

Impact of Employee Wellness Programs on Employee Mental Health in the IT Sector of Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT

Employee wellness programs (EWPs) are becoming more important as companies identify the central role that employee mental health plays in productivity and overall workplace health. This research investigates the influence of wellness programs on the mental health of IT workers in the Coimbatore area, involving interventions such as mental health counselling, stress management workshops, physical fitness, and flexible working hours. Employing a quantitative survey-based approach, data were gathered from employees to determine participation levels and perceived impact. The research finds mental health counselling and stress management workshops to be the most participated and effective programs, followed by financial wellness programs and nutrition counselling as less participated. The programs, although made available, are restricted by low awareness, non-participation, and perceived ineffectiveness from achieving their full impact. The research urges organizations to personalize wellness programs to employee needs and to establish a culture that actively fosters participation. The research adds to the current debate on workplace wellness and offers practical implications for IT companies to promote employee mental wellbeing.

Keywords: Employee Wellness Programs, Mental Health, IT Sector, Stress Management, Workplace Well-being, Perceived Impact.

1. Introduction

In the Information technology (IT) sector, employee mental health is getting more widely recognized as an essential element of the organization success. The IT work environment is characterized by long working hours, rapid technological changes, and strict performance standards. These factors have led to workplaces that are prone to stress, burnout and anxiety. The industry's worldwide competition exacerbates these mental health issues and creates a culture of constant work that strains workers' emotional and psychological health (Chellam & Divya, 2022). Due to these stresses, IT workers are at a significant risk of mental health problems including burnout and depression, which can negatively affect their output and general job satisfaction (Shrivastava, 2019).

Proactive companies are starting to emphasize wellness initiatives as a crucial component of their employee assistance plans (EAPs) as mental health problems among IT workers become more common. The focus of wellness initiatives, particularly EAPs is on providing mental health support through supportive communication channels, stress management courses, and counselling as preventive measures (Baskar & Shinde, 2021). These programs provide a comprehensive approach to well-being by addressing both mental and physical health issues (Chellam & Divya, 2022). Though a lot of studies (Barker & Nussbaum, 2011; Lerner, Adler, & Rogers, 2009), have been done on the advantages of EAPs for worker productivity and engagement, very little of it has been done in the IT industry, and even less in India, especially in places like Coimbatore.

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Employee mental health, work-related stress, and the success of wellness initiatives are important study variables. Prior research highlights the significance of an all-encompassing wellness framework that incorporates both individual and organizational interventions, as demonstrated by the study conducted by (Smit, Oostrom, Engels, & Proper, 2024). Their results demonstrate that successful wellness initiatives have a comprehensive approach to mental health, integrating exercises that focus on stress reduction, physical well-being, and the growth of interpersonal relationships (Smit et al., 2024). Moreover, additional studies show that mental health interventions in wellness programs—like those aimed at preventing burnout and offering emotional support—are linked to decreased absenteeism and increased productivity (Joyce, 2013).

Although wellness programs have become more popular worldwide, there is still a great deal of research on how effective they are in particular cultural and regional contexts in India. For example, studies in Western countries have demonstrated that wellness programs help increase employee retention and create a positive work environment (Rastogi & Chaudhary, 2018), but it is unclear whether these findings are generally applicable across a variety of socio-cultural and economic contexts. This study aims to close this gap by examining how well wellness programs promote mental health, lower workplace stress, and ultimately increase employee engagement and productivity.

In order to ascertain whether the current initiatives are adequate to address the particular pressures faced by IT workers, this study aims to examine the effect of wellness programs on employee mental health within the Coimbatore IT sector. By concentrating on the connection between wellness initiatives and mental health, this research advances our knowledge of how local circumstances affect the effectiveness of these treatments and looks at how businesses might enhance worker well-being in ways that are culturally relevant.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Nature of work in IT sector

Sun and Colleagues (Sun, Sarfraz, Ivascu, Iqbal & Mansoor, 2022) stress that high levels of stress, worry, and depression at work might impair performance, particularly in times of crisis like the COVID-19 epidemic. Particularly in high-demand industries like IT and healthcare, work stress is a significant factor affecting employee well-being, and the COVID-19 epidemic has made it worse. In her study of occupational stress in the IT industry, (Krzyżowska, 2024) discovered that high stress levels might affect workers' willingness to share knowledge, which is crucial for innovation and teamwork in tech-driven industries. According to (Kim, 2022) research, coping mechanisms, resilience, and a sense of purpose are important in reducing the detrimental effects of stress on psychological health among women working in the service industry. Transformational leadership and information sharing can mediate and alleviate stress effects, promoting adaptation and creativity, according to a study by Rafique and colleagues (Rafique, Hou, Chudhery, Waheed, Zia, & Chan, 2022). The negative effects of stress, anxiety, and depression on worker performance are highlighted in the healthcare industry by a study (Sun et al., 2022), which also identifies job burnout and mental health as mediating factors that connect high stress levels to decreased productivity. To promote employee well-being, (Thayumanavar and Sindhuja, 2023) highlight the need for organizational support and better work environments in the Coimbatore IT sector. They also offer insights into the working conditions that contribute to stress. These studies collectively highlight the intricate relationship between organizational characteristics and work-related stress, with coping strategies, leadership support, and supportive work environments all being critical to lowering stress and fostering constructive mental health outcomes.

2.2 IT Sector in Coimbatore

The IT industry in Coimbatore has grown significantly, with a sizable workforce that faces specific difficulties in preserving favorable working conditions and work-life balance. The rigorous nature of IT work in Coimbatore, where long hours and high-performance standards frequently cause stress and have an adverse effect on employees' mental health, is highlighted by (Geetha and Mahalakshmi, 2022). The investigation by (Thayumanavar and Sindhuja, 2023) also highlights the urgent need for work-life balance in this sector, as employees struggle to reconcile their personal and professional obligations because of their rigorous work schedules. The importance of supporting organizational practices is further shown by (Kumar and Brindha, 2023) who investigate how Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) can improve team performance among Coimbatore IT workers. They discover that a cooperative culture fostered by OCB has a beneficial influence on team dynamics and general job satisfaction, emphasizing that balanced workloads and productive teamwork lead to improved performance and employee retention. Together, these findings highlight that although Coimbatore's IT industry is flourishing, better working conditions, encouragement of work-life balance, and a collaborative workplace are vital for raising employee productivity and well-being.

2.3 Employee Wellness programs (EWP)

Employee wellness programs (EWP) have drawn more attention as businesses realize how important they are to improving organizational outcomes and employee well-being, particularly in high-stress industries like healthcare and manufacturing. The role of wellness programs during the COVID-19 pandemic was examined by Munoz and team (Munoz, Andrade, Pena & Donate, 2023), who show a positive correlation between wellness programs and proactive work results by emphasizing how perceived organizational support promotes employee dedication and inventive behaviour. Peña and colleagues (Peña, Andrade, María Muñoz & Barba-Sánchez, 2024) place EWP within the framework of sustainable human resource management and stress that wellness initiatives and perceived organizational support have a major impact on organizational performance. Huda and teammates (Huda, Pomi & Hoque, 2023) investigate how workers in Bangladesh's footwear sector perceive wellness programs in the industrial setting. They find that workers usually view wellness initiatives as good for their physical and mental health, which can lead to increased job satisfaction and productivity. In his discussion of the benefits of wellness initiatives across industries, (Bhaidkar, 2022) makes the claim that by attending to the physical and mental requirements of staff members, these initiatives enhance job happiness, lower absenteeism, and foster greater loyalty. From an educational standpoint, (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2024) associates wellness initiatives with enhanced performance, highlighting the importance of work-life balance and mental health support in attaining workplace effectiveness. Through qualitative research, (Davis-Sumerall, 2024) emphasizes the significance of wellness programs in the healthcare industry, concluding that they are crucial for addressing burnout and stress associated to the job, particularly for healthcare professionals. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that integrated workplace health promotion programs (WHPPs), which incorporate organizational and individual interventions, have the potential to improve mental and physical health outcomes (Smit et al., 2024). When taken as a whole, these studies demonstrate how well EWP promotes organizational performance and well-being, emphasizing the critical role that organizational support plays in maximizing program outcomes in a variety of settings and industries.

2.4 Employee Mental health

In organizational research, employee mental health has gained significant attention, particularly in light of the intricate problems the COVID-19 pandemic has presented. The significance of workplace mental health initiatives is emphasized by (Kelloway, Dimoff, and Gilbert, 2023), who show how organizational efforts to address mental health can improve employee well-being and lessen stigma. In a similar vein, (Hamouche, 2023) emphasizes the necessity of organizational action to lessen the impact of COVID-19 stresses on workers' mental health, highlighting the management's involvement in lowering anxiety and depression. (Shiri et al., 2022) evaluate research on flexible work arrangements as a crucial element in alleviating mental health difficulties, demonstrating that such arrangements can reduce job-related stress. The impact of flexible work arrangements on mental health is also clear. (Chen et al., 2022) investigates the direct

effects of work-related stress on mental health and performance, finding that higher stress levels are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction and productivity. According to (Sun et al., 2022), occupational burnout and mental health conditions acted as mediating variables in the detrimental effects of stress, anxiety, and depression on healthcare workers' performance, which were made worse by the pandemic. Additionally, (de Oliveira et al., 2023) conduct a critical analysis of the relationship between mental health and workplace productivity, concluding that mental health has a direct impact on organizational results and performance. (Kotera et al., 2022) conducted a qualitative study to examine the mental health of healthcare workers in Japan. They found that the pandemic exacerbated stress and mental health problems, indicating a need for organizational support systems on a global scale. Collectively, these studies highlight how important it is to treat mental health in the workplace in order to maintain both organizational effectiveness and employee well-being.

2.5 Impact of Employee Wellness programs (EWP) on Employee mental health

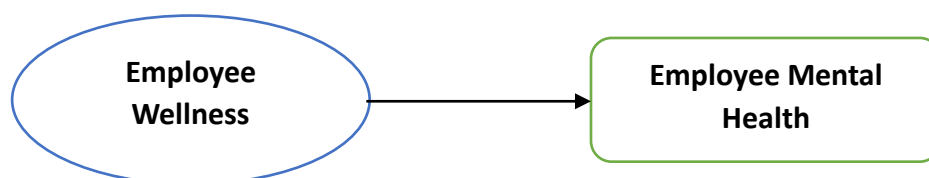
The impact of wellness programs on employee mental health are well-established, demonstrating how a positive work atmosphere and focused interventions can greatly improve wellbeing. The importance of the physical office space as a mental health resource is highlighted by (Bergefurt et al., 2022), who contend that thoughtfully planned workspaces enhance mental health. Wellness initiatives are particularly important during emergencies, like COVID-19. The necessity of proactive wellness measures to build healthier work environments is emphasized in (Gabriel and Aguinis, 2022) discussion of strategies to prevent burnout and enhance mental health resilience. Further investigating the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, (Hamouche, 2023) argues for organizational measures to manage stressors made worse by the pandemic. According to (Voordt and Jensen, 2023), wellness initiatives not only enhance employees' mental health but also organizational results by increasing employee satisfaction, productivity, and cost-effectiveness in the workplace. Wellness programs are essential for reducing stress and promoting mental health in the healthcare industry, where mental health hazards are significant (Ghahramani et al., 2023). Additionally, (Fox et al., 2022) emphasizes the impact of workplace interventions on several aspects of employee well-being, highlighting their efficacy at the organizational and group levels. Organizational wellness initiatives that enhance health and well-being are essential to creating supportive work environments, according to (Roodbari et al., 2022). The significance of wellness programs in preserving and improving mental health in a variety of work environments is highlighted by this research taken together, especially when it comes to holistic and crisis-responsive therapies.

2.6 Impact of Employee Mental Health's Impact on Organizational Performance

Enhancements in mental health have been shown to provide major organizational benefits, including increased productivity, engagement, and retention. According to (Geetha and Mahalakshmi, 2022), mentally healthy workers are more likely to be engaged, bringing vitality and passion to their jobs, which encourages greater levels of commitment and proactive involvement. Additionally, when workers feel supported by their employers, turnover rates are reduced and a more stable workforce is created, which helps with retention (Thayumanavar and Sindhuja, 2023). Additionally, people who are more focused, resilient, and efficient are more likely to perform at their best and meet organizational goals, which is another way that better mental health benefits productivity (Kumar & Brindha, 2023). These advantages demonstrate the organizational worth of wellness initiatives that focus on mental health, particularly in high-stress settings like the information technology industry.

Based on the review of previous research to study arrives at the following framework:

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



The literature emphasizes how wellness initiatives improve workers' mental health and how organizational support can amplify these benefits. There are still a lot of unanswered questions about how particular wellness program elements effectively address particular mental health issues in high-stress industries like IT. There is also a lack of research on how work stress mediates across other industries, especially in the IT sector, where high job demands and quick technical improvements exacerbate stress. In conclusion, there is a dearth of research on contextual factors in developing countries such as India, where cultural and economic circumstances may influence the efficacy of wellness programs in a different way than in Western settings. Filling in these gaps would offer a more sophisticated perspective on how to maximize wellness initiatives for mental health in diverse corporate contexts.

Based on the review of literature, the study has the following objective:

1. Assessing to what extent of Employee wellness programs are implemented in the IT sector of Coimbatore.
2. Assess the effectiveness of Employee wellness programs in addressing mental health issues in the Coimbatore IT sector.

3. Methodology

This study uses exploratory research techniques. A literature study will first be used to identify important notions, variables, and knowledge gaps in order to inform the conceptual framework and direct the creation of data collection instruments.

The target population is IT professionals employed with various companies in Coimbatore, a key IT hub in Tamil Nadu. The population is appropriate for evaluating the impact of wellness programs on mental health at various levels of the organization and job categories in the IT sector.

A sample size of approximately 200 participants has been found to be feasible based on the research timeline and budget.

Demographic profile of respondents

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic Factor	Categories	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	43%
	26-35	31.5%
	36-45	20%
	46 and above	5.5%
Gender	Male	45.5%
	Female	54.5%
Work Experience	Less than 1 year	32%
	1-3 years	40.5%
	3-6 years	15.5%
	More than 6 years	12%

Age structure of the respondents provides a general picture of the sample population. From Table 1, 43% of the participants fell in the category of 18-25 years, and the next category is 26-35 years, which consisted of 31.5% participants. In the gender structure, the majority of the participants were female respondents (48% female respondents. noteworthy is the fact that 65% of the respondents possessed more than five years of work experience working in the IT sector, which implies that they had appropriate professional exposure and had greater workplace wellness program appreciation.

This population profile is important in reporting the results of the study since more work-experienced participants would have undergone numerous different wellness programs and therefore better be able to assess their worth with greater knowledge.

Aside from facilitating easy data collection and handling, the size provides enough representation to generate meaningful outcomes. Purposive sampling was used in the study to access the variety of responses from IT employees of varying business sizes and wellness program types. The technique will offer a broad view of the impact of the wellness programs in varying workplace settings through segmentation of the sample according to organizational size and wellness program types.

The constructs to be examined are the following, which were identified from the research aims:

Employee Wellness Programs (Independent Variable): These include program components such as stress management training, work-life balance support, fitness initiatives, and mental health counseling.

Employee Mental Health (Dependent Variable): These consist of such factors as anxiety, stress, emotional fatigue, and general mental well-being.

Systematic online questionnaire will be employed to gather responses from the employees of Coimbatore's IT industry. Standardized questionnaires like Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) will be employed as the research tool to gather ratings on mental well-being and work-related stress.

The data will be analyzed using a range of statistical methods such as Descriptive statistics, Correlation analysis, Regression analysis, One-Way ANOVA.

Reliability Test

Table 1. Reliability Test

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Wellness Program (WP) Scale	0.844	Good Reliability
Mental Health (MH) Scale	0.906	Excellent Reliability
Impact Perception (IMP) Scale	0.637	Acceptable Reliability

For ascertaining the internal consistency of the MH and EWP scales, Cronbach Alpha was used. Table 2 shows the internal consistency reliability of MH ($\alpha = 0.906$) and EWP ($\alpha = 0.844$), supporting the strength of the questionnaire by showing that the scales are very consistent within themselves. The IMP scale was also scored as moderately reliable and provided a very low but adequate alpha value of 0.637.

This approach provides useful insights into how wellness programs impact the mental health of IT industry workers by allowing a comprehensive examination of the variables within a manageable sample size and period.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Extend of Implementation of Employee Wellness Programs

The results of the survey indicate that mental health counselling (67.5%) is the most frequently available wellness program within organizations, indicating a heightened organizational concern about psychological well-being. This conforms with increasing levels of awareness concerning the significance of mental health as an important promoter of employee motivation and productivity. Physical fitness activities (48%) and stress management workshops (44.5%) are also widely available, which indicates that organizations are aware of the connection between physical health and stress management as elements of work-related wellness programs.

Moderate provision of flexible work arrangements (37%) and meditation or mindfulness training (35.5%) also indicates a trend towards more comprehensive wellness initiatives, including work-life balance and mental health as part of wellness programs. But the lower percentage of financial wellness programs (27.5%), work-life balance services (24%), and nutrition counseling (9.5%) also indicates that companies may only just be starting to struggle with wellness outside of the traditional health-related interventions. The extremely low provision of nutrition counseling also indicates the presence of a potential gap, although there is growing evidence to connect food patterns with global mental and physical health.

4.2 Participation in Wellness programs

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Employee Wellness Programs (EWP)	3.25	3.50	0.874	1.25	5.00
Mental Health (MH)	2.95	3.00	0.677	1.10	4.10
Perceived Impact (IMP)	3.13	3.25	0.542	1.75	4.25

The overall take-up rate of well-being schemes was 3.25, showing moderate take-up. The mean mental health outcome was 2.95, showing that while well-being schemes are having some impact, there is still much to be done in order to have greatest impact.

4.3 Relation between Employee Wellness Programs & Mental Health

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

Variable	EWP	MH	IMP
Employee Wellness Programs (EWP)	----	0.611***	0.746***
Mental Health (MH)	0.611***	----	0.574***
Perceived Impact (IMP)	0.746***	0.574***	----

(*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001)

Correlation test was used to examine the correlation between participation in employee wellness programs and mental health outcomes. As we can see from results emphasized in Table 4, there is extremely positive correlation ($r = 0.611$, $p < .001$) between EWP and MH. That is, employees participating in wellness programs have better mental health outcomes.

The IMP-EWP correlation ($r = 0.746$, $p < .001$) also confirms that employees' self-perceived gains of wellness initiatives have a role to play as a determinant factor in their state of mind.

Table 5. Regression Model

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.636	0.404	0.398	66.9	2	197	<.001

Table 6. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Standardized Estimate
Intercept	0.868	0.2204	3.94	<.001	-----
Employee Wellness Programs (EWP)	0.319	0.0639	4.99	<.001	0.412
Perceived Impact (IMP)	0.333	0.1031	3.23	0.001	0.266

Multiple regression was employed to determine the extent to which EWP and IMP accounted for mental health outcomes. Multiple regression equation was significant ($F = 66.9$, $p < .001$) to predict 40.4% ($R^2 = 0.404$) variance in mental health outcomes.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA Results

Model	F	df1	df2	p
Mental Health (MH)	66.9	2	197	<.001

These results show that EWP most strongly impacts mental health ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < .001$), and then IMP ($\beta = 0.266$, $p = .001$). The results indicate that systematic and structured well-being activities are significant to improve the psychological well-being of employees.

One-way ANOVA was applied in the comparison of mental health outcomes by level of participation. The participation level significantly impacted the mental health score ($F = 19.0$, $p < .001$), and greater improvement in the mental health condition was felt by employees who attended more than one program.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that while organizations have progressed quite a distance towards the introduction of wellness programs, there is a wide gap in their adoption and implementation. That the most prevalent programs are mental health counselling (67.5%) and stress management workshops (44.5%) suggests the recognition by employers of the contribution of psychological well-being to workforce productivity and engagement. This is as reported in the literature, a response to rising mental health problems in high-stress work environments and the necessity for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) (Attridge, 2019). Yet, the extent of usage of such programs and the long-term effect is an area of significance that requires more studies. To surprise, physical fitness programs (48%) were the second most prevalent category of initiative provided, a response to rising awareness by the corporate sector of the connection between physical health and the performance of employees. Research has consistently shown that regular physical exercise results in enhanced cognitive functioning, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced morale in the workplace (Chen et al., 2021). Yet, even with the introduction of such initiatives, the corresponding rates of participation may be low, and therefore the necessity for more studies to evaluate employee engagement patterns for health-based interventions.

One of the notable findings is the relatively lower emphasis on nutrition counseling (9.5%), financial well-being initiatives (27.5%), and work-life balance initiatives (24%). Although stress management and mental well-being support continue to be as important as ever, neglecting financial and nutritional health could lead to half-baked wellness initiatives. Literature suggests that financial insecurity is one of the significant sources of stress for employees, which negatively impacts their mental well-being and work performance (Lusardi & Tufano, 2015). The relatively lower emphasis on financial well-being among the surveyed organizations reflects the need for a holistic response in the form of financial literacy activities, debt counseling advisories, and saving schemes. Additionally, the relatively lower emphasis on flexible work arrangements (37%) and social or recreational activities (19.5%) also reflects that organizations might still be adhering to conventional workplace norms. Literature suggests that flexible work policies have a strongly positive influence on employees' well-being, particularly in post-pandemic workplaces where hybrid models are the new normal (Bloom et al., 2022). Social interaction activities also prevent burnout and build workplace belongingness, which adds strength to the argument for holistic wellness programs.

Overall, these results call for an integrated and strategic model of well-being. Firms need to shift toward a proactive rather than reactive model in which all aspects of employees' well-being—mental, physical, economic, and social—are addressed. Future research needs to explore the long-term effects of these well-being initiatives on employee turnover, job satisfaction, and productivity in order to be capable of finding out more about their effectiveness and persistence.

6. Implications

The findings of this study are important to HR professionals and organizational policy. That the prevalence rates were that high, for Mental health counseling (67.5%) and stress management training (44.5%), signifies that the companies are giving priority to psychological well-being. That the relatively lower attention has been towards financial well-being (27.5%), work-life balance support (24%), and nutrition guidance (9.5%) reflects the gap in the process of covering all the wellness needs of the employees.

From an HR planning perspective, these results thus underscore the necessity for a wellness program at the system level addressing not only mental well-being and stress management, but also financial security, nutrition health, and work-life balance. In the wake of earlier research that has indicated a highly significant correlation between fiscal fitness and mental well-being, firms would need to supplement their wellness programs with financial education workshops, debt counseling advice, and investment planning resources. Similarly, nutrition counseling and meal planning for healthy foods need to be promoted, since food choice is a significant predictor of cognition and mental fitness.

To organizational policy makers, the implication of these findings is that wellness programs are not sufficient, but rather employee engagement and measurement must be quantified. Organizations need to have embedded measurement and feedback loops to pilot such programs and make them tailored based on employee needs. HR leaders need to also lead wellness adoption culture by linking such programs to end-to-end talent management systems, including performance management, employee engagement, and leadership development.

7. Conclusion

This study brings into focus the increasing significance given to workplace well-being programs, specifically mental counseling and stress management. While the psychological support orientation reflects improvement for organizations, relatively lesser significance given to financial health, work-life balance, and nutrition counseling has resulted in the partial wellness program for employees. Organizations must undertake a more comprehensive approach to addressing physical, psychological, financial, and social wellness categories to be successful in the well-being programs.

Subsequent research on the effectiveness and usage rates of integrated wellness programs by industry and population would more definitively define best practices. Longitudinal design studies would continue to explore the long-term impact of integrated wellness programs on employee productivity, job satisfaction, and turnover. By prioritizing a multi-dimensional wellness approach, organizations can develop healthier, more engaged, and more resilient employees, and ultimately organizational performance.

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