



# Effect Of Covid-19 On The Mental Health Of Office Goers And Work Life In Chennai

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## Abstract

COVID19 paved way for the organizations to adopt new ways of working. The organizations are also in the place to reinvent the worker's style and office roles to provide a safe, enjoyable, and productive workplace. During this time, one needs to focus on the mental health of the workers since it is a turning point in improving the productivity of the organization. The main objective of this study is to analyze the effects of the COVID19 pandemic on workers' mental health. This situation is mainly analyzed by conducting interview surveys regarding the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of office goers with a total of 156 members in seven various organizations of different fields such as manufacturing, construction, and Information Technology from the cities of Chennai. We analyzed the data via quantitative and qualitative analysis with a random sampling approach. Out of 156 members, 69% responded that they were under stress, anger, exasperation, and anxiety during the COVID19 outbreak and the factors that affect their mental health tends to be insomnia, increased feelings of disappointment, burnout, difficulty in focusing on both the household and office chores. They suffered their depression and stress in excess use of alcohol, nicotine, and others. The other factors that affected the mental and physical health of workers are mainly work schedules, salary, co-employee relationships, and lack of paid leave access. The workers minimized their stress levels with the help and support from their family members and friends by incorporating different coping mechanisms. The research findings show the urgency to transform the workspace to accommodate a portfolio of solutions that address the mental health of office goers.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, workplace, mental health, stress, and anxiety.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Unprecedented economic problems that humans have never envisaged have been brought on by COVID19. The pandemics have paved the way for new ways of working and workplaces should change their style and role of working to offer a safe, pleasant, and productive environment to the people [1]. Many organizations around the world are responding in a timely manner to safeguard their employees and offer new ways of working with the idea even the business industrialists had no awareness of. Half of the population enjoys the work-

from-home scheme and forty percentage people told that their productivity at home was more than at the office due to the less amount of distractions and continuous focus [2].

The culture of every company differs, and what entertains certain people may not necessarily be fun for others. The same individuals who had first expressed satisfaction with the work-from-home policy afterward expressed distress. Employers having several occupations enhanced their output whereas those with only one employment frequently found it difficult to

do so [3]. Not every virtual collaboration is effective while some are. While some people benefit from mentorship and develop close relationships with their coworkers, others do not.

An organization's success mainly lies in the proper mental health of the individuals. When a worker is mentally not fit, it affects their motivation to work, disturbs their concentration, and causes problems in their relationship with their coworkers [4]. Anxiety has been a common problem faced by workers in an organization, in the past 5 years. This arises the need for mental care counseling in offices and only 3% of workers who are depressed commit suicide contact mental health counseling centers. The negative stigma surrounding mental health counseling centers often prevents the workers from receiving counseling at an earlier stage and in some cases, it may often lead to suicide and depression [5,6].

The barriers faced by the workers are low trust in the counseling services and low self-esteem when it comes to sharing mental health issues with others. Based on the literature we can identify that only a minimal amount of the working population who was identified as mentally ill during the screening accepted counseling. The workers also preferred self-management-related mental health care by following the advice offered to them via teleconferencing and multimedia applications [7]. Most of the workers in the COVID19 pandemic mainly worried about their own health or the health of their loved ones who have been affected by COVID which reduced their concentration in their work.

When a worker's concentration is reduced then it directly affects their confidence levels and leads to increased stress and mental health issues. The lockdown and social distancing practices have also caused havoc in one's life [8,9]. The limited interactions with friends, family, and coworkers also affected one's social relationships. The persons who tend to have depressive symptoms also had improper sleeping and eating routines. Some employees reported decreased levels of stress following the implementation of the work-from-home policy, which is mostly attributed to the managers' choice to reduce the employees' stress [10,11]. The work-from-home program helps employees feel more liberated from having to make plans for many things, such as getting ready for a presentation the next day, arriving on time at the office, dropping the kid off at daycare, etc.

Additionally, several employees experienced embarrassment from their family members, a lack of support for their careers from them, difficulty striking a balance between their personal and professional lives, a reduction in social obligations, etc [12]. Workers also felt that their stress and anxiety levels considerably reduced when they had free conversations with their friends and family via different videoconferencing applications such as skype, zoom, Facebook, etc. Some people also used this platform to receive support from their professional therapists. Different self-management techniques such as playing with pets, journal keeping, crocheting, painting, physical exercise, gardening, social media, listening to music,

and reading also helped to cope with the worker's stress and anxiety levels.

Certain workers also indulged in harmful tasks such as drinking, smoking, taking drugs, ignoring COVID19 precaution measures, failing to wear masks, taking COVID19 vaccines, and prolonged sleeping. One-third of the population mainly followed positive coping methods such as doing yoga, taking breathing exercises, and spiritual worship. Leading businesses will valiantly confront fundamental notions of how work should be done and how an office should operate. Not everyone can benefit from the same solution [13]. Each company will respond differently, depending on factors such as the kind of talent needed, the most important roles, the degree of collaboration necessary for success, and the location of the offices at the time. Future requirements practice must involve real estate, human resources, technology, and the corporation as a whole since even within an organization, the solution may change between areas, businesses, and roles. There will be difficult decisions to make, and a manager has to be given the authority to lead the effort across many divisions and businesses [14].

Even though the existing studies have focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of the worker, very few have been conducted on the mental health of the office goers. This study is mainly conducted to identify the challenges the office goers face mentally and identify the different factors associated with it. The findings of this study offer different ways to increase office productivity by keeping an eye on the mental health of the workers. If the mind of

the workers is at peace, then they are mostly capable of finishing the projects assigned to them in time. Section 2 describes the challenges involved in workers during covid-19 followed by the experimental outcomes are discussed in section 3. Section 4 concludes the article.

## **2. CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN WORKERS DURING COVID-19:**

### **2.1 Impact on the health of workers during COVID-19:**

The impact of COVID-19 can be seen in each field and one of the most important fields affected is the construction industry [15]. The projects that were undertaken were get delayed, and suspended and these lead to the postponing of new works. Social distancing, sanitation, and adapting to the new normal environment are the most challenging tasks for the workers. Safety, health, and protection are the most challenging key factors faced by the workers [16].

COVID-19 impacts so many physical illnesses along with mental sickness and this affects the mental issues of workers too. According to the AGC survey workers' anxiety is considered 70% of problems that happened during the lockdown [17]. Even though employees face higher stress and health issues in the workplace before COVID-19, it increases to the highest after that. The work-from-home strategy was the happiest at the beginning however, it increases the stress and anxiety after days passed. Besides, most of the workers lost their jobs during this period and that also

increases mental illness along with their family members.

Employees also face feelings of disappointment, exasperation, depression, uncertainty, anger, burnout, and anxiety [18] incorporated with failure, exhaustion, insomnia, and more and forced employees to use drugs, nicotine, and alcohol. Moreover, it also impacts the employee wages, stress levels, workload, and relationships with co-workers and employers [19].

## **2.2 Mental illness Factors:**

### ***(i) Socially Solitude with tele-working:***

Tele-working has increased social solitude and results in mental issues for employees such as depression, and anxiety, and also leads to suicide [20]. Moreover, the lack of equipment, materials, and different working habits also brought up anxiety among the employees. Besides, the employees who were asked for self-quarantine experience mental illness since the lack of interaction with their loved ones. It also introduced new types of symptoms of psychological illness. This also impacts the efficiency of the works carried out by them, non-effective engagement, and afflictive attitudes [21].

### ***(ii) Stress and burnout:***

The employers increased the safety and welfare of the workers due to the impacts such as uncertainty and intricate of this pandemic [22]. Moreover, it also increases job burnout (loss of interest in the profession, persistent feelings due to the recurrent state of stress). Meanwhile, watching and listening to the COVID-19-related news also increases the fear and potential effects of virus contracting. This also leads to long time mental illness [23].

## **2.3 Moderating factors that affect the health:**

### ***(i) Impacts of COVID-19 over vulnerable age categorize:***

COVID-19 impacted the construction industries a lot especially affecting a particular group of employees. The construction works have been affected due to the older employees who lost their immune systems for age and COVID. Meanwhile, on the other side in various fields, the challenges faced by older age people are facing advanced technology along with segregating work, self-organization, and lack of interaction between co-workers and project managers [24]. The people with mental illness history had undergone higher anxiety and negative emotions during this lockdown period.

### ***(ii) Impacts of COVID-19 based on gender:***

More than male workers the most affected gender is female because managing the work and household items at the same time affects a lot [25]. So the female workers underwent higher stress due to the increased workload. The child care centers were closed during this pandemic and that too increases the responsibility of the female workers and had led to health issues like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and more [26].

## **2.4 Individual factors:**

### ***(i) Exhaustive feelings:***

The lack of equipment and resources while working from home affects the contribution of the work and impacts the overall performance [27]. Employees were affected when they had to spend more money on the resources they needed the most and

equipment and thus affecting their mental stability with paperless administration, fear of virus contamination, work-life balance, etc., [28].

**(ii) Managing personal and family needs:**

While workers were working from home the main factor that caused stress, depression, and anxiety is a responsibility that been carried out between work and family life [29]. Workers need to meet up the work deadline accurately with the available limited resources and also they have to consider the well-being of the family. Moreover, the spreading of the virus through them also has been a concern for the workers. Besides, taking care of a child, an elderly person also affects the performance

of their work and adversely affects their mental stability [30].

**(iii) Adapting to the new work schedule:**

The work from home strategies allotted by many companies and office affects the office goers because the higher administration allocates more work during this period. It also affects the night shift workers and also affects productivity. The flexible time for work has been affecting the annual turnover and increasing the procrastination of the employees. It also changes the attitudes of the workers and affects the overall satisfaction [31]. The impact of COVID-19 on different health factors such as Mental illness Factors, moderating factors that affect health, and individual factors are delineated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Factors that affect the health of the workers during COVID-19

References	Factors	Challenges
Shipman et al.[20],Bloom et al. [21], Morgantini et al. [22], Solomon et al. [23]	Mental Illness	Social solitude due to teleworking Stress and burnout
Varma et al. [24], World Health Organization [25], García-Tascón et al. [26]	Moderating factors that affect the health	Impacts of COVID-19 over vulnerable age categorize Impacts of COVID-19 based on gender
Leonardi et al. [27], Bilotta et al. [28], Vaziri et al. [29], Uddin et al. [30], Carnevale et al. [31]	Individual factors	Exhaustive feelings Managing the personal and family needs Adapting to the new work schedule

**2.5 Administrative aspects:**

**(i) Inadequate working conditions:**

The WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of worldwide importance on 30 January 2020, after cases

of infectious disease were reported in all 34 areas of China, and the aspect of this study number exceeded those of the 2003 acute respiratory syndrome [32]. The outbreak is thought to have started in late December 2019 at a seafood marketplace in Wuhan,

but the majority of instances grew dramatically inside and even beyond Wuhan, extending broadly around the country. In just about all cases, staff members share similar regions, including subcontractors, and restrooms are frequently connected to various projects at various surface positions at the same time, increasing their potential to expand the viral infection by one position to another and increasing the workers' danger of contact with the virus [33].

Due to inadequate working conditions, the psychological repercussions incapacitate and weaken the worker's health. Whether this scenario also isn't addressed, the psychological ramifications to workers' mental health are severe that driving several people to resign from their job [34]. In the same manner, these kinds of impacts never cause all countries. In the initial stage of the pandemic, the lack of working conditions and equipment with deficiencies in infrastructure, accessibility, social problems, and geographic and economical problems affects the employees.

**(ii) *Leadership knowledge and abilities are lacking in the management team:***

Based on the ramifications of pandemics, Human Resource Development (HRD) with its new roles is considered by organizations and global leaders to COVID-19. During a crisis, the function of HRD increases crucial, stressing the importance of people's town's health. Implementing suitable crisis management methods will assist companies in preparing for and responding to COVID-19 events while minimizing the negative

influence on the company [35]. Managers may assist superintendents by encouraging creativity and engaging people regularly. Professionals are confronted by unique work difficulties during the pandemic.

The significant lack of knowledge about the actual practicality and effectiveness of implementing COVID-19 procedures in architecture and rapidly challenged by factors like as complicated working arrangements and project duration [36]. This study includes detailing whether architecture is addressing the idea of working securely inside COVID-19, as well as indicating what additional effort is required to keep offering security in production throughout COVID-19.

**(iii) *Handling various workloads:***

During COVID-19, investigate the HRM strategies used by businesses to handle their staff. Another secondary purpose of their research is to look into the health of hotel personnel. They questioned 4-five workers out of each hotel to a maximum of forty-one respondents. The discussions were done via phone [37]. For ensuring functional diversity, they carried out employee discussions depending on corporate social responsibility, guest services, business development, operations, sales, housekeeping and area management.

COVID-19 is fundamentally altering gainful employment and caring. According to available facts in the international press, professional women having caregiving duties are now unfairly harmed [38]. On 25 January 2020, the first COVID-19 incident in Australia was reported, and, the Australian government shut its boundaries

across all quasi-inhabitants and implemented societal separation procedures.

*(iv) Working from home presents unique challenges:*

COVID-19 has had a significant effect on a company and businesses all over the world. This comprehensive assessment of prior research anchored in people and work psychologists, as well as adjacent topics, aims to make an understanding of the consequences for people, groups, and work organizations [39]. Furthermore, due to the possibility that COVID-19 may produce diverse effects, various mitigating variables are investigated. This practice spread offers an integrated framework for thinking about the significance of COVID-19 on the job, people, and organizations, as well as suggesting concerns for additional investigation and ideas to encourage answers [40].

Stressful situations are progressively hurting employee experience in a range of sectors, particularly transport development. Anxiety, stress, and other mental health challenges have been among the most common in the field of civil engineering, and understanding the key sources of these problems may assist considerably in reducing the effects [41]. Work pressure, financial and emotional requirements, and harassment were listed as the three top people of diverse backgrounds with cognitive impairments. These findings also show that work engagement is an important factor in reducing the incidence of depression and its harmful repercussions. Interaction between colleagues also can contribute to tension alleviation and, as a result, avert negative consequences.

**2.6 Financial aspects:**

*(i) Concerns about the sustainability of the profession:*

The COVID-19 pandemic's short-term and longer mental health consequences are currently unclear. This investigation assessed 5070 adult participants' acute mental health reactions towards the COVID-19 epidemic in Australia, employing internet questionnaires given it during the height of the epidemic [42]. The findings emphasize the acute severe effect of COVID-19 on participants' psychological health to proactive, readily available electronic therapy to confront such health needs, especially for the most susceptible, such as people with a family history of alcoholism. The longer period is required to investigate protracted determinants of poor mental care as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic.

According to facts at hand and patient care, senior employees and employees of just about any generation who may have specific actual disease disorders is at greater risk of serious sickness with COVID-19 [43]. It is still an unclear number of times laborers are becoming ill or died as a result of a COVID-19 pandemic. This Data Bulletin provides updated work and health-related information amongst employees based on an analysis of accessible national study data to estimate the possible risk of serious sickness from COVID-19 in the construction industry.

*(ii) Limited access to equipment and tools:*

Related projects a quick development of medical facilities, large residential development, transit activities, and possibilities to attract qualified personnel were among the additional incentives

presented. Mitigation strategies that have been usually applied comprised steps to improve and prevent potential additional development hazards [44]. Workers were required to wear cloth surgical masks, socially distance procedures were implemented, work to improve was staggered, COVID-19-related education was provided, heat tests were administered prior to entry into the site, and other precautionary measures were implemented.

**(iii) Delays in cash flow:**

COVID-19 had several effects on employment elements that influence the former workplace's variety and diverse properties. It finds the issues and proposed measures that management may use to improve the health and security of employees who establish and operate transit systems [45]. A thorough search aimed to assess the issues indicated that, in addition to considerations such as salaries, days of overtime, and availability for annual vacation, agricultural workers face expanded danger of virus infection, enormous scale, and other difficulties.

Intrinsic migrant employees are virtually especially prone to reported cases as a result of interlinked risk socioeconomic, ergonomic accidents, malnourishment and adequate cleanliness. The migrant laborers may operate as both illness patients and dissemination carriers, transmitting the disease to growth in the area on reversal movements [46]. Because of their pre-existing sensitivity to psychological anguish, migrant people that work alone are much more prone to be impacted by the negative human emotions caused either by the COVID-19 epidemic.

**(iv) Disruptions in the supply chain:**

The industries including transportation are still more prone to just be production from market volatility, whereas manufacturing, minerals, and communications are much more prone to really be production s at the industry level. Large market dynamics disruptions are affecting the leisure, food, and tourist industries [47]. For the sake of simplicity, they ignore death and sickness and suppose that availability disruptions are caused solely with the amount of workers removed owing to lack of familiarity. As a result, numerous situations are being used. In a modest situation, Economic development would be reduced by 3-6 percent, depending on the country [48]. As nothing more than a result, every sampling of 30 nations studied would suffer a -2.8 percent fall in GDP in 2020.

**3. Discussion:**

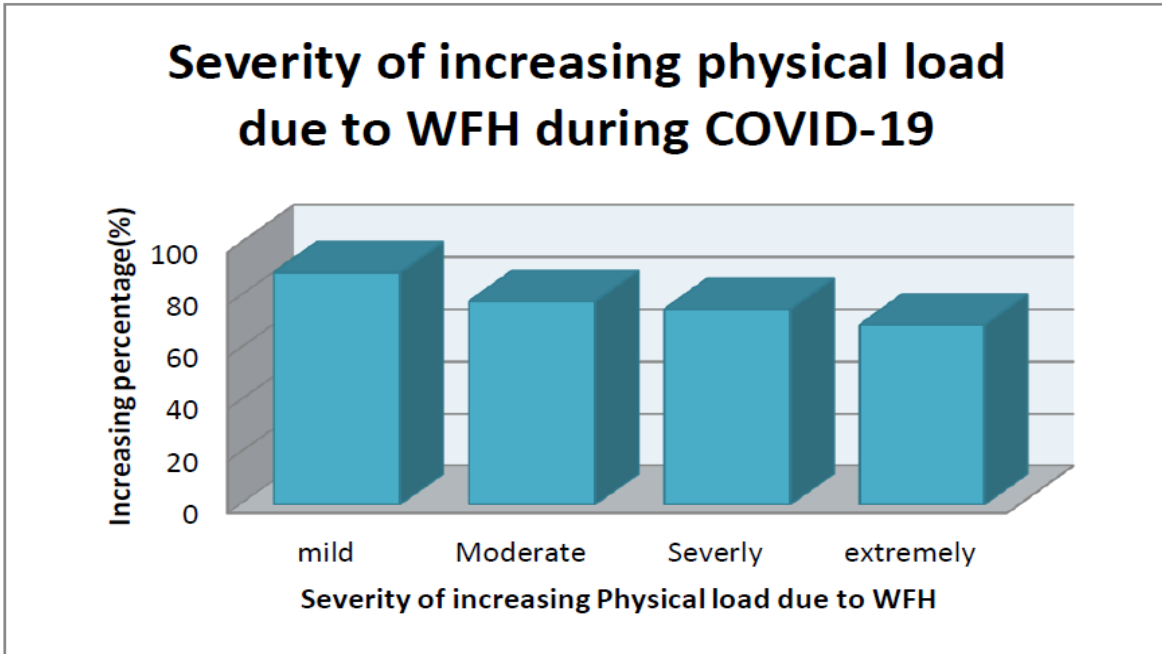
This section presents the overall impacts on the health and safety of the workers during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. The lockdown and quarantine have greatly impacted the health and safety of all the people, especially the office goers. The office goers had faced difficulty in managing the work life and household chores. This has created mental illnesses such as stress, depression, insomnia, and also suffered from insecurity about the job. Here we analyzed various pain points of office goers and plotted the graphs.

Figure 1 illustrates the increase of physical load due to Work From Home (WFH) for age groups and checked the severity of the increase. Most of the workers faced a mild increase of percentage 89%, 78% of workers

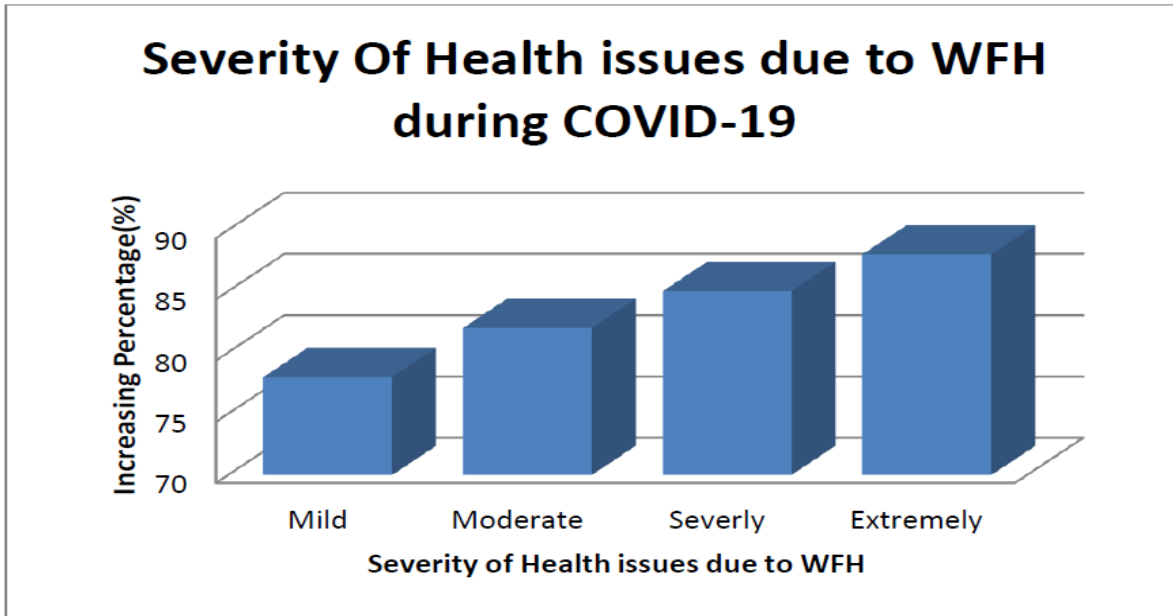


moderate increase in physical load, 75%  
faced severely increased physical load and

69% of workers faced extremely increased  
physical load during this lockdown.



**Fig 1:** Severity of increasing the physical load due to Work From Home during COVID-19



**Fig 2:** Severity of increasing health issues due to WFH during COVID-19

The severity of increasing issues due to WFH during COVID-19 is plotted graphically in figure 2. Due to the difficulty in the management of work life and family

most of the workers faced stress, depression, and other health-related issues. 88% of workers faced extremely high health issues during this period and 78% of workers faced

mildly increased health issues during the lockdown and quarantine which is plotted in figure 2.

The Mean and Frequency in the percentage of individual variable responses within home office lifestyle and home environment are

tabulated in Table 2. Based on [49] dependent variable's average ratings of both overall mental and physical well-being were lower than before work from home, at 2.70 (SD = 0.93) and 2.84 (SD = 0.87) respectively.

**Table 2:** Mean and Frequency in the percentage of individual variable responses within home office lifestyle and home environment

<b>Lifestyle and home environment</b>	<b>Number of response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Physical exercise like riding, running, walking and etc	884	1.41%	2.55
Overall physical activity	883	1.37%	2.35
Healthy food intake	884	0.94%	3.07
Overall food intake	885	0.90%	3.24

**4. CONCLUSION:**

COVID19 cleared the door for organizations to adopt innovative working methods. Organizations are also in a position to reinvent worker styles and office responsibilities in order to ensure a secure, entertaining, and productive workplace. During this period, it is critical to focus on the mental health of employees because it is a watershed moment in the organization's productivity. The primary goal of our research is to examine the consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on workers' mental health. Workers reduced their stress levels with the assistance and support of family and friends by implementing various coping techniques. The study's findings highlight the importance of transforming the workplace to accommodate a portfolio of

solutions that address office workers' mental health.

**Compliance with Ethical Standards**

***Conflict of interest***

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

***Human and Animal Rights***

This article does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any of the authors.

***Informed Consent***

Informed consent does not apply as this was a retrospective review with no identifying patient information.

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**Availability of data and material:**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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