

EFFECT OF TARGET SETTING ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOURAL WELLBEING AT EAST AFRICAN PORTLAND CEMENT COMPANY LTD, KENYA

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Abstract: Performance contracting is a strategic management tool aimed at aligning individual efforts with broader organizational objectives through the establishment of clear goals, measurable outcomes, and systematic performance evaluation. In the East African cement industry, employee behavioural well-being is often compromised by hazardous working conditions, which contribute to high levels of occupational stress is estimated that between 10% and 15% of employees in this sector experience heightened work-related stress. This study explored the effect of target setting within performance contracting on employee behavioural well-being at the East African Portland Cement Company (EAPCC). A descriptive research design was adopted, targeting a population of 467 employees from various organizational levels. Using Cochran's formula, a representative sample of respondents was determined and distributed proportionally through stratified sampling. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. A pilot study involving 10 participants was conducted to ensure the reliability of the research instrument. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages, and standard deviations, were utilized to summarize the data. Inferential analysis was carried out using correlation and regression techniques. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between target setting and employee behavioural well-being ($\beta = 0.433$, $B = 0.426$, $p < .001$). The study recommends the adoption of inclusive and strategic goal-setting practices, where employees actively participate in defining clear and attainable performance targets. Such involvement is likely to enhance ownership, motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance within the organization.

Keywords: Employee Behavioural Wellbeing, Performance Contracting.

1. INTRODUCTION

Performance contracting has emerged as a pivotal management strategy globally, aiming to enhance accountability, efficiency, and overall organizational performance. Initially adopted in public sector organizations, its principles have permeated the private sector, emphasizing goal alignment, measurable outcomes, and improved service delivery (Grossi, Kallio, Sargiacomo, & Skoog, (2020). In the cement manufacturing sector, performance contracting is instrumental in improving operational efficiency, ensuring quality standards, and effectively managing the workforce. However, the East African cement industry faces several challenges impacting its operations and workforce, including fluctuating demand, infrastructure limitations, and rising production costs. Employees in the sector report low job satisfaction, primarily due to poor working conditions, inadequate safety measures, and limited opportunities for skill development (Samba, 2022). Ambitious performance targets, when not supported by sufficient resources, can increase employee stress and contribute to burnout (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021).

Globally, the cement manufacturing sector presents unique challenges with significant implications for employee behavioural wellbeing. The industry is marked by high energy consumption, exposure to hazardous materials, and strict regulatory requirements. Workers are often exposed to harmful cement dust, linked to respiratory problems like chronic bronchitis and occupational asthma (Kamardeen & Hasan, 2024). The physically demanding nature of the work, including tasks such as repetitive lifting and maintaining awkward postures, also leads to musculoskeletal disorders like back pain and joint strain. These health risks contribute to higher stress levels, lower job satisfaction, and reduced morale among employees. In Kenya, performance contracting has been rolled out across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, as part of broader public sector reform initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency and accountability. While these measures have contributed to increased productivity, they have also been associated with heightened work-related stress, particularly among mid-level employees (Melissa, 2024). At East African Portland Cement Company Ltd (EAPCC), performance contracts have been actively employed to improve efficiency and strategic alignment. However, studies have shown that while performance contracting can boost output, neglecting employees' behavioural wellbeing can lead to burnout, low morale, and disengagement due to challenges compounded by competition from regional and international companies. Employees also face occupational risks, such as exposure to cement dust and chemicals, which pose serious health hazards (Jafari et al., 2023).

At EAPCC, performance contracting is a key strategy for aligning individual efforts with the organization's objectives. When employees believe their performance goals are attainable, they tend to be more engaged and productive. For example, employees who saw their targets as realistic helped increase production from 80% to 90% within six months. However, when expectations are unrealistic, morale can decline, leading to a drop in performance. Mwangi and Njuguna (2019) highlight the importance of a supportive work environment in boosting productivity. Their research shows that combining clear performance targets with conducive work conditions leads to significantly better results. Organizations that frequently reassess and adjust targets to match operational realities are better positioned to maintain productivity without overburdening employees. By setting clear, achievable goals, providing positive reinforcement, and fostering a supportive work environment, companies can enhance motivation, reduce stress, and improve job satisfaction. Well-defined roles also provide clarity, guiding employees in a way that supports both their wellbeing and the organization's success.

Recognizing the importance of employee behavioural wellbeing is not merely a matter of corporate responsibility; it is a strategic imperative. As organizations strive for excellence and competitiveness, understanding and addressing the behavioural health of their workforce becomes essential. This research focuses on exploring the dynamics of employee behavioural wellbeing within the context of specifically target setting aiming to shed light on how organizational practices influence the psychological and emotional states of employees. By delving into this area, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform policies and practices aimed at fostering a healthier, more productive workforce.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the East African cement manufacturing sector, target setting remains a cornerstone of performance contracting intended to drive efficiency, accountability, and organizational productivity. However, this mechanism often becomes counterproductive when targets are imposed without meaningful employee involvement or when expectations are misaligned with ground realities. In an industry already characterized by hazardous working environments, such poorly executed performance measures can severely compromise employee behavioural well-being. Alarming evidence indicates that 30–40% of cement factory workers in Kenya suffer from elevated work-related stress, largely attributed to long working hours and aggressive performance targets (Muigai, 2019). These psychological strains are further aggravated by unsafe operational conditions, fostering chronic job dissatisfaction and high employee turnover (Emmanuel, 2021). The gravity of this issue is heightened by findings from Ethiopia, where nearly half (48.9%) of cement workers reported occupational injuries within a single year (PMCID: PMC8962051), underlining the industry's inherent physical dangers. In such high-risk contexts, unrealistic performance expectations may compel employees to prioritize output over personal safety amplifying both psychological and physical harm. Conversely, evidence supports that when target setting is conducted collaboratively emphasizing clarity, attainability, and inclusivity employees demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction. A recent study in Kenya's manufacturing sector revealed that rational, well-defined goals accounted for 46.5% of the variation in employee engagement (Gede, 2025). This underscores the transformative potential of participatory goal-setting processes. Despite the centrality of target setting in performance management, there remains a notable gap in empirical research examining its specific influence on employee behavioural well-being within high-risk

industries such as cement production. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how target setting within performance contracts affect employee well-being at East African Portland Cement Company. The findings aim to inform more humane, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to performance management in industrial settings.

Study Objectives

The study sought to examine the effect of target setting on employee behavioural wellbeing at East African Portland Cement Ltd in Kenya

Study Hypotheses

H01: Target Setting does not significantly affect employee behavioural wellbeing at East African Portland Cement Ltd in Kenya

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goal-Setting Theory, as articulated by (Latham, 2023) posits that specific and challenging goals significantly enhance individual and team motivation, leading to improved performance outcomes. The theory posits that specific and challenging goals can enhance performance by directing attention, increasing effort, and fostering persistence. However, if these goals are perceived as unattainable or lack clarity, they can lead to stress and decreased motivation (Hasyim & Bakri, 2024). Priya et al. (2023) highlight that rigid performance targets can induce stress among employees. Further research by (Maryani & Umar, 2024) underscores the need for longitudinal studies to understand the long-term psychological effects of target setting across various industries. At EAPCC, performance contracting has been implemented to align individual and organizational objectives. Studies indicate that when employees perceive their goals as attainable, there is higher engagement and productivity. Employees who considered their goals attainable demonstrated higher engagement, leading to a production increase from 80% to 90% within six months. However, unrealistic targets often resulted in frustration and declining morale, ultimately affecting productivity. (Hafeez et al., 2019) highlighted the role of a supportive work environment in employee productivity. Combining clear performance goals with a conducive workplace leads to better outcomes. Nonetheless, the theory is not without limitations. Its emphasis on quantifiable objectives can constrain creativity and limit adaptability, particularly in dynamic or innovative work environments (Omowole, Bamidele Micheal et al., 2024). The pressure associated with difficult goals may also induce stress or burnout, especially when expectations are perceived as unattainable (Bakker & De, 2021). Moreover, the theory tends to overlook external factors such as organizational culture, resource limitations, and unanticipated workplace changes.

Establishing clear and measurable goals is fundamental to effective target setting and aligning individual efforts with organizational priorities. In performance contracting, well-defined goals sharpen focus, enhance accountability, and drive productivity. They serve as a strategic tool to guide planning and connect individual roles to the organization's broader mission. When employees understand what is expected of them and can track their progress, they are more motivated, engaged, and purposeful in their work. Goal-Setting Theory reinforces that clarity in objectives fosters commitment and leads to higher performance. Equally important is role specification, which ensures employees know their responsibilities and how their work contributes to organizational success. Role clarity reduces confusion, boosts engagement, and strengthens alignment. Together, clearly established goals and well-defined roles form the backbone of effective performance management in structured organizational settings.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between variables.

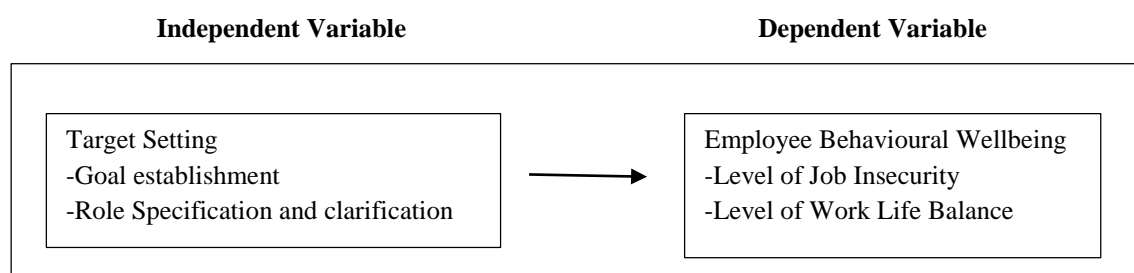


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design to systematically examine how performance contracting affects employee behavioural wellbeing without altering the existing work environment. The research was conducted at East African Portland Cement Company Ltd in Machakos County, Kenya, a strategic industrial hub that offers insights into employee wellbeing amid high-demand work conditions (Hafeez et al., 2019)

3.2 Target Population

The study targeted a population of 467 composed of (28 senior managers, 65 middle-level managers, and 374 general employees to capture diverse organizational perspectives at East African Portland Cement Company Ltd

3.3 Sample size and sampling Technique

In this study, a stratified random sampling method was applied to ensure that each subgroup within the population was adequately represented. This approach minimized selection bias and enhanced the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Ahmed, 2024)

$N = \frac{1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$ Applying the finite population corrections:

$$n = \frac{(0.05)^2 \cdot 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5}{0.0025} = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.250}{(1-0.5)} \quad n = \frac{0.00253 \cdot 3.8416}{0.25} \quad n = \frac{0.96040}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.96040}{0.00250} \quad \mathbf{n=384.16=384 \text{ respondents}}$$

Study population is 467 employees and Sample size is 384 respondents

3.4 Ethical Consideration

The researcher took deliberate measures to inform participants about the study's purpose, objectives, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of their involvement. Confidentiality of organizational data was emphasized, and participants were assured that sensitive information would remain undisclosed. Ethical research principles were strictly observed, with full respect for participants' autonomy and dignity. All sources were appropriately cited and referenced, and formal authorization was obtained from relevant authorities in accordance with regulatory requirements (World Health Organization, 2024).

4. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The primary quantitative data was collect by structured questionnaires administered to employees. The questionnaire had closed ended questions and items with a 5 point Likert scale with 1 representing "Strongly Agree (SA)," 2 representing "Agree (A)," 3 representing "Neutral (N)," 4 representing "Disagree (D)," and 5 representing "Strongly Disagree (SD)," with the questionnaires being divided in to sections 1, 2, 3 and 4, the researcher used the drop-and-pick method to distribute questionnaires. The data entry process began with organizing the collected questionnaires, assigning identification numbers, and coding responses systematically. Microsoft Excel was used to capture and arrange the data in a structured format. The data was cleaned and verified and transferred into appropriate statistical program (SPSS Version 21), to facilitate, analysis, accuracy and consistency. The data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Regression and correlation analysis was conducted to measure relationships and test hypothesis. The subsequent linear regression function was employed in the study: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Where; Y is the dependent variable representing behavioural wellbeing,

X_1 is the independent variable representing target setting,

β_0 is the intercept,

β_1 is the coefficient for X_1 and

ε is the error term.

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the 384 questionnaires administered to employees of East African Portland Cement Company Ltd, 331 were duly completed and returned, resulting in a commendable response rate of 86.2%. This level of participation exceeds the benchmark commonly accepted in empirical research, where a response rate above 70% is considered excellent for survey-based studies (Onyango & Muturi, 2021). The high return rate enhanced the credibility and robustness of the findings.

Table 1: Response Rate

Description	Value
Target Sample Size	384
Complete questionnaires	331
Response Rate (%)	86.1%

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

Demographic analysis involves examining the characteristics of a study population—such as gender, age, education, and other attributes to ensure balanced representation and enhance the validity of findings.

Table 2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	162	48.9
Male	169	51.1
Total	331	100.0

In this study, gender distribution was nearly equal, with males comprising 51.1% (169) and females 48.9% (162) of the respondents. This balanced representation promotes inclusivity and supports a comprehensive understanding of employee perspectives. It also aligns with the two-thirds gender rule articulated in Kenya's Constitution (2010), which requires that no gender dominates by more than two-thirds in any grouping (Muchiri, 2022)

Table 3: Employees Work Experience

Work Experience in current position	Frequency	Percent
More than 6 years	109	32.9%
4 to 6 years	85	25.7%
1 to 3 years	100	30.2%
Less than 1 year	37	11.2%
Total	331	100%

Most respondents reported considerable experience in their current roles, with 32.9% having worked for over six years, 25.7% between four and six years, 30.2% for one to three years, and 11.2% for less than a year. This level of tenure suggests that many employees are familiar with EAPCC's internal processes, making their input particularly valuable in assessing the influence of performance contracting on behavioural well-being.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of the Variables under investigation

Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale was used to gauge respondents' level of agreement with statements on Target Setting and Employee Behavioural Wellbeing. The scale was structured as follows: 1 – Strongly Agree (SA), 2 – Agree (A), 3 – Neutral (N), 4 – Disagree (D), and 5 – Strongly Disagree (SD). The findings were computed and analyzed using the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD)

Table 4: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on Target Setting

Target Setting Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. There are well defined targets set in the performance contracting that are clear and measurable	331	1	5	2.85	1.15
2. All employees have well-defined roles with a manageable number of goals, typically no more than five to seven, to ensure focus.	331	1	5	2.92	1.18
3. Well-defined roles positively contribute to job satisfaction and overall wellbeing.	331	1	5	2.18	1.12
Average Mean				2.65	1.15

The findings of this study suggest that employees at East African Portland Cement Ltd hold a generally neutral to slightly positive perception regarding target setting and its impact on their behavioural wellbeing. A mean score of 2.85 (SD = 1.15) for the statement on clear and measurable targets indicates a moderate level of agreement, though responses exhibit notable variability. The perception of having clearly defined roles with a manageable number of goals yielded a mean score of 2.92 (SD = 1.18), signifying a slightly positive outlook on role clarity while still allowing for diverse opinions. The statement associating well-defined roles with job satisfaction and wellbeing received a mean score of 2.18 (SD = 1.12), reinforcing the notion that employees generally recognize the positive influence of structured roles on their wellbeing, albeit with some variation in perspectives. With an overall mean score of 2.65 (SD = 1.15), these results suggest that target setting and role clarity contribute to improved employee satisfaction and wellbeing, though perceptions vary across employees. This aligns with recent studies emphasizing the role of goal-setting in enhancing workplace motivation and psychological wellbeing (Omuga & Senelwa, 2022).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on Employee Behavioural Wellbeing and Performance Contracting

Employee Behavioural Wellbeing Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The existence of level of job insecurity has adversely impacted the emotional wellbeing of employees, resulting in sensations of anxiety and uncertainty.	331	1	5	2.85	1.0
2. Employee job satisfaction has decreased following the implementation strategy process of the performance contracting within the company.	331	1	5	2.89	1.03
3. Employees experience a sense of job insecurity due to the negative impact of their inability to balance demanding work schedules with family commitments	331	1	5	2.92	1.05
4. Emphasizing performance contracting may adversely affect employees' level of work life balance by prioritizing productivity over personal wellbeing.	331	1	5	2.9	1.04
5. Positive behavioural strength plays a significant role in maintaining employee level of work life balance within our organization.	331	1	5	2.83	0.98
6. Clear performance targets outlined in contracts influence employees' job satisfaction and their distribution of time between work and personal life.	331	1	5	2.88	1.02
Average Mean				2.87	1.06

The study reveals that employees generally hold neutral to slightly positive views on how performance contracting affects their emotional wellbeing, job security, and work-life balance. The statement regarding job insecurity impacting emotional wellbeing scored a mean of 2.85 (SD = 1.00), indicating moderate concern with varied responses. Similarly, the perception that job satisfaction declined following the implementation of performance contracting recorded a mean of 2.89 (SD = 1.03), reflecting mixed but largely neutral sentiments. Other aspects—such as challenges balancing work and family life, performance expectations influencing work-life balance, and the clarity of targets affecting time management and satisfaction received mean scores ranging from 2.83 to 2.92, suggesting mild agreement without strong negativity. Notably, the role of behavioural resilience in supporting work-life balance had the lowest mean (2.83, SD = 0.98), indicating general

agreement on its value. With an overall mean of 2.87 (SD = 1.06), findings suggest employees acknowledge the influence of performance contracting on their behavioural wellbeing, though concerns are not strongly pronounced. These insights align with Nyongesa and van der Westhuizen (2023), who found that while performance contracting improves service delivery in Huduma Centres, it must be balanced with employee wellbeing.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was employed to evaluate the impact of performance contracting component namely target setting, on the behavioural wellbeing of employees. This statistical technique is valuable for determining the strength and direction of relationships between a dependent variable (employee behavioural wellbeing) and independent variable (performance contracting components). By modeling these relationships, the analysis helps identify which factors significantly influence employee wellbeing.

4.4.1 The Relationship between Target Setting and Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

This study investigated the influence of target setting on the behavioural wellbeing of employees at East African Portland Cement Ltd. To guide the analysis, the following null hypothesis was tested:

H_{01} : Target setting does not significantly affect employee behavioural wellbeing at East African Portland Cement Ltd.

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression model was applied, represented by the equation:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$, where Y denotes the dependent variable (behavioural wellbeing), X_1 represents the independent variable (target setting), β_0 is the intercept, β_1 is the regression coefficient for target setting, and ϵ is the error term. This model was used to assess the extent to which changes in target-setting practices are associated with variations in employee behavioural wellbeing. The results of the regression analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Model Summary for Target Setting on Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.766 ^a	.586	.584	.4739

a. Predictors: (Constant), Target Setting

As indicated in the table above, the results revealed a strong positive relationship between target setting and employee behavioural wellbeing, with a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.766$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.586$) suggests that approximately 59% of the variation in behavioural wellbeing can be attributed to target-setting practices. The adjusted $R^2 = 0.584$ confirms the model's robustness and predictive reliability, even after accounting for potential bias due to sample size. The standard error of the estimate (0.4739) reflects a reasonable level of precision in predicting employee wellbeing from target-setting initiatives. These findings align with Nyongesa and van der Westhuizen (2023), who emphasized the critical role of clear performance goals in supporting employee wellbeing.

Table 7: ANOVAa For Target Setting on Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	104.621	1	104.621	465.686	<.001 ^b
	Residual	73.913	329	.225		
	Total	178.534	330			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Target Setting

An ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of the regression model examining the impact of target setting on employee behavioural wellbeing. The results revealed that the model was highly significant, $F(1, 329) = 465.686$, $p < .001$, indicating that target setting accounts for a meaningful proportion of the variation in employee behavioural wellbeing. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, affirming that target setting has a significant influence on behavioural wellbeing. These findings underscore the value of establishing clear and attainable performance targets in creating a supportive work environment and promoting employee wellbeing (Nyongesa & van der Westhuizen, 2023).

Table 8: Coefficients for Target Setting on Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.165	.050	3.307	.001
	Target Setting	.652	.024	.766	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Behavioural Wellbeing

The regression analysis examined the influence of target setting on employee behavioural wellbeing. The resulting equation, $Y = 0.165 + 0.652X_1$, indicates that target setting is a significant predictor of wellbeing. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.652$, $t(329) = 27.166$, $p < .001$) suggests that a one-unit increase in effective target setting corresponds to a 0.652-unit improvement in behavioural wellbeing, assuming all other factors remain constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.766$) further confirms a strong, positive relationship between the two variables. These findings reinforce the conclusion that clear and measurable targets significantly enhance employee behavioural wellbeing.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIO

5.1 Summary

The analysis identified target setting as the most influential factor affecting employee behavioural wellbeing, with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.433$ and an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.426$ ($p < .001$). This means that clearly defined and structured performance goals significantly enhance employee wellbeing. Employees who understood their roles and objectives reported increased motivation and lower stress levels. These findings are consistent with Goal-Setting Theory (Syallow, 2019), which posits that specific and attainable targets foster higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment.

5.2 Conclusion

Among the key components of performance contracting, target setting stands out as the most impactful in influencing employee behavioural well-being. The study found that well-defined, realistic, and structured goals play a critical role in boosting motivation and minimizing stress caused by role ambiguity. When employees clearly understand their responsibilities and are supported by a coherent strategy, they tend to exhibit greater focus and confidence in executing their duties. This aligns with Goal-Setting Theory (Aswani, 2019), which suggests that specific and challenging objectives enhance both performance and engagement. Recent studies further support this view, highlighting that clarity in performance expectations not only drives motivation but also improves job satisfaction. When employees have a clear sense of direction, they are more likely to commit to their roles and maintain consistent productivity.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends for clear goal establishment and role specification mechanism in target setting for positive employee behavioural wellbeing.

EAPCC may actively involve employees in target setting including the goal-setting process to reduce stress and promote a sense of ownership. Management should also provide resources and training to support goal achievement.

HR professionals need to design performance management systems that include indicators of employee well-being. They may organize workshops that allow employees to co-develop their targets, ensuring transparency, engagement, and reduced anxiety from unrealistic goals.

Policy makers may include performance contracting behavioural wellbeing possible review of employee progress with in performance contracting period.

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