

Psychological Well-being and its Dimensions among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian Postgraduate Students in Malaysia: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This comparative study investigated differences in Psychological Well-being (PWB) and its three specific dimensions—Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance—among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students in Malaysia. Psychological well-being is crucial for students, as it fosters positive ego motivation and goal achievement in complete psychological health. The objective was to determine if significant differences existed in PWB and its dimensions among these three nationalities. The population and sample consisted of 229 postgraduate students currently pursuing studies in Malaysia, including 62 Arab, 90 Malaysian, and 77 Indonesian students. The methodology employed a survey approach, and data was analyzed using ANOVA. The instrument used was the 17-item Grera, M.Y psychological well-being scale (2025), which measures the three specified dimensions and demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). The main findings revealed significant differences across all variables. Overall PWB and Feeling of Responsibility were highest among Malaysian graduate students. Conversely, Achievement Motivation and Self-acceptance were highest among Arab graduate students. The implications suggest that Malaysian students' superiority in overall PWB and responsibility may stem from a sense of belonging and psychological security afforded by living in their own country. Arab students' higher achievement motivation and self-acceptance may be a response to the political and economic changes in the Arab region, prompting them to strive for self-realization and establish themselves abroad. Future research should broaden the nationalities and consider demographic variables like gender and age.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, Self Acceptance, Postgraduate Students, Arab – Malaysians -Indonesian

Introduction

Psychological well-being is of great importance to students as it is one of the most important factors in forming a positive ego motivation that leads to achieving their goals while they are in complete psychological health. These students set multiple goals for themselves, such as success. These students may achieve their goals while others fail. Therefore, the success of these students may be due to their sense of self-acceptance, and sense of responsibility and independence. Furthermore, they may experience social satisfaction due to their sense of social compatibility and positive relationships with others. All of this creates a strong drive for achievement within them, motivating them to complete their schoolwork, strive for academic achievement, and succeed at the end of the school year. Furthermore, Grera (2009) emphasized that successful students usually live happy lives, due to their ability to socially adapt to their environment, which makes them more responsible in performing their homework, and this pushed them to be more motivated to raise their academic achievement levels than students who suffer from psychological problems.

Wang, et al. (1997) demonstrated that when assessing the relative influence of more than 30 educational, psychological, social, and emotional categories on academic achievement, psychological variables had the greatest impact on academic performance. Research examining the association between psychological and emotional traits and academic achievement found that higher levels of intelligence were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression symptoms in students (Lopez-Zafra, 2009 & García). The results of some studies (Harden & Pihl, 1995) also revealed that students who performed poorly on educational tasks were anxious and impulsive, whereas students with positive psychological and emotional development readily adapt to new experiences, develop a positive attitude toward learning, and achieve high academic achievement. In addition, the cultural approach and social context in which people are raised vary from country to country, producing specific values, goals, and behaviors. The practice of these behaviors and the cultures learned are likely to influence feelings of psychological well-being. Therefore, any study of well-being needs to diversify and compare its sample.

Moreover, the comparative differences study in Psychological Well-being (PWB) and its three specific dimensions—Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance—among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students in Malaysia is an educational and psychological necessity and an urgent requirement to enrich the educational field with such that help understand the differences of psychological and cultural makeup of students, and these, which in turn may impact their level of education, enabling us to benefit from their educational systems and approaches to raise the level education of students in the other countries. So, in this study, the aim is to elucidate whether the level of psychological well-being is different among (Arab – Malaysian – Indonesian) postgraduate students.

Psychological Well-Being

The student's feeling that they are a person capable of organizing their behavior independently of the social pressures surrounding them, and that they have the continuous ability to develop their capabilities in a way that confirms that they are open to new experiences and has sufficient flexibility to deal skillfully with different environments, and that they have positive attitudes towards themselves and adheres to these attitudes, and that

they have clear goals for their existence in this life that they seek to achieve in a way that does not conflict with the goals of the society to which they belong, and that they have positive relationships with others that are dominated by mutual understanding, is directly linked to the efficiency and quality of the academic outcome and the outcomes of the educational process. Grera, M.Y, and Abd Hamid (2021) studied the relationship between psychological well-being and Achievement Motivation Among Postgraduate students. The results showed that psychological well-being was significantly positively associated with achievement motivation among postgraduate students.

Psychological well-being, according to the approach developed by Ryff (1989), consists of six dimensions, each of which illustrates the different challenges individuals face as they strive for positive outcomes. These dimensions are self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, environmental control, positive relationships, and purposeful living. Also, Psychological well-being is defined by Grera, M.Y (2025) as positive psychological functioning that stems from within, accompanied by strong feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. This functioning must be based on a strong desire to strive and confront life's challenges to achieve an ideal image of one's true potential. Thus, Psychological well-being is not characterized by positive feelings alone, which are relatively temporary, but rather includes long-term and stable aspects of performance (Abbott, et al., 2008). This was confirmed by Lykken (2000), who said that getting rid of the pressures and problems in our lives may reduce our feelings of pain and sadness, but this does not increase our level of happiness and psychological comfort (Abdul Latif, 2009).

In fact, there are not many studies that have focused on individual differences between nationalities in the level of psychological well-being. These studies are rare, and among them are: the study by Grera, (2022), which aimed to identify if there was a difference in psychological well-being among Syrian, Yemeni, and Libyan students. This study showed that there was a significant difference in scores of psychological well-being among Arab postgraduate students, with the Yemeni students having the highest mean. Also, Pi-Ming, et al. (2023) studied "A Comparison of Psychological Well-Being Between Taiwanese and Australian Nursing Students". The results showed that students in Australia had higher mean scores than Taiwanese nursing students for psychological well-being, life satisfaction/self-actualization, and Spiritual well-being. Problem-focused disengagement was shown to be significantly and positively related to psychological well-being and significantly and negatively related to anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation in both groups. El-nabgha, et al. (2010) aimed to identify the differences between Japanese and Egyptian university students in psychological well-being (PWB). The results indicated that there are significant differences between Japanese and Egyptian students, with Japanese students scoring higher levels in autonomy and personal growth, and Egyptian students scoring higher levels in environmental control, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others. No significant differences were observed for the total psychological well-being score.

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is characterized by the individual needing to be more ambitious, loving challenges and struggle, setting ambitious but achievable goals, and also desiring feedback on their performance and accomplishments, as well as control and influence over their actions to serve their goals. In addition to the need for achievement and growth, a

successful individual has a strong desire to work and be with others to receive praise for their work, engage in continuous social interaction, and help others develop and progress. Also, achievement motivation means that an individual possesses high levels of enthusiasm and interest toward a goal or task, and that they utilize their maximum capabilities to achieve them (Grera, 2023).

Furthermore, Murray (1983) asserted that achievement motivation is a component of the healthy personality, and considered it one of the twenty-seven human impulses acquired, and one of the 20 psychological needs of origin. He defined it as the keenness of the person to achieve the goals that others see as difficult, and the ability to control the social environment, control ideas, improve their organization, speed of performance and independence, overcome difficulties and obstacles, reach excellence, excel over oneself, compete with others, excel against them, and have self-pride and appreciation (Bahi, 1998). So, it cannot be denied that the growing interest in achievement motivation and its relationship to the psychological well-being aspect in recent years is due to the belief of researchers that achievement motivation is an important indicator towards achieving the required educational achievement and positive educational outcomes, and its strong association with the personality free of any psychological or social barriers (Grera, 2022).

Feeling of Responsibility

Many studies of responsibility are a scientific requirement to enrich a general concept that revolves around the positive personality interacting with society and life, in order to be a positive, active person. Also, empirical work suggests that the development of social responsibility is a very valued educational objective. Qasim defined responsibility as: "The individual's responsibility for himself, and his responsibility towards his family, friends and religion, through his understanding of his role in achieving his goals and his concern for others through his positive relationships and his participation in solving community problems and achieving general goals" (Al-Shafi'i, 2016). Furthermore, Maryem (2009) emphasized that successful students usually live happy lives, due to their ability to be more responsible in performing their homework than students who suffer from psychological problems and have a lower level of social adjustment and a lower sense of responsibility. Also, Grera, (2009) found that there was a correlation coefficient between positive psychological feelings and the sense of responsibility, and it is significant at the 0.01 level.

Sense of responsibility includes a sense of self-responsibility, represented by the habits of self-control and self-direction. The individual tends toward independence in life affairs and does not seek help if they are capable of performing this task on their own; this is the need for personal responsibility. It also includes social responsibility, which is learning social awareness, where the individual takes into account the desires and feelings of others in order to form positive relationships with them.

Self Acceptance

Self-acceptance is achieved by accepting oneself, both positively and negatively, without hating or denying these aspects. This self-acceptance does not necessarily mean contentment with one's negatives; rather, it should not become an obstacle to holding oneself accountable and evaluating one's behavior in order to develop and advance it by enhancing one's strengths and attempting to overcome one's weaknesses (Grera, 2025).

Ryff (1989) confirmed that maintaining a positive attitude toward oneself appears as a central characteristic of positive psychological performance. This is known as a central feature of mental health, in addition to the characteristic of self-realization, optimal performance, and maturity. Alaa Kafafi (1990) states that a person who accepts himself, with his positive and negative aspects, neither hates nor denies himself. This acceptance of the self does not necessarily mean satisfaction with his negatives. Rather, this acceptance does not constitute a barrier to holding himself accountable and evaluating his behavior to develop and progress. This is achieved by consolidating his strengths, attempting to overcome his weaknesses, and reducing the impact of his flaws (Hiba, Salouma, Sand, 2013).

The Present Study

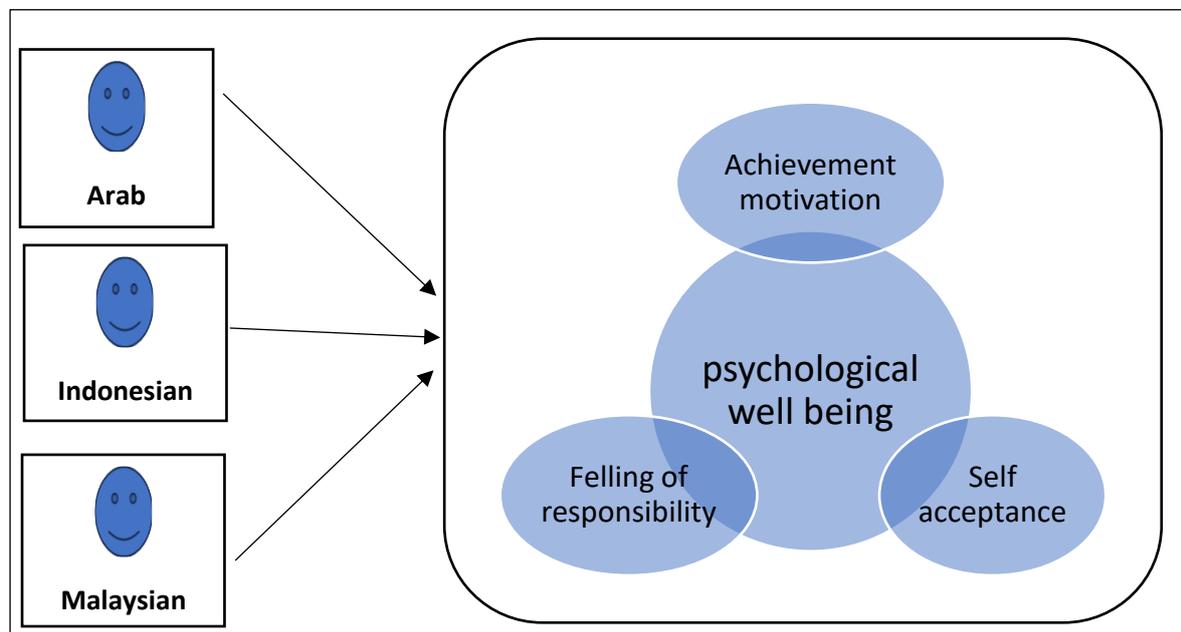
The researcher's interest in studying the psychological well-being of graduate students and determining whether there are differences between different nationalities in their levels of psychological well-being is an important indicator of desired educational outcomes. These differences may indicate the diversity of educational systems and cultures followed in some countries, which may contribute to raising or lowering psychological well-being, which in turn may impact their academic achievement. Therefore, this study may contribute to shedding light on teaching methods and approaches in countries with high student well-being, enabling us to benefit from them and adopt their educational curricula and approaches to raise the psychological well-being of students in other countries. In addition, there may be other factors that negatively or positively impact psychological well-being, such as economic, political, and social conditions, which necessarily vary from one country to another.

For example, in countries such as Spain, Croatia, and Greece, there was a steady decline in well-being (satisfaction with life), while in Denmark, Finland, and Norway, there was an increase in well-being, and in Austria, Canada, and Scotland, there was a clear increase in well-being. These results may be due to factors such as concerns about the future, high expectations set by family, school, and peers, and constant school pressure. Another reason is the circumstances of some countries, for example economic situation, unemployment rates, and social insecurity, which can lead to higher levels of stress and psychological pressure (Fernandes, et al., 2010).

Hence, the researcher emphasizes the necessity of studying the nature of these differences in the level of psychological well-being. Focusing on psychological development and psychological well-being contributes to and positively impacts the level of academic achievement, and all of these factors are strongly linked to excellence and success. All societies, regardless of their levels, seek to have successful individuals who contribute to the development and progress of their communities. Societies in general, and developing societies in particular, are in dire need of such individuals to help keep pace with the sciences and developments our world is witnessing these days. Accordingly, the researcher focused her study on postgraduate students, as this stage includes a large portion of individuals who represent the youth of society, upon whom the future relies for its advancement and the achievement of its future goals. This stage bears the burden of properly forming and strengthening the personalities of these students. The purpose of the present study was to examine whether the level of psychological well-being is different among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian postgraduate students.

Research Model

The following chart summarizes how differences in psychological well-being, and its three dimensions, were studied among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian graduate students. The chart illustrates the variables and groups.



Objectives

The objectives of the study were: 1) To investigate whether there is a difference in Psychological Well-being among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students. And 2) To investigate whether there is a difference in the three dimensions of Psychological Well-being, which are Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance, among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students.

Methodology

The study employed a survey method. The participants in the study consisted of a total of 229 postgraduate students (62 Arab students, 90 Malaysian students, and 77 Indonesian students). Data were collected through four main instruments; the Psychological Well-being Scale by Grera, (2025). This scale is briefly discussed below. Grera, Psychological Well-being Scale (2025): The scale consists of 17 items. It is designed to measure three theoretical constructs (dimensions) of psychological well-being, which are Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance. Satisfactory reliability and validity scores have been found for this scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.89. The test-retest method yielded a coefficient of 0.75, while the split-half method yielded 0.86, indicating that the scale enjoys high reliability..

Results and Discussion

To answer the research questions, the ANOVA was used to find out whether there is a difference in Psychological Well-being among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students, and whether there is a difference in the three dimensions of Psychological Well-being, which are Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance, among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students.

Firstly: Differences in Psychological Well-being Among Postgraduate Students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 1: The Result of ANOVA to investigate whether there is a difference in Psychological Well-being among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian postgraduate students.

Brief data analysis of H1

H1: There are differences in Psychological Well-being among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 1

Differences in psychological well-being

nationality	Sample-N	Mean - M	S.D	F- value	SIG
Arab	62	77.66	4.23	51.18	0.000
Indonesian	77	70.84	3.86		
Malaysians	90	77.73	5.88		

The Table showed that there was a significant difference in scores of Psychological Well-being among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students, with the Malaysian students having the highest mean ($F = 51.18$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The mean value for the three groups was \$77.66\$ with a standard deviation of \$4.23\$ for Arab students. The mean for Indonesian students was \$70.84\$ with a standard deviation of \$3.86\$. Meanwhile, the mean for Malaysian students was \$77.73\$ with a standard deviation of \$5.88\$.

Secondly: Differences in Achievement Motivation Among Postgraduate Students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

2) To investigate whether there is a difference in the three dimensions of Psychological Well-being, which are Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance, among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students.

Table 2: The Result of ANOVA to investigate whether there are differences in Achievement Motivation among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

H2: There are differences in Achievement Motivation among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 2

Differences in Achievement Motivation

nationality	Sample-N	Mean - M	S.D	F- value	SIG
Arab	62	27.85	2.01	39.37	0.000
Indonesian	77	25.12	1.45		
Malaysians	90	27.47	2.42		

The Table showed that there was a significant difference in scores of Achievement Motivation among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students, with the Arab students having the highest mean ($F = 39.37$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The mean value for the three groups was \$27.85\$ with a standard deviation of \$2.01\$ for Arab students. The mean for Indonesian students was \$25.12\$ with a standard deviation of \$1.45\$. Meanwhile, the mean for Malaysian students was \$27.47\$ with a standard deviation of \$2.42\$.

Thirdly: Differences in Feeling of Responsibility Among Postgraduate Students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 3: The result of ANOVA to investigate whether there are differences in Feeling of Responsibility among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian). H3: There are differences in Feeling of Responsibility among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 3

Differences in feelings of responsibility

nationality	Sample-N	Mean - M	S.D	F- value	SIG
Arab	62	27.16	2.99	22.09	0.000
Indonesian	77	25.23	2.17		
Malaysians	90	27.67	2.24		

Table showed that there was significance difference in scores of feeling of responsibility among (Arab – Indonesian - Malaysians) postgraduate students for which has the highest mean (Malaysians) ($F = 22.09$ $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). It can be seen that, the mean value for three group had, 27.16 and the standard deviation is 2.99 for Arab students. the mean for Indonesian students is 25.23 and the standard deviation is 2.17. while, the mean for Malaysians students had 27.67 and the standard deviation is 2.24.

Fourthly: Differences in Self-acceptance Among Postgraduate Students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 4: The result of ANOVA to investigate whether there are differences in Self-acceptance among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

H4: There are differences in Self-acceptance among postgraduate students (Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian).

Table 4

Differences in Self-acceptance

nationality	Sample-N	Mean - M	S.D	F- value	SIG
Arab	62	22.64	2.60	21.43	0.000
Indonesian	77	20.45	1.52		
Malaysians	90	22.45	2.48		

The Table showed that there was a significant difference in scores of Self-acceptance among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students, with the Malaysian students having the highest mean ($F = 21.43$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The mean value for the three groups was \$22.64\$ with a standard deviation of \$2.60\$ for Arab students. The mean for Indonesian students was \$20.45\$ with a standard deviation of \$1.52\$. Meanwhile, the mean for Malaysian students was \$22.45\$ with a standard deviation of \$2.48\$.

The results of this study demonstrated that there were significant differences in Psychological Well-being and its three dimensions: Achievement Motivation, Feeling of Responsibility, and Self-acceptance, among Arab, Malaysian, and Indonesian students. These results revealed differences in Psychological Well-being and Feeling of Responsibility in favor

of Malaysian graduate students. The mean value of Malaysian students in the Psychological Well-being variable and the Feeling of Responsibility variable was higher than that of Arab and Indonesian students, supported by ($F = 51.18, P = 0.000 < 0.05$) and ($F = 22.09, P = 0.000 < 0.05$), respectively. Also, the results found differences in Achievement Motivation and Self-acceptance in favor of Arab graduate students. The mean value of Arab students in the Achievement Motivation variable and the Self-acceptance variable was higher than that of Indonesian and Malaysian students, supported by ($F = 39.37, P = 0.000 < 0.05$) for the Achievement Motivation variable and ($F = 21.43, P = 0.000 < 0.05$) for the Self-acceptance variable.

This is consistent with a few previous studies conducted in this area and has also been confirmed in previous studies. Grera, M. Y (2022) aimed to identify whether there was a difference in Psychological Well-being among Syrian, Yemeni, and Libyan students. This study showed that there was a significant difference in scores of Psychological Well-being among Arab postgraduate students, with the Yemeni students having the highest mean. Also, Pi-Ming, et al. (2023) studied "A Comparison of Psychological Well-Being Between Taiwanese and Australian Nursing Students". The results showed that students in Australia had higher mean scores than Taiwanese nursing students for Psychological Well-being, Life Satisfaction/Self-actualization, and Spiritual Well-being.

Problem-focused disengagement was shown to be significantly and positively related to Psychological Well-being and significantly and negatively related to anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation in both groups. El-nabgha, et al. (2010) aimed to identify the differences between Japanese and Egyptian university students in Psychological Well-being (PWB). The results indicated that there are significant differences between Japanese and Egyptian students, with Japanese students scoring higher levels in autonomy and personal growth, and Egyptian students scoring higher levels in environmental control, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others. No significant differences were observed for total psychological well-being. well-being score.

Conclusion

These results revealed differences in Psychological Well-being and Feeling of Responsibility in favor of Malaysian graduate students. The mean value of Malaysian students in the Psychological Well-being variable and the Feeling of Responsibility variable was higher than that of Arab and Indonesian students, as shown by the respective mean scores: (77.73, 77.66, 70.84) and (27.67, 27.16, 25.23). Also, the results found differences in Achievement Motivation and Self-acceptance in favor of Arab graduate students. The mean value of Arab students in the Achievement Motivation variable and the Self-acceptance variable was higher than that of Indonesian and Malaysian students, as shown by the respective mean scores: (27.85, 25.12, 27.47) for the Achievement Motivation variable and (22.64, 20.45, 22.45) for the Self-acceptance variable.

Based on these results, we can conclude that Malaysian students' superiority in Psychological Well-being and Feeling of Responsibility stems from their sense of belonging and psychological security. Living in their own country affords them job opportunities, medical insurance, and other benefits that Malaysian institutions do not provide to non-Malaysians. Conversely, Arabs' highest scores in Achievement Motivation and Self-

acceptance can be explained by highlighting the political and economic changes the Arab region is undergoing, which have prompted them to emigrate and attempt to change their circumstances for the better. They have harnessed their full potential to achieve self-realization and establish themselves by spreading their culture and heritage to other countries. Given that these studies did not follow a comprehensive approach, future studies should consider not only focusing on these three nationalities, but also other nationalities, such as European nationalities. The impact of other demographic variables, such as gender, age, and social status, should also be considered, requiring further research.

This study makes a significant contribution by providing rare empirical evidence comparing the levels and dimensions of Psychological Well-being (PWB) among Arab, Indonesian, and Malaysian postgraduate students in a shared academic environment. The significance lies in its ability to shed light on how cultural backgrounds and host-country factors influence specific psychological constructs like achievement motivation and responsibility. The findings have direct implications for educational policy, student support services, and curriculum development in international universities. They suggest that institutions should develop targeted interventions—such as specialized mentorship programs for international students to address well-being factors like belonging and security, and self-enhancement workshops for local students to boost areas like motivation—to ensure better psychological health and optimal academic outcomes across diverse student populations.

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