

# Impact of Spirituality on Stress: With the Special Reference of Engineering Students of Indian Institute of Technology

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## Abstract

Spirituality is to 'know' who you are and the knowledge of yourself understanding the highest spiritual qualities and attributes which are love, peace, purity and bliss. Spirituality is a resilient and controversial variable that has evidenced an ability to help people better cope with stress. This empirical research paper attempts to identify the relation between spirituality and stress in the student life. In student life, meaning of the spirituality is different and beyond from the prayer, religion, etc., this paper covered the factors which affect the students and engender the stress. Four types of indicators are used for measurement of stress such as behavioural indicators, emotional indicator, sleep indicator and personal habits of students. Hypothesis said there is no relation between spirituality, stress and academic life of students. Spirituality is high then stress will be low or if spirituality is low then stress will be high. Data is collected through the questionnaire based on spirituality index and stress index. 75 students have taken as participants to find out the level of spirituality and stress in scale and correlation is used for determine the relation between spirituality and stress. The result showed that there is negative correlation ( $r = -0.519$ ) between the stress and spirituality of engineering students. Stress indicators showed that emotional indicators and physical indicators are high in girls than boys.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, faith, stress, supreme power, engineering students

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stress plays an important role in the life of the individuals whether it is businessman, students, teachers and other professions. To cope with the stress people use meditation, listen good music, fun etc. depend upon which type of stress is occurring. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with the problems. Spirituality is to know about oneself and the understanding of some supreme power through which the world is governed. Spirituality is not just about the god and religion, it is something related to elite power, it is a faith which connects a normal human being to their soul. "a person's experience of, or a belief in, a power apart from his or her own existence" (Mohr 2006). Spirituality is the bridge between what we are and where we want to reach or we can say it is hopefulness.

Spirituality is the choice of human being to surrender him to one supreme power that is meaningful and desirable for him "An active choice to surrender oneself to God's will" (Wong-McDonald, 2000, p. 149). Sometimes people believe on supreme power only to mitigate the deleterious effects of the life. Spiritual coping has been effective in protecting individuals from the negative effects of death of a loved one, natural disasters, chronic illness, and acts of terrorism (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott, & Kadar, 1997). In other words spiritual is the faith and trust who save the people from the negative things. Spirituality is the way to reduce the negative effects of life such as: death, stress, illness etc. Stress is the body's instinctive response to external environment cues as well as to one's inner thoughts and feeling. Stress arises when we try to control the uncontrollable things. American institute of stress says that "Everyone knows what stress is, but nobody really knows." Means we know about the stress and the reason of the stress but we don't focus on it in the initial stage when its effects the mind then we starts to find the solution.

### Types of stress:

Basically, there are two types of stress: one is related to positive stress called eustress which motivate and improve performance of the individual and other one is negative stress called distress which demotivate and decrease performance of the individual, it can lead to mental and physical problems.

According to the situation, stress is of three types (The Stress Solution by Lyle H. Miller, PhD, and Alma Dell Smith, PhD.):

**Acute stress:** Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting, because it is short term, acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. The most common symptoms are:

- Emotional distress — some combination of anger or irritability, anxiety and depression, the three stress emotions.

- Muscular problems including tension headache, back pain, jaw pain and the muscular tensions that lead to pulled muscles and tendon and ligament problems.
- Stomach, gut and bowel problems such as heartburn, acid stomach, flatulence, diarrhoea, constipation and irritable bowel syndrome.
- Transient over arousal leads to elevation in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, migraine headaches, cold hands or feet, shortness of breath and chest pain.

**Episodic acute stress:** Episodic stress is a severe acute stress which means a human being experiences this type of stress every day in a daily life not just once in a while. This type of stress is usually seen in people who make self-inflicted, unrealistic or unreasonable demands which get all clamoured up and bring too much stress in their attempt to accomplish these goals. The symptoms of episodic acute stress are the symptoms of extended over arousal: persistent tension headaches, migraines, hypertension, chest pain and heart disease.

**Chronic stress:** While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting, chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending "troubles" have brought to the people of Northern Ireland; the tensions of the Middle East have brought to the Arab and Jew, and the endless ethnic rivalries that have been brought to the people of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

In student life, it has been found that the eustress helps to build their future but it depends on the personality of the student and the way of motivation he takes. Problem of attendance, poor grades etc. create an acute stress but when it happens regular way it converts into chronic stress. Spirituality perspective predominately speaks about some power which originates from inside, it also involves a feeling of being connected with one's work and with others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Neck and Millimam, 1994.) to connect with the one's work and others depend upon the individuals. The most common types of spirituality that can be experienced by an individual are:

#### **Religious spirituality**

It is related to belief in a being greater than oneself. There are different ways to connect with greatness like some people connect to it through prayer, church and books. Most of us get spirituality, peace and faith from the church, temples, Gurudwara etc. and some people gets it only through the books like the Gita, Ramayana, Bible or Quran. The main thing behind the spirituality is to get a peace of body as well as mind.

#### **Non-religious spirituality**

A second type of spirituality is non-religious spirituality. It centres on doing something positive. This gives a sense of peace in one's spirit. Non-religious spiritual acts often mean creating things or making something by hand. This act gives a sense of satisfaction. Fans of the television show NCIS may recall a scene. After Agent Gibbs solves a disturbing crime, he retreats to his basement. There he quietly, carefully works on his hand made boat. The message is simple. The act of creating something fed his soul. The acts of destruction he saw took away his sense of peace. Building something of beauty gives back his inner peace. His spirit is nourished back to health. Making the boat gives meaning and purpose to his life. This is an example of non-religious spirituality.

## **2. REASON OF THE STUDY**

1) What is the relationship between spirituality, stress, and academic performance? 2) How do spiritual students use their spirituality to cope with stress and how does this impact their academic performance? 3) Do spiritual people feel more positively about their academic performance than less spiritual people? Why or Why not? 4) Are girls more spiritual than boys? 5) In which stress level is high whether in girls or boys? 6) Does spirituality really matter in student life? To answer these questions, took a mix methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research strategies.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many researches have been studies done on stress and spirituality on academic sector and focussed external factors as environmental, economic demands, affects the stress more instead the internal factors as personal habits, perception, attitude etc., The literature defines stress as a process in which environmental demands tax or exceeds a person's ability to adapt resulting in psychological and biological changes that place a person at risk for disease (Cohen, Kessler, & Gordan, 1997). College is the place where the stress increased and decreased for the first time of students which related to the future's consequences, (Northern, O'Brien, Goetz, 2010). College life is a developing stage of the student life and concerns about the career and relationships, (Arnett, 2000). Researcher focussed the stress like alteration from adolescence to adulthood at the student life (Brougham et al., 2009). Most of the students face independency first time where they manage financial stress, cope up with the new social life and very leading their academic career, while Research shows that college students are not just affected by an academic load, but that the current economic climate has led to increased financial stress for this

population (Northern, O'Brien, & Goetz, 2010). Personality of the individual does matter for the measure of stress level and it vary individual to individual. Some Students take stress in a positive while other in negative way, it depend upon the personality of the students, (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Unfortunately, college has also been found to be very stressful for many young adults with the result, 27% of college students report being frequently overwhelmed 80% report being moderately stressed, 12% are severely stressed, and 52% report experiencing high levels of stress at least s some time during a semester (Abouserie 1994; Pierceall and Keim, 2007; Hudd et al., 2000). Research suggested self-efficacy and social support as particularly helpful for stress-coping, both acts as a stress moderator in a student life. Social support means family support and friends support, 60% students believe more on friend's support rather than family support, (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). College students who experience the most stress are more likely to consume junk food, less likely to exercise, and less likely to get enough hours of sleep, (Brougham et al., 2009). Finance stress has been a leading stress in the student's life, (Choi, 2005; Arnett, 2000). Study proved that there is relationship between financial stress and increased smoking and alcohol consumption. In college students financial stress is associated with poor self-reported mental health, lower self-esteem, lower self-image, and negative affect (Skinner et at., 2004; Northern et al., 2010).

Spirituality depends upon the personality of the individual and stress occurs due to personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, trait anger and neuroticism (Elise E. Labbe´ and Ashley Fobes, 2010). A person who is highly spiritual has a lower state anger. For women, higher spirituality was significantly associated with higher contentment as well as with lower stress levels. Stress and spirituality of the individual depend on the age as well as gender (Jessica Tartaro, Linda J. leuken, Health.E.gunn, 2005). The lack of relationship between contentment and stress, even given women's significantly higher stress levels, indicates that, for women, contentment is strongly associated with an internal factor of spirituality as opposed to environmental factors represented by stressful life events (E. Don Poage, Kay E. Ketzenberger, James Olson, 2009). Many people believe that spirituality works in their life as a source of strength (Hill, et al., 2003). Spirituality is not associated only with the god, faith, and religion, it is a strength, one's individual getting strength from where, which source, it depend upon the personality and it varies age group, attitude and perception. Past research tends to indicate that those who are very religious tend to have less education, but these findings may exist at least in part because of poor operational definitions of religion and spirituality (Clark, 2004).

Spirituality can happen in a different way either through yoga, listening religious music, share problems with others. Yoga practices enhance muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory etc. beyond this, it reduce stress, anxiety, depression and chronic pain, improve sleep pattern and enhance overall well- being and quality of work life (Catherine woodyard, 2011).

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The main objective of this study is to determine the level of spirituality and stress in the life of engineering students and also find out that whether spirituality plays any role in reducing stress of students. Lots of research have done on assess the spirituality and stress but after work on the literature review of past researches which shows that level of the spirituality in the student life is not high as compare to other, (Clark, 2004; Park & Bonner 2008). The other objectives of the study are as:

1. To examine the level of the spirituality among girls and boys of IIT's engineering student.
2. To find out the correlation between the spirituality and stress of the IIT's engineering student.
3. To examine the level of stress among girls and boys of the IIT's engineering student.

#### **5. NULL HYPOTHESIS:**

1. There is no significant relationship between the spirituality, stress and academic performance.
2. There is no significant relation between spirituality, stress and gender.
3. There is no significant relation between the indicators of the stress between boys and girls.

#### **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

##### **Research instruments:**

The study is based on the primary data and data is gathered through distribute the questionnaire to the specific target of engineering students of Indian Institute of Technology. The age group of the students was 17 to 22 year so, it was easy to focus the spirituality and stress level on the target sample size.

##### **Measurements of variables:**

Spirituality support subscale and spirituality openness subscale is used to determine the spirituality. Four types of indicators are used for measurement of stress such as behavioural indicators, emotional indicator, sleep indicator and personal habits. Survey was selected on the basis of convenience. A 81 items in questionnaire in which 48 questions are related to stress index and rest of the related to spirituality, which showed effective and

time saved and instruction associated with the format and to identify items that were tried to easily understand by the employees. Respondents were asked to indicate their disagreement or agreement into 6 directions for spirituality index it was as which ranging from 1 to 6: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree. For stress it was as which ranging from 1 to 5: never, almost never, some of the time, most of the time and almost always.

In the stress index, Q1 to Q5 are related to sleep indicators; Q6 to Q14 are related to behavioural indicators; Q15 to Q35 are related to emotional indicators; Q36 to Q40 are related to general questions of stress; Q41 to Q48 are related to physical indicators. In the spirituality index: Q1 to Q10 indicates spiritual support subscale, Q11 to Q18 indicates spiritual openness subscale and rest of the questions related to god or supreme power.

**Reverse scoring:** Q1, Q3, Q7, Q8, Q21, Q31, Q32, Q33 are reverse scored. Each subscale is scored separately scoring is kept continuous.

**Data collection:** Primary data were collected through the questionnaire distributed among the engineering students in the premises of IIT. Survey was based on the convenience sampling method. A predominantly quantitative approach was adopted for the study, respondents were selected randomly. Some data related my research was collected through personal interviews with the students.

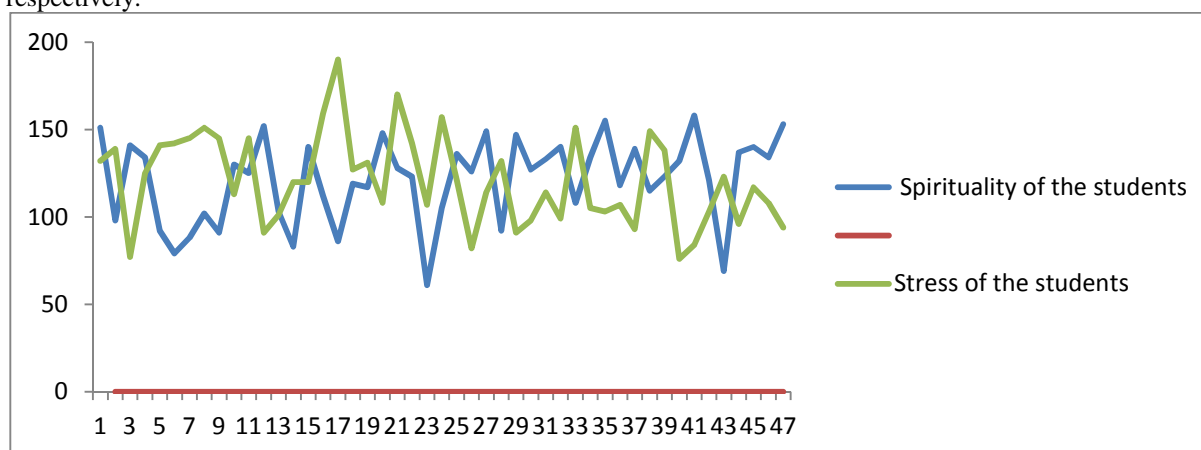
**Sample size:** During the survey 75 questionnaires were distributed among the engineering students and 47 questionnaire got return back, which shows 62% respondent rate.

**Statistics used:** Data were analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 (SPSS 20) and Microsoft excel 2010. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the spirituality, stress and engineering students. Data coding strategies were used to analyse the qualitative data.

## 7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants were 47 (31 boys and 18 girls) engineering students of IIT Roorkee from the Department of Paper Technology. 75 questionnaires were distributed in the premises of the selected department and 47 got return back. Respondent rate were 62% in which some participants from boys didn't give the answers of some questions. The average mean of the age of the students was 18 years in this study.

This study has been done at the end of the semester where student's mind is stable to find out the actual reason of stress and spirituality. The overall stress score and spirituality score among students are tabulated in Table1. Correlation of spirituality and stress are tabulated in Table2. The findings reveal that the stress level is significantly related to the spirituality of the students. Some information was collected through personal interviews, according to which boys adopt different things to get relief from the anxiety such as smoking, drinking, and workout etc. Alcohol may be used as a tool to reduce psychological distress (Marx and Sloan, 2003). But girls do religious and non-religious activities for reducing the stress. Graph1 shows that if spirituality is high then stress will be low and if spirituality is low then stress will be high it means spirituality and stress are inversely proportionate to each other. The result showed that mean score of spirituality and stress level of students is 121.14 and 120.76 respectively out of the total score of the spirituality and stress was 192 and 280 respectively.



**GRAPH 1: Representation of the spirituality and stress of the students**

**HYPOTHEIS1: There is no significant relationship between the spirituality, stress and academic performance.**

**TABLE1: Spirituality and Stress of engineering students**

**Descriptive Statistics**

|                    | N         | Minimum   | Maximum   | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Skewness  |            | Kurtosis  |            |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                    | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic      | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Spirituality       | 47        | 61.00     | 158.00    | 121.1489  | 24.25676       | -.625     | .347       | -.364     | .681       |
| Stress             | 47        | 76.00     | 190.00    | 120.7660  | 25.75825       | .362      | .347       | -.239     | .681       |
| Valid N (listwise) | 47        |           |           |           |                |           |            |           |            |

A Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965, Razali & Wah 2011 ) and visual inspection of their histogram, normal Q-Q plots showed that the spirituality and stress were slightly normally distributed of students with the skewness of -1.80 ( SE =0 .347) and a kurtosis of -0.53 (SE= 0.681) for spirituality of the students where the skewness of 1.04 ( SE=0.347) and a kurtosis of -0.35 (SE= 0.681) for the stress. Stress is highly normally distributed than the spirituality normality curve. The result shows that there is a relationship between the spirituality and stress which rejected the hypothesis. According to the results, spiritual person is a person who always tries to cope with the stress and find out the relevant solution of the problem. Spirituality can be in terms of faith, belief and hope about oneself which helps individual to fight with the stress.

**TABLE 2: Correlation of spirituality and stress**

**Correlations**

|              |                     | Spirituality | Stress  |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---------|
| Spirituality | Pearson Correlation | 1            | -.519** |
|              | Sig. (1-tailed)     |              | .000    |
|              | N                   | 47           | 47      |
| Stress       | Pearson Correlation | -.519**      | 1       |
|              | Sig. (1-tailed)     | .000         |         |
|              | N                   | 47           | 47      |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The correlation (-0.519) indicates that relation between the spirituality and the stress of the students is negatively related to each other which shows significant relationship between spirituality and stress. Result reveals that when spirituality of students in any terms whether religious, non -religious and toxic is high then stress of the students will be decreased. In other terms when spirituality of the students increases then stress will be decreased in the student life.

**HYPOTHESIS 2: There is no significant relationship between spirituality, stress and gender.**

**TABLE3: Correlation of spirituality and stress between girls and boys**

**Correlations**

|                     |                     | Stress (Boys) | stress (girls) | Spirituality (Boys) | Spirituality (girls) |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Stress(Boys)        | Pearson Correlation | 1             | .162           | -.456**             | -.206                |
|                     | Sig. (1-tailed)     |               | .261           | .006                | .206                 |
|                     | N                   | 29            | 18             | 29                  | 18                   |
| Stress(girls)       | Pearson Correlation | .162          | 1              | -.248               | -.658**              |
|                     | Sig. (1-tailed)     | .261          |                | .161                | .001                 |
|                     | N                   | 18            | 18             | 18                  | 18                   |
| spirituality(Boys)  | Pearson Correlation | -.456**       | -.248          | 1                   | .241                 |
|                     | Sig. (1-tailed)     | .006          | .161           |                     | .167                 |
|                     | N                   | 29            | 18             | 29                  | 18                   |
| spirituality(girls) | Pearson Correlation | -.206         | -.658**        | .241                | 1                    |
|                     | Sig. (1-tailed)     | .206          | .001           | .167                |                      |
|                     | N                   | 18            | 18             | 18                  | 18                   |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).



Table3 shows that there is slightly positive relationship between girls and boys towards stress with the value of correlation  $r = 0.162$  as well as same in the case of spirituality but, there is negative relationship between the stress and spirituality of boys with the value of  $r = -0.456$ . On the other hand, the value of  $r = -0.658$  shows negative relation of stress and spirituality in girls which is more than the boys. Overall, the result shows that there is positive relationship of spirituality between girls and boys, it means if girl believe in spirituality toward then boys would be entice sometime himself towards spirituality because of affection, love and friendship or vice- versa. At last the above correlation tables are proving that gender affects the level of spirituality and stress.

**HYPOTHESIS 3:** *There is no significant relation between the indicators of the stress between boys and girls.*

**Table4:** indicates the indicators of stress of boys and girls

| Descriptive Statistics        |    |         |         |         |                |
|-------------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
|                               | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
| emotional indicators(girls)   | 18 | 51.00   | 83.00   | 68.3889 | 9.08223        |
| emotional indicators(boys)    | 18 | 28.00   | 50.00   | 38.6111 | 6.42732        |
| Sleep indicators ( girls)     | 5  | 29.00   | 60.00   | 51.4000 | 12.77889       |
| Sleep indicators (boys)       | 5  | 20.00   | 40.00   | 32.2000 | 7.75887        |
| behavioural indicators(girls) | 9  | 37.00   | 78.00   | 56.5556 | 13.76691       |
| behavioural indicators(boys)  | 9  | 17.00   | 52.00   | 35.1111 | 12.22134       |
| physical indicators(boys)     | 8  | 56.00   | 76.00   | 67.2500 | 7.08620        |
| physical indicators( girls)   | 8  | 28.00   | 56.00   | 42.8750 | 10.04899       |
| Valid N (listwise)            | 5  |         |         |         |                |

After the study of the indicators of the stress, it has cleared that boys are emotionally stable then the girls. Girls easily fragile herself and takes anxiety about their grades, competition etc., that's why boys do not show their stress through insomnia. There is so slightly difference between the behavioural indicators of girls and boys. Girls physically show their stress to others but boys are physically stable. There is highly positive correlation ( $r = 0.818$ ) of behavioural indicators between boys and girls. Behaviour indicators like feel sensitive, irritable, solitude, temper outbursts, no home sickness found almost same in both as same with the sleep indicators with  $r = 0.7705$ , like sleeping pills, awake with tired, bad dreams and night mares etc variable chose to find out sleep indicators of stress. There are slightly positive correlation ( $r = 0.018$ ) of physical indicators between boys and girls. Physical indicators like poor attendance, insecurity of placement, assignments problem, excitements and challenges etc found so difference between girls and boys.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the study, it is examined that the stress level of engineering students with the reference of spirituality, which showed that boys have been suffering from stress more than girls because boys easily adapt themselves according to situation. Academic performance is not vital indeed of every student, in IIT students, it was noticed that extra curriculum activities like membership of hobbies club, cultural club, sports club etc., (Arnett, 2000; Brougham, Zail, Medonza, Miller, 2009) have been developing an importance in the students after taking the personal interviews and talks. Boys are more ostentatious than girls which indicate the stress indicators are well defined in boys. Meaning of spirituality is different in the age group 17-22 years. Correlation of spirituality and stress between girls and boys proved that gender affects the level of spirituality and stress. Correlation of spirituality and stress between girls and boys proved that gender affects the level of spirituality and stress. Spirituality means the things which make them happy, relax, trauma free etc., 56% students believe on faith, supreme power like mother, father etc., rather than religion, prayer. Beyerlein, 2004, states that spiritual students who believe on god, prayer, do not perform better in school than other students and that very spiritually students may not seek higher education as it conflicts with their moral sensibilities. Behavioural indicators of girls and boys are almost same between age group 17- 22 years.

## 8. LIMITATIONS

Students have the power to develop their career in interesting and creative way but due to some stresses like family pressure, financial problems, improper guidance, unrealistic expectations etc. Student's stress is highly affected by the financial aspect. This paper didn't focus on the financial stress of the students. Financial problem, family problem, group cohesiveness are important variables for the measurement of stress and spirituality of the students. Personality of the individual like extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, trait anger, and neuroticism decide the level of stress acceptance. Characteristics of the personality are the crucial for the research related to stress and spirituality. Self-efficacy has been defined as a sense of personal control and the perception that one has the ability to minimize, reduce, or tolerate a particular situation (Bandura 1977). These were the limitation of this study and also serve as suggestions for the future researcher who are interested to do research in the area of stress and spirituality.

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