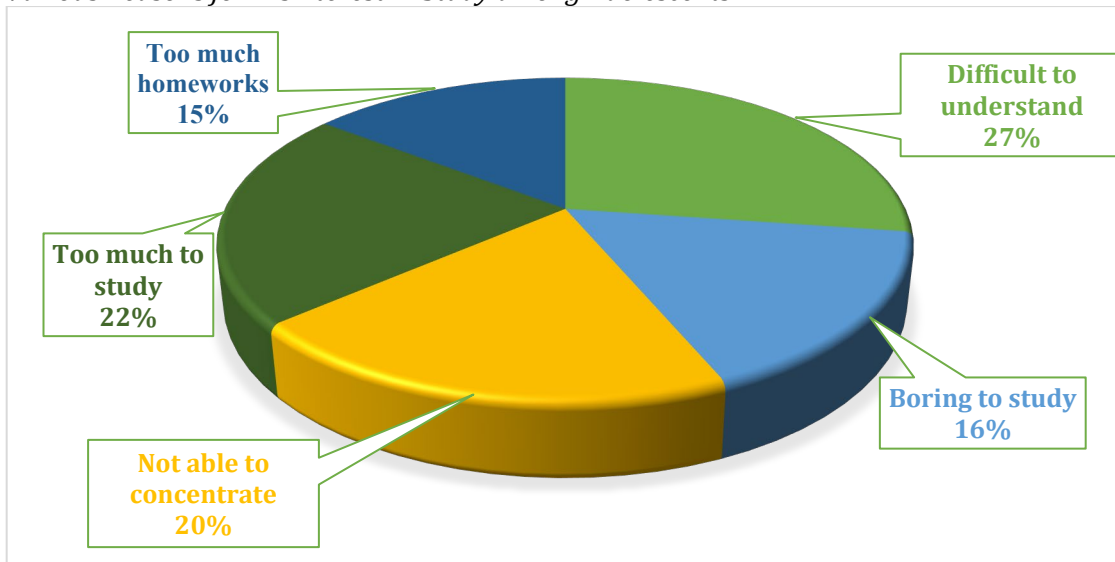
\*\* $P < 0.01$

## 7. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The various reasons for disinterest in study was analysed using percentage. Further, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data related to the reasons for liking and disliking of schools. From figure 1, various reasons for disinterest in studies can be seen. Majority of students find it difficult to understand (27%), followed by feeling of too much to study (22%), unable to concentrate (20%), find studying to be boring (15%) and feel there are too much homework to do (15%).

**Figure 1**

*Represents the Various Reasons for Disinterest in Study among Adolescents*



**Table 3**

*Themes Related to Liking of School*

| Themes | Description | Example quote |
|--------|-------------|---------------|
|--------|-------------|---------------|

|                           |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teachers                  | Adolescents' positive perception about their teachers on the factors such as teacher's knowledge, approachability, showing kindness and teaching effectively. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Teachers speak with students friendly (AA, Female 14 years)</li> <li>❖ Teachers are approachable and kind (R.A, Male 15 years).</li> <li>❖ Talent teachers are in the school (M.S, Male 16 years).</li> <li>❖ I like my miss because my miss is affection me (S.D Female, 13 years)</li> </ul> |
| Peer group                | The enjoyment and happiness derived from being with same age.                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ My friends are studying in the school (SS, Male 13 years)</li> <li>❖ I like my friends and play with her so I go to school (DD Female 13 years)</li> <li>❖ My friends teaches me so like the school (D.K Female 16 years)</li> </ul>                                                           |
| Food                      | The good quality of free meals provided in the school for students.                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Because the school I so many things they give me like food (K.S Male 14 years)</li> <li>❖ I like my friends and healthy food is given (R.G Female 15 years)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         |
| Non-scholastic activities | The non-scholastic activities in the schools like physical education classes.                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ I have good friends, all time in the school permit PET period (S.A Male 16 years)</li> <li>❖ Interested to play with my school friends (A.K Female 14 years)</li> <li>❖ I come to school for play (K.J Male 15 years)</li> </ul>                                                               |
| School environment        | The school environment includes the physical and psychological climate of the school.                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ I like my school ground (I.D Male 16 years)</li> <li>❖ Very nice school, very well teachers and sisters who give food, watchman also good (H.S Female 14 years).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    |

**Table 4***Themes Related to Disiking of School*

| Themes             | Description                                                                           | Example quote                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teachers           | Teacher's behaviour towards students and their teaching methods                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ All teachers are teasing me with the name as maku, so I don't like this school (B.B Male 15 years)</li> <li>❖ Teachers do not teach concepts in understandable way (S.K Female 14 years).</li> </ul>                                                                                                              |
| Peer group         | The non acceptance in the friends group.                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ No good friends and teachers (A.S Female 14 years)</li> <li>❖ No friends for me (MM Male 15 years)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Bullying           | Unwanted and aggressive behaviour of one student towards another.                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Don't like the school. Big students make fun (G.S Male 13 years).</li> <li>❖ I do not like to study in the school as senior beat me (K.S Male 15 years)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                |
| Punishment         | The action of inflicting physical or psychological pain on students.                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The teacher scold and give punishment (M.K Male 15 years).</li> <li>❖ My school tamil teacher beating and torturing me (J.S Female 15 years).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| Food               | The poor quality of free meals provided in the school for students.                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ In my school midterm meals rice and eggs are not good (S.S Male 16 years)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Drugs              | The use of inappropriate and illegal drugs inside the school premises.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ In the school kanja and coolies are used (D.M Male 16 years)</li> <li>❖ Students are frequently used cigarettes, so I don't like the school (M.S Male 15 years)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                        |
| School Environment | The school environment includes the physical and psychological climate of the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ School grounds are full of mud in all place the rain water is stagging, dirty smell spread (L.S Male 16 years)</li> <li>❖ Toilets are very bad condition, They do not clean it regularly (K.M Female 15 years)</li> <li>❖ I don't like this school because they are very strict (K.H Female 14 years).</li> </ul> |

**8. DISCUSSION**

In this study, a total of 393 adolescent students studying in corporation schools participated. The main objective of the study is to find out the influence of individual and social factors on well-being of adolescents. The findings of the independent sample t test reveal that there exists a significant difference on all variables except the exception of love and care from other. In this study, male adolescents are found to have high level of well-being compared to female. Although, adolescence is a critical period for both male and female, the females undergo crucial physiological changes due to puberty which results in hormonal fluctuations. This hormonal rush and mood swings can have considerable impact on the psychological health of the female. A longitudinal study conducted by Yoon et al., (2023), among 8612 adolescents in the age group of 11 to 14 years found that girls are at higher risk of mental health problems and poor well-being than boys. Similarly, findings of many studies have also reported that female experience poor well-being compared to male (Campbell et al., 2021; Marquez et al., 2023; Perez, 2012; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2018).

Further, significant difference was found between the two age groups (12 to 14 years and 15 to 17 years) where the older adolescents seem to have low level of well-being compared to younger adolescents. Similarly, significant difference was found between the two class groups (6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>), where adolescents in lower class have better well-being compared to higher class. The major reason could be as children's age increase and move to higher classes there are lot of academic demands, parental pressure, competition, expectations from teachers and school that to be fulfilled by the adolescents which might affect their well-being. These finding is supported by a cross cultural study among adolescents in the age range of 15 to 24 years, which found that age and subjective well-being are negatively related to each other. The study has reported that across different culture adolescents have poor well-being compared to young adults (Handa et al., 2023), Similar finding was reported in few other study that younger adolescents experience better well-being compared to older adolescents (Bluth et al., 2017; Pravitha & Sembiyan, 2017). Further, few other studies have reported that well-being decreases with increase in grade level (Konu & Lintonen, 2006; Raccanello et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2021).

Further, it was found that adolescent students of Tamil medium experience better well-being compared to adolescents in English medium. Language plays a very important role in learning, communication, formation of friendship and maintaining interpersonal relationships in a life of a student. Although English language is accepted as a universal language of communication across countries, it is still a foreign language. Learning in native language actually helps students to understand better and learn quickly. Further, in corporation schools in Chennai, the option of choosing English medium of study is provided only after primary level (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> classes) of schooling. Therefore, this could also be a reason that affect their well-being as it becomes difficult for students to learn another new language in a short duration and excel in it. This finding is in line with few previous studies. A study conducted by Riad et al., (2023) among 85 preschool Swedish children found that the language background affect the well-being of the children, where, the children from linguistically diverse background had lower score compared to their peers. Similarly another study by Liu and Pascarella (2020) also found that students of non-native language were found to have low level of well-being compared to students of native language.

While comparing adolescents who have interest in study and disinterest in study, it was found that adolescents with interest in study show better well-being than those who do not have interest in study. Similarly, adolescents who like their school showed better well-being compared to adolescents who do not like their school. Attitude towards learning and school might influence the well-being of a student. Adolescent with negative attitude towards learning might perceive studies to be boring, difficult and might experience poor well-being. On the contrary to all other variables of the study, no significant difference was found on expectation of love and care from others. This indicates that adolescents who expect love and care and who do not expect love and care experience same level of well-being. One major reason could be adolescents who grow in low socio-economic background often experience more freedom with lack of supervision from parents. This enable them to function more independently and their culture provide more opportunity to mingle with peer group, thereby fulfil their need for love and care. Thus, they might not feel need for affiliation from others.

The regression analysis was performed for age, gender, class, medium of study, interest in study and liking/disliking school. From the analysis, except age and gender all other variables was found to be significantly predictor of well-being that contribute for 52% variance. When the adolescents learn in their mother tongue, have interest in study and positive attitude towards school, they are likely to experience better wellbeing compared to students learning in other language, have disinterest in study and dislike their school. Even though, male and female was found to differ on well-being, it did not significantly predict the well-being of adolescents indicating gender does not predict well-being of an adolescent. Further, class and age can go hand in hand, as the age increases, adolescents move to higher classes academically, therefore age did not emerge as a significant predictor.

The results of the qualitative analysis are presents in two tables (Table 4 and 5). From the analysis four themes were commonly identified for liking and disliking of the school namely, teachers, peer group, food and school environment. Previous research findings have reported that school climate, teacher's support and academic demands can affect the mental health of the students (Aldridge et al., 2016; Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Plenty et al., 2014). In addition to the four common themes, non-scholastic activity like physical education classes, playing with friends also found to influence liking towards school. In a study by Reda and Ahmad (2012), it was found that students consider physical education classes to be fun, that makes them feel happy, satisfied, help them to be fit & healthy and also, they get more friends through these classes.

While observing the themes emerged for disliking the school, apart from the four common themes, adolescents dislike school for the factors like bullying, punishments and usage of drugs in the school. According to a press release by American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), children who experienced bullying on a regular basis in school performed poorly in academics, disliked their school, and had less self-confidence in their academic skills. Similarly, punishments in schools can affect adolescents' perception towards the school, especially use of sarcasm words by teachers and corporal punishments for disciplining the students. In addition to all the factors, the use to drugs inside school is prevalent. Although, adolescents consider usage of drugs as a disliking factor, it is well known fact that availability of drugs inside school can have detrimental effect on their health, academics and wellbeing of the adolescent.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The present study is an attempt to explore and to highlight the role of individual and socio factors in influencing well-being of adolescents. The factors that was found to predict well-being of adolescents, gives insight in planning of mental health strategies to prevent and promote well-being of adolescents from low socio-economic background.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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