The Influence of *Soft Skills, Hard Skills* and Work Motivation on Final Semester Students' Work Readiness at Dian Nuswantoro University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the influence of soft skills, hard skills, and work motivation on the job readiness of final-year students at Dian Nuswantoro University. The research employs a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires as the data collection technique. The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling, applying Cochran's formula, with a total sample of 100 respondents, consisting of final-year students at Dian Nuswantoro University. The data analysis technique was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The results of the study confirm that all variables, soft skills, hard skills, and work motivation significantly influence the job readiness of final-year students at Dian Nuswantoro University

INTRODUCTION

Globalization currently has a significant impact on economic growth, which has an impact on the absorption of labor and the qualifications of the workforce needed to achieve business goals. Human resources are a very important economic resource for business, and are even the most important asset. Human resources are also a determinant of business success in economic activities. In Indonesia, the high number of workers that is not balanced by the quality of adequate job seekers and limited job vacancies are one of the causes of the high unemployment rate. This condition requires prospective workers to prepare themselves with skills and competencies that are in accordance with the needs of the world of work.

Indonesian human resources cannot be separated from the strategic role of education in improving quality both mentally, physically, and intellectually and professionally. In addition, national development cannot be in accordance with planning if the strategic role of education in this country is ignored. Thus, education may function as a tool to develop better, innovative, and creative human resources, and be able to produce high output. By learning, a person can develop potential and optimize the abilities within themselves to be ready to face life in society and work (Raihan & Nengsih, 2024) .

Table 1. Open Unemployment Rate

Level of education	Open Unemployment Rate Based on Education Level 2024
No/Never attended school/Not graduated & graduated from elementary school	2.32
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	4.11

General High School	7.05
Vocational High School	9.01
Diploma I/II/III	4.83
University	5.25

Source: BPS.com, 2025

According to BPS data in 2024, the open unemployment rate in Indonesia is still quite high, especially among college graduates, which is 5.25%. College graduates should be better prepared with formal education, but in reality many of them are not yet able to meet the skills demands required by the world of work. This shows a mismatch between graduate competencies and the needs of the world of work. The phenomenon of increasing unemployment at the university level is a serious concern in economic development in Indonesia. Things that may be factors in increasing unemployment at the university level include a mismatch between the skills possessed by graduates and the needs of the labor market, rapid technological changes, and lack of work experience during their studies. College graduates who only focus on academic education without strengthening practical skills will often face difficulties in competing in the job market.

According to this research (Maulidiyah et al., 2024) , technological developments are increasingly rapid, especially digital technology. Technology has the ability to meet most human needs. This era of all-electronic use is known as the "digital era", and causes humans to use technology as the main intermediary in their lifestyle. However, we must ensure that technology is used for social welfare. So, to produce high productivity and a workforce that is ready to meet future demands, the skills needed include emotional intelligence, resilience, empathy, creativity, and critical thinking (Poláková et al., 2023) .

Human resources are becoming more qualified with the digital era. Students are a generation born in the digital era (Gen Z) and utilize the sophistication of digital technology. To prepare students for work in the digital era, there are many opportunities they can take, such as helping them develop their knowledge and skills, but there are also challenges that can cause them to fall. These challenges will be faced by students, especially in the final semester, in readiness for work in the digital era.

Further explained by Maulidiyah et al., (2024)that work readiness is a condition in which students have achieved the maturity needed to enter the workforce after graduating from college and not receiving much training. This condition includes physical, mental, and experience maturity that students have accumulated as a basis for work readiness. Because it makes students have strong competitiveness to align themselves with more talented people. Therefore, work ability is important for students. This ability, which includes *soft skills* and *hard skills* , can only be achieved if driven by one's own ability to achieve it, and this drive is known as work motivation.

Soft skills are behaviors and attitudes that are seen in our interactions with different types of people. According to Raihan & Kurnia Nengsih, (2024), prioritizing soft skills as a potential human resource is one of the pillars of an organization's operating system and is very important to achieve its goals. Therefore, the business world must manage its human resources as effectively as possible because every worker must have both *hard skills* and *soft skills* , as well as expertise in technology and financial resources. Meanwhile, hard skills according to Sutianah, (2021) are special technical abilities that are needed for a particular job. In addition, Sutianah, (2021) also explains that *hard skills* are the ability to create something original and immediately considered a hard skill. Technical tests can be used to evaluate hard materials.

This study aims to determine the influence of *soft skills* , *hard skills* and work motivation on the work readiness of final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University, Semarang. By understanding the factors that influence work readiness, it is hoped that universities can develop more effective education and training strategies to improve the competitiveness of graduates in facing the challenges of the digital era and reduce the level of open unemployment among young

people. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of *soft skills, hard skills* , and work motivation on the work readiness of final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University, Semarang.

Hard Skill

According to Maulidiyah et al., (2024) *Hard skills* are defined as academic and technical skills that can be acquired through formal education, such as school, college, and training. To be successful in a particular job, students must have hard skills. If you already understand it, the task can be completed according to the objectives. Given the increasingly sophisticated digital age, students can acquire technical skills other than formal education through internet-based media.

According toRaihan & Kurnia Nengsih, (2024) *Hard Skills* are basically the mastery of science, technology, and technical skills relevant to a particular field of work that are required for a particular job. Hard skills play an important role in the workplace and are needed to get the best results. Researchers use measurements or indicators of *Hard Skills* by Ratuela et al., (2022) , namely 1) Technical skills, 2) Science, 3) Technological science.

Soft Skill

According toDevita Putri, (2024) *Soft skills* are skills and abilities that come from within a person. It can be used not only in formal workplaces, but also in everyday life. It involves emotional intelligence, communication skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, and leadership skills, among others, and other elements. As a provision for the future, *soft skills* are very important for students to have and develop. This is especially true in today's digital era, because the real competition begins when students leave college.

Maulidiyah et al., (2024)states that *soft skills* are everyday life skills that students have when interacting with other people, such as thinking, solving problems, controlling emotions, and so on.

According to Widiyawati et al., (2024), indicators that can be used to evaluate a person's *soft skills* are: 1) *Public speaking* skills , 2) *Problem solving skills* , 3) Desire to learn new things, 4) Adaptability.

Work motivation

According to Anoraga in (Mustikawanto et al., 2022) stated that motivation is a work spirit that arises because of the drive within a person to do and achieve something based on the hopes, goals or ideals that he wants to achieve. In line with Hamzah B. Uno in Maulanada et al., (2024) motivation is a stimulus that arises from within a person to make changes to a condition that is expected to be better.

According to Deswarta et al., (2023) , the indicators of work motivation are: 1) Desire and interest in entering the world of work, 2) Hopes and ideals, 3) Environmental pressure and encouragement, 4) Physiological needs.

Work Readiness

According to Devita Putri, (2024) Work Readiness is a person's condition or situation, including their health and mental development, experience, and physical, as well as the desire to work. According to Mustikawanto et al., (2019), work readiness is an important component of a mature person's performance, which is supported by efforts to improve abilities that include physical, mental, and experiential readiness needed to enter the world of work.

According to (Deswarta et al., 2023) , the following are indicators of work readiness that everyone must have: 1) Have logical and objective considerations, 2) Have a critical attitude, 3) Have the courage to accept responsibility individually, 4) Have the ability to adapt to the environment, 5) Have the ambition to progress and try to keep up with developments in the field of expertise.

Formulation of hypothesis

Damayantie & Kustini, (2022) said that *soft skills* are *Soft Skills* are the most important part of a student outside of formal or technical knowledge. *Soft Skills* are an important skill and attribute today to be able to support the formal skills possessed by a student . The importance of *soft skills* in the world of work is also reinforced by the results of a survey *by the National Association of Colleges and Employers* (NACE), namely that there are 19 abilities needed in the world of work and 16 of the abilities needed are *soft skills* . This shows that *soft skills* need to be considered by students in preparing themselves to enter the world of work.

The results of this study support research from Deswarta et al., (2023) , Podungge et al., (2023) and Widiyawati et al., (2024) which state that *soft skills* have a positive and significant effect on work readiness. Based on the statement above, the hypothesis in this study is as follows:

H1: *Soft skills* have a positive and significant effect on work readiness

According to Novita et al., (2023) hard skills are the mastery of science, technology, and technical skills related to a particular field of expertise. Hard skills are technical skills that are inherent in a profession and are an important factor in a person's work readiness. High mastery of hard skills allows someone to carry out tasks more effectively, so that they can contribute to achieving organizational or company goals. Graduates who have hard skills tend to be more ready to compete in the world of work than those who do not have them. This is crucial because competition in the world of work is increasingly open, requiring prospective workers to have relevant qualifications and expertise certifications.

The results of this study support research from Aprianus Telaumbanua, (2024) , Devita Putri, (2024) and Deswarta et al., (2023) that hard skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness, that the better the *hard skills* possessed by students, the better the work readiness of students and vice versa, the worse the *hard skills* possessed by students, the worse their work readiness. Based on the statement above, the hypothesis in this study is:

H2: *Hard skills* have a positive and significant effect on work readiness

Motivation is the drive that makes someone try to achieve a goal or take a certain action, which usually comes from personal needs, desires, or goals Astuti & Amri, (2024) . In the context of the world of work, the higher a person's level of motivation, the higher their work readiness. Strong motivation encourages individuals to be more proactive, adaptable, and improve their competence, so that they can face challenges in the world of work better.

The results of this study support research from Azky & Mulyana, (2024) , Deswarta et al., (2023) and Maulanada et al., (2024) which stated that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness, this is that individuals who have high work motivation tend to be more prepared to face the world of work, both in terms of technical skills and the ability to adapt to the work environment. Strong motivation encourages individuals to increase productivity, take the initiative. Based on the statement above, the hypothesis in this study is:

H3: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative analysis method with data collected through questionnaires to all Udinus students. Respondents were searched online via Google Form and the scale used was *the Likert scale* . The sampling technique used was *non-probability* sampling with the method being *purposive sampling* . The *purposive sampling method* is sampling using several specific considerations according to the criteria, here are the criteria: 1) Active students of Dian Nuswantoro University, 2) Final year students.

This study uses the *Cochran formula* to take samples due to the large population. Here is the calculation:

$$n = \left(\frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}\right)$$

$$n = \left(\frac{(1,96^2)x(0,5)x(1-0,5)}{0,1^2}\right)$$

$$n = 96,04 = 100 \; dibulatkan$$

Based on the sample calculation , the sample used in this study was 100 respondents. The analysis method used multiple regression analysis techniques. In this research, the data analysis process was carried out through the IBM SPSS Statistics 27 program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Data

Categories for respondents in this study include gender, age, and study program of Dian Nuswantoro University students, with the number of respondents set at 100 respondents. Description of respondent characteristics based on gender is dominated by women with a percentage of 61% . Respondent characteristics based on age are dominated by students aged 21 years with a percentage of 50%. Respondent characteristics in student majors are dominated by management majors by 71%.

Validity Test

This test aims to evaluate the adequate level of validity contained in the statements in the questionnaire. A questionnaire is considered valid if the calculated correlation (r count) is greater than the table correlation value (r table).

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Variables	Item	Rcount	Rtable	Information
Soft Skills (X1)	X1.1	0.807	0.196	VALID
	X1.2	0.824	0.196	VALID
	X1.3	0.778	0.196	VALID
	X1.4	0.812	0.196	VALID
Hard Skills (X2)	X2.1	0.860	0.196	VALID
	X2.2	0.839	0.196	VALID
	X2.3	0.816	0.196	VALID
Work Motivation (X3)	X3.1	0.857	0.196	VALID
	X3.2	0.881	0.196	VALID
	X3.3	0.760	0.196	VALID
	X3.4	0.865	0.196	VALID
Work Readiness (Y)	Y1.1	0.851	0.196	VALID
	Y1.2	0.839	0.196	VALID
	Y1.3	0.849	0.196	VALID
	Y1.4	0.856	0.196	VALID
	Y1.5	0.809	0.196	VALID

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the above test, *the soft skill* , *hard skill* , and work motivation variables are considered valid because the calculated r value is higher than the table r, namely 0.196.

Reliability Test

Reliability testing aims to assess the extent to which the measuring instrument is able to provide consistent results in measuring the same concept. If the Cronbach's Alpha value for each variable exceeds 0.6, it indicates that the measuring instrument in this research can be considered reliable.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Soft Skills (X1)	0.819	Reliable
Hard Skills (X2)	0.788	Reliable
Work Motivation (X3)	0.855	Reliable
Work Readiness (Y)	0.896	Reliable

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Classical Assumption Test
Normality Test

Normality testing to determine whether research data is normally distributed or not, if the significance value > 0.05, then the data is considered normally distributed.

Table 4. Normality Test Results

One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		100
Normal Parameters	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.39326326
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.086
	Positive	.080
	Negative	-.086
Test Statistics		.086
Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)		.065

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the table above, it shows that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.065 > 0.05. So it can be concluded that the data in this study is normally distributed.

Multicollinearity Test

To see whether there is a relationship between the independent factors of the regression model, a Multicollinearity Test is carried out. There must be a VIF rating of less than 10 and a tolerance number close to 1 or greater than 0.10.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variables	Collinearity Statistics		Information
	Tolerance	VIF	
Soft Skill (X1)	,367	2,728	No The occurrence Multicollinearity

Hard Skill (X2)	, 435	2,299	No The occurrence Multicollinearity
Work motivation (X3)	, 391	2,559	No The occurrence Multicollinearity

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the above test , it reveals that each research variable in the regression model has a VIF value of less than 10 and a tolerance value approaching 1 or greater than 0.10. So there is no symptom of multicollinearity.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The purpose of the Heteroscedasticity Test is to check whether the variance of one observed residual is different from the variance of other measurements.
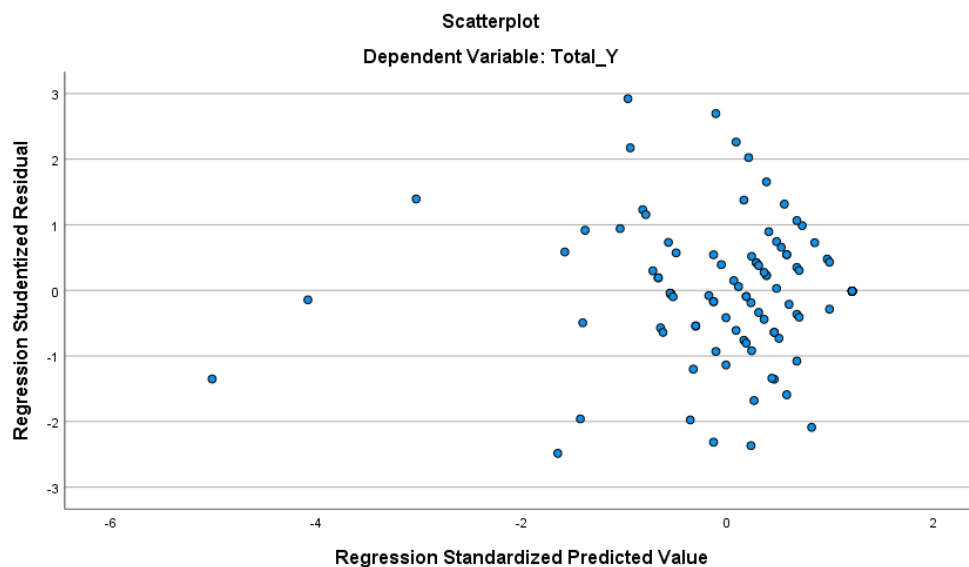

Figure 2. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

It can be seen in the scatterplot that the points are spread randomly both above and below the number 0 (zero) on the Y axis and there is no clear pattern in the distribution of the data. This shows that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model. So this model has met the heteroscedasticity assumption test.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Next, the author applies multiple linear regression techniques to analyze how the soft skill variables (X1), hard skills (X2), work motivation (X3) influence the dependent variable, namely work readiness (Y).

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis Test Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.299	1.107		.270	.788
	Soft Skill _X1	.340	.096	.266	3,540	.001
	Hard Skills_X2	.827	.114	.499	7,250	.000

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		.276	.090	.223	3,071	.003
Work Motivation _X3						

Based on the output above, the a value of 0.299 functions as a constant value or condition when the work readiness variable has not been affected by other variables. It can be concluded that the Soft Skill variable (X1) has a coefficient value of 0.340, Hard Skill (X2) has a coefficient value of 0.827, and Work Motivation (X3) has a coefficient value of 0.276, all three variables have a positive and significant influence on students' work readiness.

Goodness of Fit Test
Model Feasibility Test (F Test)

The F test is used to test the significance of the equation that determines the level of impact of independent variables on dependent variables simultaneously. In addition, the F test is also used to determine whether this research model is stated as good or fit.

Table 7. F Test Results

ANOVA [a]						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	777,383	3	259,128	129,444	.000 [b]
	Residual	192.177	96	2.002		
	Total	969,560	99			
a. Dependent Variable : Total_Y						
b. Predictions: (Constant), Total_X3, Total_X2_Total_X1						

Based on the output above, the significance value is 0.000 <0.05, and the calculated F value is 129.444> F table (2.700). It can be concluded that there is a significant influence of Soft Skill (X1), Hard Skill (X2), Work Motivation (X3) simultaneously on Work Readiness (Y). and the regression model is considered satisfactory and feasible to be used as a research model.

Determination Coefficient Test (R^2)

The determination coefficient test was carried out to determine the level of determination or influence of the Soft Skill, Hard Skill, and Work Motivation variables on Work Readiness.

Table 8 Results of Determination Coefficient Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.895 [a]	.802	.796	1.41487
a. Predictors: (Constant), X3, X1, X2				
b. Dependent Variables: Y				

Based on the table above, it shows that there is an Adjusted R Square of 0.796. This value indicates 79.6% that the research model can explain the influence of Soft Skill, Hard Skill, and Work Motivation on Work Readiness by 79.6%. While the remaining 20.4% is explained by other factors not included in this research model.

Hypothesis Testing
T-Test (Partial Test)

This test aims to assess the extent to which the dependent variable is partially influenced by the independent variable. A significant influence is considered to occur in variables with a significance value (p-value) of less than 0.05. Here are the output results:

Table 9. T-Test Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.299	1.107		.270	.788
Soft Skills _X1	.340	.096	.266	3,540	.001
Hard Skills_X2	.827	.114	.499	7,250	.000
Work Motivation _X3	.276	.090	.223	3,071	.003

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on the output above, with a sample (t-table = 1.984), the soft skill variable (X1) with a t-count of 3.540 > 1.984 and a significance value of 0.001 < 0.05 that soft skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness, For the hard skill variable (X2) has a t-count value of 7.250 > 1.984, and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05, then hard skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness, and the work motivation variable (X3) with a t-count value of 3.071 > 1.984 and a significance value of 0.003 < 0.05, then work motivation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness.

Discussion

1. The Influence of Soft Skills on Job Readiness

According to the results of the *t- test* , soft skills have a positive and significant effect on the work readiness of final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University. This is evidenced by the *t-count value* of 3.540> *t-table* 1.984 and a significance value of 0.001 <0.05. This finding indicates that the higher the soft skills possessed by an individual, the higher the level of work readiness. Soft skills in final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University are supported by various activities outside of lectures, such as involvement in student association organizations and external campus organizations. These activities contribute to developing interpersonal skills and personal character that support work effectiveness, such as communication skills, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving skills, empathy, and time management.

The results of this study are in line with research by Deswarta et al., (2023) and Setiarini et al., (2022) that soft skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness, this means that college graduates who master soft skills will find it easier to win competition in the world of work, adapt faster, and ultimately succeed in their careers.

2. The Influence of Hard Skills on Job Readiness

According to the results of the *t- test* , hard skills have a positive and significant effect on the work readiness of final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University. This is evidenced by the *t-count value* of 7.250> *t-table* 1.984, and a significance value of 0.000 <0.05. These findings indicate that hard skills are one of the important aspects that influence the quality and readiness of the workforce. Final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University have various hard skills such as abilities in the field of information technology (eg coding), data analysis, foreign language proficiency, and professional training and

certification organized by the campus. These various skills directly contribute to improving their work readiness when entering the professional world.

The results of this study are in line with research by Ratuela et al., (2022) and Telaumbanua & Telaumbanua, (2024) that hard skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness, this indicates that the higher a person's mastery of hard skills, the greater their readiness to enter the world of work. Hard skills that include technical skills, mastery of technology, and the ability to complete specific tasks in certain fields are the main factors that increase the competitiveness of graduates in the world of work.

3. The Influence of Work Motivation on Work Readiness

According to the results of the *t- test* , work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the work readiness of final semester students at Dian Nuswantoro University. This is evidenced by the *t-count value* of 3.071> *t-table* 1.984 and a significance value of 0.003 <0.05. This finding indicates that the higher the work motivation of students, the higher their readiness to enter the workforce. Work motivation in final semester students can be seen from their enthusiasm in completing their final assignments, their desire to take internships or job training, looking for job vacancy information, and their willingness to continue learning and this motivation is also influenced by the drive to be financially independent, gain work experience, and the hope of making a real contribution to the family.

The results of this study are in line with research by Deswarta et al., (2023) and Wibowo & Nugroho, (2021) that motivation is an encouragement that arises from stimulation from within or from outside to make changes from a condition to the expected condition and efforts to achieve goals. The motivation that exists in students will affect the success of achieving goals.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been analyzed, the variables of soft skills, hard skills, and work motivation have a positive and significant influence on the work readiness of final year students at Dian Nuswantoro University. Soft skills have the highest influence in influencing the work readiness of final year students at Dian Nuswantoro University, hard skills have the second highest influence in influencing the work readiness of final year students at Dian Nuswantoro University. And the variable work motivation has the smallest influence in influencing the work readiness of final year students at Dian Nuswantoro University.

Suggestions for future research, it is recommended to develop a model that examines the influence between soft skill, hard skill, and work motivation variables in increasing work readiness by considering the *Adjusted R Square value* of 79.6%. This shows that 20.4% of the variability in work readiness is explained by other factors that have not been studied in this study. Therefore, further research is recommended to include additional variables such as work experience, professional networks, job training, or psychological factors such as self-confidence and resilience, which also have the potential to influence students' work readiness.

In addition, the research object can be expanded not only limited to final semester students at universities, but also include high school students (SMA) or other vocational educational institutions, in order to obtain wider data coverage .

The data collection method in this study only used a questionnaire, which limited direct communication with the research subjects (students) to dig deeper and more accurate information. Therefore, for further research it is recommended to add other data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and direct observation, so that the data obtained is richer and describes a more comprehensive condition.

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