



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Understanding Work Stress and Work-Life Balance among Generation Z Employees in the Modern Workplace

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Abstract: The background of this study is based on the increasing importance of work-life balance for generation Z amid increasingly complex work demands that have the potential to cause job stress. This study aims to examine the relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees. The background of this research is based on the increasing importance of work-life balance for Gen Z, alongside the rising demands of modern work environments that may trigger job stress. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlation survey design involving 218 Gen Z employees years. Data were collected using a job stress scale adapted from Hadiyanti and Sari (2025) and a work-life balance scale adapted from Gunawan et al. (2019). The analysis in this study used Spearman correlation. The results show a significant relationship between job stress and work-life balance ($r = 0,695$, $p < 0,05$), indicating a very strong positive correlation. This finding indicates a significant positive association between work stress and work-life balance among Gen Z employees. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study did not directly assess whether the observed work stress reflects eustress or distress.

Keywords: generation Z, job stress, work-life balance, employees, correlation

Abstrak: Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada meningkatnya pentingnya work-life balance bagi generasi Z di tengah tuntutan kerja yang semakin kompleks dan berpotensi menimbulkan stress kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara stres kerja dan work-life balance pada karyawan Generasi Z. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada meningkatnya pentingnya work-life balance bagi generasi Z di Tengah tuntutan kerja yang semakin kompleks dan berpotensi menimbulkan stres kerja. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei korelasional yang melibatkan 218 karyawan generasi Z berusia 18-28 tahun. Pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan skala stress kerja yang diadaptasi Hadiyanti and Sari (2025) serta skala work-life balance yang diadaptasi dari Gunawan et al. (2019). Analisa dalam penelitian ini menggunakan korelasi Spearman. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang signifikan antara stress kerja dan work-life balance ($r = 0,695$; $p < 0,05$) dengan kekuatan hubungan yang sangat kuat dan arah positif. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang signifikan antara stres kerja dan work-life balance pada karyawan Gen Z. Namun, temuan tersebut perlu diinterpretasikan secara hati-hati karena penelitian ini tidak secara langsung mengukur apakah stres kerja yang diamati merefleksikan eustress atau distress.

Kata kunci: generasi Z, stres kerja, work-life balance, karyawan, korelasi

INTRODUCTION

A surveys shows that approximately 62% of employees in Indonesia prefer a hybrid working system, which combines remote and on-site work depending on their needs. This preference is mainly influenced by the desire to reduce transportation costs, avoid traffic congestion, and improve work effectiveness (Pynasthika & Siahaan, 2024).

The trend toward flexible working arrangements has also become increasingly evident among Generation Z, particularly after the shift in work patterns following the pandemic. The transition from office-based working to flexible working reflects a significant change in work systems. As many as 95% of Generation Z consider the balance between work responsibilities and personal life, commonly referred to in organizational contexts as work-life balance (WLB) to be important, especially amid these changes in work systems.

Another study revealed that around 48% of Generation Z highly value flexible working hours, indicating that they do not wish to be restricted by conventional working hours or mandatory office attendance (Rosa & Ramadansyah, 2024). A recent survey found that 37.2% of Generation Z employees chose to leave their jobs due to poor work-life balance, while 56.9% reported working irregular and

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excessively long hours. Therefore, aspects such as adequate leave availability, flexibility in remote working arrangements, and increased corporate social and environmental responsibility have become important elements in achieving work-life balance. These factors represent the conditions and expectations that Generation Z employees seek from the organizations in which they work (Schroth, 2019).

However, the increasing number of demands has led to significant imbalances between personal life and work life. In line with the findings of Schroth (2019), this imbalance has the potential to increase job stress, emotional exhaustion (burnout), and reduce the psychological well-being of Generation Z employees. Furthermore, work demands that are not balanced with personal life may lead to lower work-life balance, causing Generation Z employees to experience fatigue more quickly, lose motivation, and feel less engaged with their work. If these conditions persist over the long term, companies may face negative consequences, such as higher employee turnover rates and increased recruitment and training costs. This condition is also associated with lower job satisfaction and a greater turnover intention among Generation Z employees.

Work-life balance is a condition in which personal life and work demands can coexist proportionally (Adiawaty & Bernhard, 2023). From the employees' perspective, work-life balance refers to the ability to divide time and energy between work, personal life, and family responsibilities. Meanwhile, from the company's perspective, work-life balance is viewed as employees' efforts to maintain their own health and well-being (Dhaniswari & Sudarnice, 2024).

According to Hayman (2005), work-life balance can be measured through four aspects. The first is Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), which refers to the extent to which work interferes with personal life and reflects a low level of work-life balance. The second is Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), which describes how personal life disrupts work and may reduce work performance effectiveness. The third is Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW), which indicates that personal life can positively contribute to work performance. The fourth is Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL), which describes the positive impact of work on the quality of personal life as an indicator of achieved work-life balance.

Research conducted by Veluthan and Valarmathi (2020) showed that work-life balance is influenced by two main factors, namely work-specific factors and life-specific factors. Work-specific factors include work schedules, reward systems, social support, facilities, policies, and leave arrangements, all of which help employees manage their workload and family responsibilities. Meanwhile, life-specific factors include household responsibilities, childcare, and support from family members, parents, and spouses, which play an important role in maintaining a balance between work and personal life.

Work-life balance (WLB) is an important factor in supporting individual well-being and improving work productivity. Individuals who are able to achieve a balance between work demands and personal life tend to have better mental and physical health conditions, higher levels of work motivation, and effective stress management abilities. Conversely, an imbalance between work roles and personal life has the potential to create various negative impacts, such as increased stress, job burnout, role conflict, and decreased performance (Damayanti, 2023). These negative impacts indicate that an imbalance between work and personal life can become one of the main sources of job stress among employees.

Job stress is a psychological response that arises due to excessive and continuous pressure from the work environment, where individuals are faced with demands, opportunities, needs, and resources originating from the workplace, the organization, and themselves. This condition may lead to decreased concentration, anxiety, mild depressive symptoms, and a tendency to withdraw from social environments. Although job stress is generally viewed as a negative condition, low to moderate levels of job stress may be considered normal and may not necessarily attract special attention from company management (Ardita & Suwandana, 2022; Yan & Praningrum, 2025).

According to Parker and DeCotiis (1983), job stress is a condition of pressure experienced by individuals due to an imbalance between job demands and the abilities or resources they possess. Job stress is understood as a psychological response to stressors in the workplace that may affect employees' emotional conditions and behavior. Parker and DeCotiis divided job stress into two main aspects: time stress, which is related to time pressure, excessive workload, and demands to complete tasks within limited time, and anxiety, which reflects feelings of tension, nervousness, and worry related to work (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983).

Several previous studies have shown a close relationship between work-life balance and job stress. Research conducted by Rahmawati and Gunawan (2019), as well as Jaharuddin and Zainol (2019), found that an imbalance between work demands and personal life can trigger stress, work exhaustion, and even burnout. In line with these findings, Utomo et al. (2016) stated that job stress is one of the factors affecting work-life balance, where the level of job stress influences an individual's ability to maintain balance between professional and personal responsibilities. Research by Nurendra and Saraswati (2016) on hospitality sector employees also revealed a negative relationship between work-life balance and job stress, indicating that the better the work-life balance, the lower the level of stress experienced by employees. These findings suggest that poor work-life balance contributes to increased job stress among employees.

Nevertheless, Previous studies have generally reported that work stress is negatively associated with work-life balance and have predominantly focused on employees from various occupational groups or earlier generations. However, limited empirical evidence is available regarding whether this relationship operates similarly among Generation Z employees. As a generation characterized by high digital connectivity, expectations for work flexibility, and different approaches to managing boundaries between work and personal life, Generation Z may experience work stress and work-life balance differently from previous generations. Therefore, further investigation is needed to better understand the relationship between these variables within the context of Generation Z employees.

Based on the explanation above, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on Generation Z employees. This study aims to examine the relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees.

METHODS

Participant characteristics and research design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational survey design. Data were collected from March 12 to April 6, 2026, through an online questionnaire

distributed via Google Forms. The sampling procedure utilized a non-probability sampling technique, specifically self-selection sampling, in which participants voluntarily participated in the study. The sample consisted of 218 Generation Z employees from various regions across Indonesia. In terms of occupational sectors, the respondents were distributed as follows: information technology/digital (30 respondents; 14.2%), finance/banking (34 respondents; 15.6%), education (27 respondents; 12.8%), healthcare (19 respondents; 8.7%), marketing/creative (41 respondents; 18.8%), government administration (30 respondents; 14.2%), customer service (27 respondents; 12.4%), and other sectors (10 respondents; 5%). Regarding employment status, respondents included a mix of permanent employees, contract workers, freelancers, part-time employees, and interns, with varying work arrangements such as on-site, remote, and hybrid systems. Work stress and work-life balance were treated as study variables, and the analysis focused on examining the association between them.

Sampling procedures

The sampling procedure was conducted using a non-probability sampling method, specifically self-selection sampling, in which participants voluntarily completed a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. A total of 218 participants took part in this study. No incentives or compensation were provided to the participants. However, ethical considerations were strictly upheld by obtaining informed consent prior to questionnaire completion and ensuring the confidentiality of participants' data. The eligibility criteria for participants included active employees who belong to Generation Z, aged between 18 and 28 years, and have a minimum of six months of work experience. Individuals who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study (exclusion criteria). This study employed a survey design to examine the relationship between work-life balance and work stress among Generation Z employees.

Sample size, power, and precision

This study considered a GPower calculation to determine a target sample size of 200 participants in practice. Ultimately, the study obtained 218 Generation Z employees who met the research criteria. This number was considered sufficient to conduct statistical analysis and examine the relationship between work stress and work-life balance. The study did not employ a formal power analysis, nor did it apply interim analysis or stopping rules, as the data were collected at a single point in time.

Instrument

Data were collected using two research instruments: a work stress scale and a work-life balance scale. The work stress scale was adapted from Parker and DeCotiis (1983), consisting of 10 items across two dimensions, namely time pressure and anxiety. Meanwhile, work-life balance was measured using a scale adapted from Fisher et al. (2009), which consists of 17 items covering four dimensions: Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL), and Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW). A higher total score on this scale reflects a better perceived work-life balance. Notably, items belonging to the interference dimensions (WIPL and PLIW) were reverse-scored prior to analysis, as these dimensions are negatively worded. The questionnaires were distributed online through social media platforms.

The work stress instrument used in this study was originally developed by Parker and DeCotiis (1983) and later adapted by Hadiyanti and Sari (2025). Validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The model demonstrated good fit (CFI = 0.989; TLI = 0.984; SRMR = 0.0322; RMSEA = 0.0690), and all retained items demonstrated factor loadings greater than 0.5 (ranging from 0.711 to 0.982), indicating that they were valid. Furthermore, the reliability test showed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.967, suggesting that the instrument has excellent internal consistency.

Work-life balance was measured using a scale developed by Fisher, Bulger, and Smith (2009), adapted into Indonesian by Gunawan et al. (2019). This scale consists of 17 items across four dimensions: Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL), and Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW). Notably, items belonging to the interference dimensions (WIPL and PLIW) were reverse-scored prior to analysis, as these dimensions are negatively worded. A higher total score reflects a better perceived work-life balance. Validity was confirmed through CFA, with all items yielding SLF values greater than 0.5 (ranging from 0.75 to 0.912). The reliability test revealed a Composite Reliability (CR) value of 0.976 and a Variance Extracted (VE) value of 0.707, indicating excellent reliability.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests indicated that the data were not normally distributed and the relationship between variables was not linear. Therefore, a non-parametric correlation test, specifically Spearman's rho, was employed to examine the relationship between work stress and work-life balance.

Spearman's correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the association between the variables. In addition to the correlation coefficient (ρ) and significance value (p-value), a 95% confidence interval (CI) was also reported to provide an estimate of the precision of the correlation. The results were interpreted based on the magnitude and direction of the correlation coefficient, where a negative value indicates an inverse relationship, and a positive value indicates a direct relationship between work stress and work-life balance.

RESULTS OF STUDY

This section presents the results of the data analysis, beginning with an overview of the respondents' characteristics, followed by the validity and reliability testing of the research instruments. Furthermore, assumption tests, including normality and linearity tests, were conducted. The final stage of the analysis involved hypothesis testing using a correlation test to examine the relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees.

Respondent Demographics

In this study, the distribution of respondents can be seen in Table 1. The table shows that the total number of respondents consisted of 218 Generation Z employees. Based on gender, the respondents were relatively balanced between males (50.5%) and females (49.5%).

Based on age, the majority of respondents were aged 24-25 years (54.6%), with an overall age range of 20 to 28 years ($M=23.45$, $SD=1.75$). This age range falls within the Generation Z demographic, who are currently entering and navigating the early stages of their professional careers. Regarding work tenure, nearly half of the respondents had been employed for 1-3 years (49.5%), suggesting that most participants had sufficient workplace experience to meaningfully assess job demands and work-life balance.

Based on occupational field, respondents came from various sectors, with the largest proportion working in the marketing/creative field (18.8%), followed by other sectors. This demonstrates that the research participants had diverse occupational backgrounds.

Validity and Reliability of the instruments

In this study, the instruments used to measure job stress and work-life balance were first tested for validity and reliability before hypothesis testing was conducted. Validity testing was carried out to determine the extent to which the items in the instrument were able to measure the variables being studied. A valid instrument indicates that the measurement tool is appropriate and can be used for data collection (Sugiyono, 2017).

For the work-life balance variable, the initial instrument consisted of 17 items. Based on the validity test results, 13 items were declared valid, while 4 invalid items were eliminated from the analysis. Meanwhile, the job stress variable consisted of 10 items. The validity test results showed that all items were valid; therefore, no items were eliminated in this study. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that all items had factor loading values greater than 0.5.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Respondents (N= 218)

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	110	50.5
	Female	108	49.5
Age	20-21 years	38	17.5
	22-23 years	54	24.8
	24-25 years	119	54.6
	> 26 years	7	3.2
Work Tenure	> 6 months	26	11.9
	6 months – 1 year	51	23.4
	1 – 3 years	108	49.5
	3 – 5 years	26	11.9
	> 5 years	7	3.2
Job Sector	Marketing/Creative	41	18.8
	Finance/Banking	34	15.6
	IT/Digital	31	14.2
	Others	112	51.4

Tabel 2. Reliability Test Results of Each Variable

Variabel	Koef. Alpha	Koefisien	Note
Work-life balance	0,718	0,60	Reliabel
Stres kerja	0,809	0,60	Reliabel

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the consistency level of the instruments in measuring the research variables. An instrument is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60 (Ghozali,

2018). The reliability test results showed that the work-life balance scale had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.718 after the removal of invalid items, indicating that the scale was reliable. Meanwhile, the job stress scale had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.809, which indicates a good level of reliability. Therefore, both instruments used in this study were considered reliable and appropriate for use.

Normality and Linearity Tests

In this study, assumption tests were conducted before performing hypothesis testing. The assumption tests included normality and linearity tests. The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Based on the analysis results presented in Table 3, the significance value obtained was $p < .001$ ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, the assumption of normality in this study was not fulfilled.

Furthermore, a linearity test was conducted to determine whether the relationship between the variables was linear. Based on the results shown in Table 3, the significance value for deviation from linearity was $p < .001$ ($p < 0.05$). This result indicates a deviation from a linear relationship, suggesting that the relationship between the two variables was not linear.

Overall, the assumption test results indicate that the data in this study did not meet the assumptions of normality and linearity. This condition suggests that the use of parametric analysis has limitations in this study. Therefore, the subsequent analysis results should be interpreted cautiously while considering these limitations.

Correlation Analysis

Based on the results of the Spearman non-parametric correlation test in Table 4, a correlation coefficient of 0.695 was obtained with a significance value of $p < .001$ ($p < 0.05$) for a total of 218 respondents. This indicates a significant relationship between job stress and work-life balance. The correlation coefficient value of 0.695 indicates a strong relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the positive correlation indicates that the higher the level of job stress, the higher the perceived work-life balance, and vice versa.

Tabel 3. Assumption Test Results

Test	Indicator	Value	Sig.	Note
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.186	0.001	Not Normal
Linearity	Linearity	536.592	0.001	Not Linear
	Deviation from Linearity	5.726	0.001	Not Linear

Tabel 4. Spearman Correlation Results

Variable	Job Stress	N	Coefficient	p-value
Work Life Balance - Job Stress	Spearman's rho	218	0,695	0.001

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to analyze the relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between the two variables; therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this study was accepted. Furthermore, the magnitude of the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between job stress and work-life balance is categorized as very strong.

However, the direction of the relationship found in this study was positive, meaning that the higher the level of job stress, the higher the level of work-life balance. The positive association found in this study should be interpreted cautiously. Although some individuals may perceive work demands as motivating, the present study did not directly measure eustress or distress. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the observed work stress functioned as eustress among Gen Z employees. In the workplace, two types of stress are commonly recognized: eustress and distress. Eustress refers to positive stress that can produce constructive effects, whereas distress refers to stress that tends to have negative or harmful impacts. When individuals are able to respond to stress effectively, such stress can be managed and may produce positive outcomes (Christy & Amalia, 2018). Generation Z is known for being adaptive, flexible, and accustomed to fast-paced, technology-based work environments. As a result, they tend to be more capable of managing work pressure effectively compared to previous generations.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Ferdinan et al. (2023), which showed that occupational stress among Millennials and Generation Z does not always have negative effects due to the mediating role of work-life balance on employee engagement. The study explained that manageable levels of work pressure can actually encourage individuals to balance work demands with personal needs in order to maintain their work performance. In addition, research conducted by Pratiwi (2024) also demonstrated that job stress and work-life balance can operate simultaneously in influencing employee performance. When individuals are able to manage stress adaptively, work pressure can become a source of motivation to improve productivity while also maintaining work-life balance.

Compared to previous studies, the findings of this study show different results. Several earlier studies, such as those conducted by Rahmawati and Gunawan (2019), as well as Jaharuddin and Zainol (2019), found that poor work-life balance could increase job stress and lead to exhaustion and burnout. In addition, research by Nurendra and Saraswati (2016) also revealed a negative relationship between work-life balance and job stress. The differences in findings may be attributed to the different characteristics of the respondents, as this study specifically focused on Generation Z employees, who have distinct work patterns and ways of coping with pressure compared to previous generations. Furthermore, differences in work contexts, such as the increasing flexibility of work arrangements and the widespread use of digital technology, may also influence how individuals manage stress and maintain work-life balance.

Theoretically, the findings of this study can be explained through the concept of work-life balance by Hayman (2005), which includes the aspects of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW), and Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL). In this context, high levels of job stress do not always produce negative effects, because individuals may still perceive positive contributions between work and personal life, particularly

in the enhancement aspects (PLEW and WEPL). Furthermore, based on the job stress theory proposed by Parker and DeCotiis (1983), the aspects of time stress and anxiety, at certain levels, may function as motivating factors that encourage individuals to improve their performance and time management abilities, and therefore do not necessarily reduce work-life balance.

The findings of this study indicate that organizations need to pay attention to factors that can help employees manage job stress, such as work flexibility, social support, and policies that support work-life balance. With such support, employees can maintain their work-life balance even when facing high levels of work pressure. In addition, individuals also need to develop time management skills and effective coping strategies in order to manage stress more adaptively.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Based on the demographic data of the respondents, the majority of participants had relatively similar work experience, predominantly ranging from 1–3 years. This condition limited the variation in work experience, even though work experience may play an important role in influencing both job stress and work-life balance. In addition, the use of a cross-sectional data collection method, conducted at a single point in time, further restricted the study's ability to capture the dynamic influence of work experience on both variables.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to expand the scope of respondents, particularly in terms of variations in work experience. By involving respondents with a wider range of work experience, future studies are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of work experience in influencing individuals' ability to manage stress and maintain work-life balance. This is important because individuals with greater work experience tend to have better abilities in managing work demands and personal life responsibilities.

Another limitation of this study concerns the relatively strong correlation obtained between work stress and work-life balance. Since both variables were measured using self-report questionnaires administered at a single point in time, the findings may be influenced by common method bias. Therefore, the observed association should be interpreted cautiously, as it may not fully reflect the actual relationship between the constructs in different organizational contexts.

Overall, this study demonstrates that there is a significant and strong relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of the dynamics between the two variables, particularly within the context of Generation Z, which possesses unique characteristics in dealing with work demands. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for future research development as well as a consideration in human resource management practices.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that there is a significant and very strong positive relationship between job stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees. This study found a significant positive association between work stress and work-life balance among Generation Z employees. The findings should be interpreted cautiously because eustress was not directly measured in this study, namely positive

stress that can enhance individuals' motivation, focus, and ability to manage both work demands and personal life responsibilities.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that future studies involve a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the results. The inclusion of additional variables such as social support, workload, and organizational factors is also important to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing work-life balance and work stress. Therefore, future research is expected to yield more in-depth and accurate findings in explaining the dynamics of these two variables.

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DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles. Respondents participated voluntarily and provided consent prior to the data collection process.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Technology

In the process of preparing this manuscript, the authors used artificial intelligence technology to assist with grammar correction, sentence structure improvement, and overall readability. After the use of such technology, the entire content of the manuscript was reviewed, edited, and remains the full responsibility of the authors.

Authors' contributions.

First Author (Rifqi): Rifqi made major contributions to the research design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing.

Second Author (Pundani): Pundani contributed as the academic supervisor by providing guidance, feedback, and supervision throughout the research and article-writing process.

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