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**The influence of self-esteem and role stress on job performance of  
technical college employees**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The authors examined the influence of self-esteem and role stress on job performance of technical college employees.

**Research design:** two sets of hypotheses were proposed. The first accessed the effect of self-esteem on job performance and the second focused on role stress on job performance. Participants consisted of 162 employees drawn from technical teachers and workshop attendants in selected technical colleges in Rivers and Bayelsa states. Questionnaire was the research instrument for data collection. To test the hypotheses, Structural equation modeling (SEM), were implemented.

**Findings:** The result of the study indicated that there is significant negative effect of self-esteem, Role ambiguity and role overload on job performance of employees in technical colleges

**Policy implications:** Findings in this research indicates that college authorities should focus efforts at boosting self-esteem, since high self-esteem causes many positive outcomes. The study would be very useful to employees and students of technical colleges.

**Key words:** *self-esteem, role stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, job performance, college employees*

## Introduction

The experience of workplace stress has been subject to a large amount of research and interest in the topic shows no sign of waning. It is now generally accepted according to Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, (2001), that prolonged or intense stress can have a negative impact on an individual's mental and physical health. They gave five sources of stress with examples of the components of these sources given;

1. Poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressure.
2. Role in the organization, including role ambiguity and role conflict.
3. Career development, including lack of job security and under/ over promotion.
4. Relationships at work, including poor relationships with the boss or colleagues.
5. Organizational structure and climate including little involvement in decision making and office politics.

Job stress is influenced by several factors, notably, role stress. Role stress is regarded as both a source, (Cooper and Marshal, 1976); and an important premise of job stress, (Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning, 1986), quoted in (Yilmaz, 2015). Using the Conservation of Resources Theory, it is possible to describe job stress as stress that employees experience in the workplace environment (Karatepe and Karatepe, 2009). According to this theory, employees experience stress when:

- they are faced with the danger of losing resources;
- they lose their resources; or
- they are unable to achieve the expected results despite the fact that the resources are available to use (Hobfoll, 2001).

Teachers attribute their organizational stress on various aspects of work environment such as students, school administration and school system. Stressors have been identified among teachers, according to Mekhia, Kara, & Malhotra (2012), to include-

role overload (being overwhelmed by the amount or complexity of work, role ambiguity (uncertainty about job description), conflicting job roles, lack of influence over the work environment, inadequate work environment, demands made by external agencies, poor relations with students, lack of support from the principal, school climate and culture. These may sometimes result to poor job performance.

Self-esteem is a disposition that a person has which represents his judgment of his own worthiness (Olsen, Breckler and Wiggins, 2008). Branden (1969) stated that self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life. To him, it is The Sum Of Self-confidence (A feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). Self-esteem is seen as the belief that a person is accepted, connected, unique, powerful and capable. It is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it (Smith, & Mackie, 2007). It affects the way we are and act in the world and the way we are related to everybody. Wickman and Campbell, (2003), explained that Carl Rogers (1902-1987), an advocate of humanistic psychology, theorized the origin of many people's problems to be that they despise themselves and consider

themselves worthless and incapable of being loved. This is why Rogers believed in the importance of giving unconditional acceptance to a client and when this was done it could improve the client's self-esteem. Some other authors have argued that high self-esteem does not affect a person's performance at work. To Roy, (2003), the modest correlation between self esteem and school performance do not indicate that high self-esteem leads to good performance. Efforts to boost the self-esteem of pupils have not been shown to improve academic performance. Others unlike Roy still find that high self esteem leads to happier outcomes regardless of stress or other circumstances. According to Bowles, Gintis, & Osborne, (2001); Judge & Bono, (2001). Self- esteem and other non-cognitive traits developed through education are important factors for job satisfaction, job performance and earnings in the labour market. High self-esteem enables one to cope with tough times and helps one to create and make the most out of it. According to, Roy, (2003), Job performance in adults is sometimes related to self-esteem, although the correlations vary widely, and the direction of causality has not been established. Whether self-esteem has great effect or insignificant effect on job performance, especially on technical college employees will be shown in this work. Following the above divergent views, it is only fair to explore the influence that self esteem and role stress may have on job performance of technical college employees.

## **Literature review**

### *Self-esteem*

Self-esteem as a concept has been put up as a strong force that can affect work performance. It is important because it shows how we view the way we are and the sense of our personal value. Farah Kuster, Ulrich Orth, and Laurenz L Meier (2012), noted in their study that high selfesteem predicted better work conditions and outcomes, while workers with low self-esteem are overly dependent and have difficulty in making decisions. Rosenberg, (1965) defined self-esteem as an overall evaluation of one's personal worth or value. It is a collection of an individual's attitudes toward himself. Self-esteem according to Olsen, et al, (2008), is a disposition that a person has which represents his judgment of his own worthiness. The development of selfesteem depends on an individual's evaluation of other people's competencies in comparison with his or her own (Cotton, 1985). Branden (1969) stated that self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life. He continued that it is the sum of selfconfidence (a feeling of personal capacity), and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). In his theory, (Maslow 1987), included self-esteem in his hierarchy of human needs. He described two forms of "esteem": the need for respect from others in the form of recognition, success, and admiration, and the need for self-respect in the form of self-love, self-confidence, skill, or aptitude. According to Maslow, without the fulfillment of self-esteem need, individuals will be driven to seek it and unable to grow and obtain self-actualization. Self-esteem can impact one's performance to a large extent. To (Ausubel, 1950), emotional interactions, the ability to prove oneself, efficient competency skills and anger management also contribute to the development of self-esteem. When an individual accepts himself or herself, that individual can live in harmony with the strong and weak features of his or her personality (Karatepe and Demir, 2014). Employees' self-esteem is negatively influenced by their failure to meet goals. Matching individual standards, wishes and performance capacity positively influences employees' selfesteem. This means that if the employees' work standard matches their attitudes, they are more likely to develop self-esteem. However, it should be noted that the self-

esteem of some persons can be influenced by many individuals from their past, ranging from teachers, colleagues and classmates to other social groups with whom they have had contact in the past or still have contact (Osborne, 1997). The findings from the research conducted by Yilmaz, 2015 indicated that there is no significant effect of self esteem on job performance in service occupations, although high self-esteem facilitates persistence after failure and may be helpful only in some job contexts.

### *Role stress*

Individuals face stress on daily basis in their personal and professional lives. Stress according to Fozia, and Shan (2015), is an imbalance in an individual's personality due to external factors resulting in psychological, physical and behavioural change. Colligan & Higgins (2006) describes occupational stress as the change in psychological, physical and behavioural response due to work place challenges and threats posed to employees. Acute stress is experienced due to the incompatibility of a person's handling of work tasks, such as when employees are given an unrealistic work demand which causes frustration, sadness and worry and threatens self-esteem. The negative outcomes of job-related stress (e.g., lower productivity, turnover, and lower commitment), can affect overall functioning of the institution. To Fozia and Shaan, stress is an imbalance in an individual's personality due to external factors resulting in physical, psychological and behavioural change. There are multiple reasons that can cause stress and such reasons can change our current physical, psychological, and behavioural responses, which ultimately results in negative job outcomes. Physical consequences of organizational stress according to Mekhia, Karan, & Malhotra (2012), involve changes to normal bodily functioning. Role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity are three major components of role stress (Cooper and Marshall, 1976; Singh and Dubey, 2011), and they have been abundantly investigated in the extant literature (Brown and Peterson, 1994; Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Role ambiguity occurs when there is an ambiguity in the role of a person in the organization or when the person does not know what to do or how to perform his or her role. Role conflict occurs when employees are confronted with expectations for different roles, such as when two roles should be performed simultaneously or when performing one role prevents performing the other one. Role overload increases when the fulfillment of a role becomes impossible for the individual because of time, energy or resources. All these three elements, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, are significant variables influencing the functions of organizations. This may cause discontent, a lack of confidence in the organization, tense interpersonal relations, low productivity, low performance, low achievement and fewer interpersonal relationships (Widmer, 1993).

Studies have shown that there are diverse statistically significant relationships between job performance and for example; role conflict (Babin and Boles, 1998; Mohr and Puck, 2007), negative affection Bhagat, Krishnan, Nelson, Leonard, Ford, and Billing (2010), role ambiguity (Rigopoulou, Theodosiou, Katsikea, and Perdakis, 2012), and core self-evaluation (Song and Chathoth, 2013). In addition, prolonged occupational stress in teaching is found by Mekhia, Karan, & Malhotra (2012), to result in reduced performance, withdrawal, deteriorating collegial relations and accident. Stress within teaching profession may not only affect the physical and emotional wellbeing of a teacher, but it also affects the organization where they are working because it may impair the working relationship with students and colleagues. Mekhia et al continued that, there



tend to be few studies on job stress among teachers; however, there are strong indications of high stress levels among staff in technical colleges. Employees in technical colleges, both teachers and instructors, have impact on students learning. Stress therefore on their part may affect the way they discharge their duties. In all of the above, more research on the influence of stress needs to be carried out specifically in the technical colleges in Rivers and Bayelsa states.

### *Job performance*

Job performance has been described by Murphy, (1989) as a set of behaviours that are relevant to goals of the organization in which a person works. Numerous studies conducted in various sectors show that there are statistically significant relationships between job performance and role conflict. (Babin & Boles, 1998), and role ambiguity, (Rigopoulou, et al). Job performance has been shown to relate to an organization's profit, effectiveness and survival. (Johnson, 2003). A view that has been advanced by Brown, (1993), is that self-esteem level or one's overall positive or negative evaluation of oneself should be related to job performance. Typically, such suggestions evoke the notion that individuals with high self-esteem are motivated to do well on the job to maintain cognitive consistency with their high self-evaluations, a main effect of self-esteem level, Korman (1970). Self consistency theory advanced by Korman provides a theoretical framework for organizational hypothesis regarding self-esteem level, with the general premise that individuals with high self-esteem would be more satisfied and productive at work. In his words, "individuals will be motivated to perform on a task or job in a manner which is consistent with their self-image", suggesting a positive main effect of self-esteem level on job performance. The empirical reviews and narratives above notwithstanding, the overall main effect of self-esteem level on job performance have been questioned according to Baumister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, (2003). It is therefore this gap that this study intends to fill, to really show to what extent the concepts (self-esteem and role stress) affect job performance.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in this study;

- (I) There is no significant negative effect of self-esteem on job performance of employees in technical colleges.
- (II) Role ambiguity has no significant negative effect on job performance of employees in the technical colleges.
- (III) Role conflict has no significant negative effect on job performance of employees the technical colleges.
- (IV) Role overload has no significant negative effect on job performance of employees in the technical colleges.

### **Methodology**

#### *Data collection and analyses*

Data were collected from five technical colleges in Bayelsa and Rivers state in December 2015. All the six technical colleges in the two states were proposed for the study. One of the colleges however, could not be reached due to militancy issues, so five of them that were accessible were chosen. Five departments in each of the five technical colleges were used for the study. The

departments are Motor vehicle technology, Carpentry and joinery, Block laying and concreting, Electrical installation and maintenance, Plumbing and pipefitting. These departments were purposively chosen as they were the ones that were present in all the technical colleges under study. All forty employees who include, teachers and instructors which are all involved in teaching either theory or practical to technical college students from each college were used for the research. There were a total of 200 respondents from the colleges. National board for technical education NBTE, (1993), gave the number of instructors and teachers to be about eight in each department. Copies of questionnaires were distributed by the researchers with the help of research assistants.

#### *Reliability of the Instrument*

The 39 items in the questionnaire were subjected to internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha and the result is found to be reliable and satisfactory with a reliability coefficient of 0.854. see table 2.

#### **Reliability: Table 1. Case Processing Summary**

	N	%
Cases		
Valid	50	100.0
Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
Total	50	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### **Table 2.**

#### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.854	30

The Vice principals of the colleges helped in sensitizing the staff to help fill the questionnaires. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, only 162 were returned and used for the study. (The rate of return was 81 per cent). The respondents' demographic characteristics were identified through

descriptive statistics using SPSS (version 19.0). Then, using the two step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement model analysis was assessed via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL. Finally, the hypothesized relationship between self-esteem, and role stress on job performance was tested using a structural equation model.

### *Measurement*

A questionnaire was used as the research tool in this study because according to Nworgu (2015), researchers necessarily can use it to obtain data on the feelings, views and perceptions of a group of people toward certain issues. The questionnaire is of two sections, one dealing with demographic properties of the participants and the other seeking to elicit responses on self-esteem, role-stress and job performance. In total, 10 Likert-type expressions developed by Rosenberg (1965) which relates to self-esteem were adopted ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). The Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale was confirmed as a valid and reliable measurement technique for assessing self-esteem. 13 items were related to role stress and was adapted from a study employed by Chang and Hancock (2003), 16 were related to job performance and were adapted from the rating scale developed by the University of California (2014). The items were compiled by the researcher and subjected to internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha and the result was found to be reliable and satisfactory with a reliability coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.854$ ).

### *Demographic Characteristics*

The demographic factors of gender, age and job tenure were measured. The results on Table 3 show that the respondents consisted of 56 % male and 44 % female. The average respondents' age is 32.6 years with 92 % of them being older than 23 years. Nearly half of the employees (28 %) had work experience of less than five years and 72 % of the employees had work experience of five years or more in the technical college they currently work for.

**Results:** Table 3.

#### **Mean job performance score based on demographics.**

Characteristics	Frequency	%	Mean of JP
<i>Gender (n = 162)</i>			
Male	90	56	2.63
Female	72	44	3.45
<i>Age (n = 162)</i>			
22 years or younger	-	-	-



23-32 years	9	6	3.67	38	2.77
33-42 years	63	56	3.21		
43 years and above	90				
					3.75**
<i>Job tenure (n = 162)</i>		28			3.45**
5 years and less	45	72			
6 years and above	117				

Notes: *n* = number of respondents, *JP* = job performance, \*\**p* < 0.01 (one tailed)

**Table 4.**

**Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis for the relationship between self-esteem and job performance; stress and job performance of technical college workers**

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	r	R <sup>2</sup>
Self-esteem → Job performance	162	3.42	0.47	-0.70	0.63
Stress → Job performance	162	2.76	0.56	-0.89	0.78

Key: *n* = number of respondents,  $\bar{x}$  = mean, SD = standard deviation, *r* = correlation coefficient, R<sup>2</sup> = coefficient of determination

The results on Table 4 show that the correlation coefficient obtained was -0.70 (self-esteem and job performance) and -0.89 (stress and job performance). This means that, there exists a direct negative relationship between Self-esteem and Job performance; Stress and Job performance. Table 4 also shows that, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) associated with the correlation coefficient of -0.70 is 0.63 and -0.89 is 0.78. This coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates that, 63% of self-esteem and 78 % of stress accounted for poor job performance while 37% and 22 % of the variation in workers job performance are attributed to factors other than self-esteem and stress.

### *Structural equation modeling*

The revised fitness model is deemed appropriate and satisfactory after the examination and perusal of the fitness indices. The structural equation model fits well with the data, and they complimented each other to a high degree ( $\chi^2 = 276.89$ , *df* = 100, *p* < 0.001, GFI=0.87, CFI=0.89 and RMSEA =

0.087) the value of the normed chi squared ( $\chi^2/df$ ) is 2.75 which is less than 3.00 (Hair et al. 2010). other indicators include GFI = 0.87, CFI = 0.89 and RMSEA = 0.087, thus suggesting that this index was an acceptable fit. Ho<sub>1</sub> proposed that there is significant negative effect of self-esteem on job performance of workers in technical colleges. The results revealed that self-esteem ( $\beta$ -value = -0.70,  $p < 0.01$ ) evidently contradict the null hypothesis. This implies that self-esteem negatively affects job performance and the null hypothesis is rejected. The results also contradict Ho<sub>2</sub>, which hypothesized that role ambiguity has no negative effect on job performance ( $\beta$ -value = -0.89,  $p < 0.01$ ). As for Ho<sub>3</sub> which proposed that role conflict has no negative effect on job performance, the results reveal that role conflict ( $\beta$ -value = 0.56,  $p < 0.001$ ) has no negative influence on job performance and the null hypothesis is accepted unlike Ho<sub>4</sub> which proposed that role overload has negative effect on job performance of employees in the technical colleges. The result reveals that role overload ( $\beta$ -value = -0.62,  $p < 0.001$ ) negatively affect job performance and the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 5.**

**Structural parameter estimate**

Hypothesized path	Standardized path coefficients	t-value	Decision
Ho <sub>1</sub> Self-esteem → Job performance	-0.70	6.47**	Reject
Ho <sub>2</sub> Role ambiguity → Job performance	-0.89	4.09**	Reject
Ho <sub>3</sub> Role conflict → Job performance	0.56	8.21**	Accept
Ho <sub>4</sub> Role overload → Job performance	-0.62	7.45**	Reject

Note :  $\chi^2 = 276.89$ ,  $df = 100$ , GFI=0.87, CFI=0.89 and RMSEA = 0.087, GFI = 0.87, CFI = 0.89, \*\* $p < 0.01$ ,

## Discussion and conclusions

### *Theoretical implications*

The objective of this study is to highlight the effect of self-esteem and role stress on job performance of technical college employees in Rivers and Bayelsa states of Nigeria. It aimed at evaluating the role stress of technical college employees and how role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload played a part in influencing job performances. To test the hypothesis proposed, structural equation modeling was employed. As a result of the equation modeling used, it was ascertained that self-esteem, role ambiguity and role overload influence job performance of technical college employees in a negative way whereas; role conflict has no negative effect on job performance. Previous research (Judge & Bono, 2001; Roy, 2003) which shows that role stress have significant negative effect on job performance, supports the findings of this research. So, it is possible to argue that the employees' job performance decreased in the following six separate scenarios:

1. When at times they think that they are no good at all
2. When they feel that they do not have much to be proud of

3. When they are inclined to feel that they are failures.
4. When resources needed for effective role performance are not available
5. When they feel that more is expected from the role than they can cope with.
6. When they lack clarity of jobs description and responsibilities.

Technical college administration should look out for staff that has low self-esteem; this is in order that something should be done to improve the self-esteem of such persons. Some social occasions and counseling programme may be employed to help the employees with self-esteem issues. They may be made to feel important: they may be given special considerations when giving awards and corrections; to make them feel that after all, they are not failures. This would enhance productivity and job performance. Furthermore, studies have shown that there is statistically significant relationship between job performance and role conflict, (Babin and Boles, 1998; Mohr and Puck, 2007), negative affection Bhagat, et al (2010), the outcome of this study shares similarity with that of Bhagat et al, which states that role conflict has no significant relationship with job performance. Role conflict occurs when employees are confronted with expectations for different roles, such as when two roles should be performed simultaneously or when performing one role prevents performing the other one. It may be possible that though employee is expected to perform more than one job at a time, he/she is not to be punished by management for not achieving targets because of role conflict caused by the administration. As a result, the employee performs his/her assigned duties as he/she can and at his best.

If role load is too much for employees, they will certainly waste their energy trying to cope with it by learning new ways of overcoming and executing the task. If they succeed in learning new ways, their self-esteem may be increased positively, but whereby they fail to be able to improve on new methods of tackling the overload, they may then see themselves as failures and tend to sink into low self-esteem. Also, when they strive to the best of their ability to meet up with the much load that is assigned to them, and they fail to meet up, according to Sullivan and Bhagat, (1992), energy is wasted and job performance is affected. This knowledge might provide the basis for effective interventions aimed at improving self-esteem and role stress.

#### *Practical implications*

From the result of this study, it can be asserted that there are some steps that technical college administrators can take to improve job performance among employees. It should be clearly understood that self-esteem has negative influence on job performance. So, improving the employee's self-esteem through various programmes and counseling can do a lot to improve their self-worth and consequently job performance. Self-esteem and other non-cognitive traits are important factors for job performance and earnings in labour market. (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Bowles, Gintis and Osborne 2001, Judge and Bono, 2001). While interviewing applicants for employment, it may be better to choose from those who feel that they are persons of worth and take positive attitude towards themselves. Conducting training and re-training exercises regularly for employees make them to perform better on their jobs and thereby in turn improving their self-esteem.

This research project showed that job performance is influenced negatively by role ambiguity. Not being sure about job description creates serious uncertainty among employees. Materials that are used for practical works in technical colleges are usually costly to procure. An employee that is not certain of the type of project to which such items are to be used would wait to get clear instructions. When only minimal direction is given, he/she may be tempted to work slowly or reluctantly to see if further instruction may be given. If he/she fails to meet up with the target for the delivery of the project, it affects his self- esteem and job performance. To improve job performance, clear instruction need to always be given by the administration.

Role overload (being overwhelmed by the amount or complexity of work), was identified in this study to negatively influence job performance. This means that when the employees in technical colleges feel that they could not successfully accomplish a certain role with the given resources because of a lack of time and energy, they would increase their job performance to try to successfully cope with or complete their roles. However, if this situation is mirrored, according to Jones et al, (2007), job performance could be affected if the principal assigns duties that require more time, energy and resources than the employees are used to

From the findings of this study, role conflict has no significant negative effect on job performance. This contradicts the assertion of Mohr and Puck, (2007), which claims that there are significant relationships between job performance and role conflict. Employees are expected to work conscientiously when duties are assigned to them simultaneously. Where this situation is upheld, there would always be an improved performance because trust and reliance on honest input would encourage hard work which in turn raises self- esteem of employees.

## **Conclusions**

In this country, where it is seen that the quality of education has dropped, (Okeke and Leghara, 2008), whatever measures that are possible need to be taken by educational authorities to improve teaching and learning in technical colleges. Government should see it as a challenge to improve job performances by attending to the variables that negatively affect performance at work. High job performance increases employees' competitive capacity, assists in meeting targeted goals and increases employee's self- confidence and job satisfaction (Sonentag and Frese, 2002). However, coping efficiently with a job and attaining a high job performance level depends on the interaction of various individual features and situations. As a result, a careful selection of the employees for the needs of a specific job may facilitate the achievement of their requisite level of job performance (Yperen, 2003). The concept of self- esteem and role stress has been the topic of much debate in educational and psychological circles in recent years. Judge et al (1998), had stated that individuals with poor self-concepts would likely see the negative aspects of increased job challenge, whereas individuals with positive self-concepts would attend to the positive aspects of the change This study therefore, has the implication of improving the quality of life and job performance of employees in technical colleges by taking care of selfesteem issues and addressing the problems that are caused by role ambiguity, role overload, while laying less emphasis on role conflicts. In this study, it was determined that self- esteem, role overload and role ambiguity has negative effect on job performance of technical college employees, while role conflict has no negative effect. It can be suggested that the college administrators should help their employees to see themselves in positive light. Furthermore, people love to be appreciated for what they do and say. Appreciation

acknowledges their value and uniqueness. When you appreciate someone for something, you raise the person's self-esteem and increase his or her self-confidence. The more you appreciate someone for something, the more likely they are to do it again, and to do it even better next time, so that they can earn more appreciation than before. College administrators should desist from belittling their employees and doing things that can increase stress level or deflate their self-esteem.

*Limitations and suggestions for further studies*

This study probably has some limitations in terms of not covering all the technical colleges in the two states studied, due to remoteness of one of the colleges and fear of militancy attack on the researchers. Findings of the present study makes contribution to the development of various theories associated with the improvement and role adjustment of technical college employees' job performance. Future research should investigate other factors that may be affecting job performance of workers. The same study can also be carried out in other states or in selected technical colleges that are located either in townships or those located in the rural areas to find out if location affects job performance.



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