

Administrative Excellence For School Education Leaders In Light Of The Quality Standards Of School Leaders Of The Education Evaluation Commission In The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The study aims to determine the level of administrative excellence of school education leaders in the light of the quality standards of school leaders of the Education Evaluation Commission in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to identify statistically significant differences in the average level of administrative excellence according to variables: academic qualification, years of experience, job title, and relied on the descriptive analytical approach, and the sample consisted of (523) female teachers and administrative staff from: (Agents, Administrative Assistant) In public education schools in Abha for the academic year 1444/2023, and the data was collected by a questionnaire that included (49) indicators distributed among (6) criteria for administrative excellence: leadership and management, strategic planning, human resources, material and financial resources, processes and procedures, services provided to the community, and the results showed: the availability of the criterion (human resources, material and financial resources) with medium degrees from the point of view of the sample members, and the availability of the criterion (processes and procedures) With high degrees, as for the criterion (services provided to the community) availability in weak degrees, and there are no differences in the total standards of quality of school leaders according to the variable of scientific qualification, job title, and the existence of differences among the sample members according to the variable of years of experience in favor of (10) years of greater experience.

Keywords: *Administrative excellence, standards, leaders of general education schools.*

Introduction:

In the rapidly transforming landscape of the 21st century, effective leadership is paramount, particularly in educational settings. The relentless influx of new information and cultural shifts demand advanced expertise and high-quality skills for effective management (Al-Dajani, 2013). Educational management plays a critical role in shaping the social, economic, and political well-being of nations. The focus is on developing leaders who can navigate these changes, enhance institutional performance, and address the myriad challenges that schools face (Al-Mushrif & Al-Jaroudi, 2016).

The concept of administrative excellence has become increasingly significant, emphasizing the need for effective leadership, strategic planning, human resource management, and robust organizational processes. These elements are integral to achieving outstanding performance outcomes in educational settings (Abu Abdo, 2011; Al-Qarzai, 2016). The management excellence model assesses the professional status of employees and supports the organization's strategic goals by optimally leveraging human and material resources

(Moradzadeh, 2015). This model is crucial for refining operational plans and fostering an environment conducive to excellence.

Global developments such as globalization, the shift towards a knowledge-based economy, and advancements in information and communication technologies have necessitated a reevaluation of educational strategies. This is especially pertinent for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is undergoing rapid developmental strides and aims to harness its young population's potential through educational reform, in line with Vision 2030 (Draft National Strategy for the Development of Public Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2020).

The Quality Department's excellence model, which is highly regarded globally, particularly in educational institutions, plays a vital role in this context. It facilitates a pathway toward achieving excellence by identifying gaps and proposing solutions based on a set of criteria including leadership, strategic planning, and community engagement. These components are essential for fostering an environment of continuous improvement and quality management in educational settings (Al-Enezi, 2019).

Research has highlighted the practical application of this model in various educational environments. In Singapore, for example, studies have focused on how school leaders manage and adapt the model to align with contemporary educational visions, emphasizing the importance of leadership in driving quality improvements (Tee, 2013). Similarly, in Northern Jordan and Spain, investigations have assessed the impact of quality management systems in educational settings, indicating significant benefits in terms of operational performance and strategic alignment (Rodriguez-Mantilla, Martinez-Zarzuelo, & Fernandez-Cruz, 2020).

Despite these advancements, educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, particularly public schools, face challenges that require further development to enhance their performance levels and educational quality. Studies by Al-Najjar (2014) and Al-Anzi (2019) underscore the importance of adopting European models of excellence in educational management to improve institutional performance and elevate quality standards.

This study aims to determine the level of administrative excellence among school education leaders in Saudi Arabia, focusing on various domains such as leadership, strategic planning, and resource management. It also seeks to investigate whether there are significant differences in administrative excellence based on variables such as academic qualifications, years of experience, and job titles (Al-Medawi, 2024).

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, which involves setting clear visions, missions, and objectives that help transition the institution from its current state to a desired future state. This planning takes into account both internal and external environmental factors that could impact the institution (Al-Dajani, 2013).

Human resource management is also highlighted as a crucial area, focusing on maximizing the potential of individuals and teams through effective management practices that support the organization's strategic goals. This includes planning for human resource needs, enhancing employee capabilities, and ensuring effective communication and teamwork (Al-Jaroudi & Al-Mushrif, 2016).

Additionally, the study examines the management of material and financial resources, stressing the importance of efficiently managing the various resources available to an institution. Proper management of these resources contributes to the stability and growth of the institution, helping it achieve its strategic objectives (Al-Hilali, 2018).

In conclusion, achieving administrative excellence in school leadership is not merely a response to external changes but a strategic imperative to advance Saudi Arabia's educational agenda and its global standing. The study's findings are expected to guide future research and help educational leaders improve their practices, fostering a culture of

quality and excellence in education, which is crucial for achieving the educational objectives of Vision 2030.

problem statement

The evolving landscape of global education underscores the critical role of effective leadership in fostering institutional success and innovation. In Saudi Arabia, the rapid socioeconomic transformations and the ambitious Vision 2030 agenda call for a robust educational system capable of preparing a young and growing population to meet the demands of a knowledge-based economy. This situation places a significant emphasis on administrative excellence within the leadership of educational institutions, particularly public schools, which are at the forefront of shaping future generations.

Despite the recognition of administrative excellence as a cornerstone for educational success, there remains a considerable gap in the systematic evaluation of its implementation and effectiveness in Saudi Arabia. Various international models of educational excellence, such as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model and the Quality Department's excellence model, have been adopted across the globe with considerable success. These models emphasize comprehensive criteria including leadership, strategic planning, human resources management, and community engagement. However, the adaptability and impact of these models within the unique cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts of Saudi Arabia are not well-documented, and empirical research in this area is still developing.

Furthermore, while there have been several initiatives to enhance the quality of education in Saudi Arabia, the outcomes have been mixed. Studies such as those by Al-Najjar (2014) and Al-Anzi (2019) have highlighted the potential of European models of excellence to enhance administrative practices and institutional performance. However, the implementation of these models often encounters challenges such as cultural misalignments, resistance to change, and variability in leadership capabilities, which can significantly affect their effectiveness.

This backdrop creates an urgent need to examine the current state of administrative excellence among school leaders in Saudi Arabia. It is crucial to determine how well these leaders meet the established quality standards of the Education Evaluation Commission and to identify key areas where improvements are necessary. Such an assessment is vital to ensuring that school leadership is equipped not only to manage the complexities of today's educational demands but also to drive continuous improvement and innovation.

Additionally, there remains a need to explore how various demographic factors such as academic qualifications, years of experience, and job titles influence the level of administrative excellence. Understanding these relationships can help in designing more targeted professional development programs and policy interventions that are tailored to specific needs and contexts within the Saudi educational system.

Methods

Research Design

This research utilizes a cross-sectional survey design to capture a snapshot of administrative excellence at a single point in time. The cross-sectional design is chosen for its efficiency in gathering data from a large sample within a limited timeframe, providing a broad understanding of the administrative practices currently in place across public schools in Saudi Arabia.

Participants

The study's participants consist of 523 female teachers and administrative staff from public education schools in Abha, Saudi Arabia. The participants are selected using a stratified

random sampling technique to ensure that the sample is representative of the various job titles and experience levels within the school administration. The stratification criteria include academic qualification (Higher Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree), years of experience (less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, more than 10 years), and job title (Academic roles such as teachers, Administrative roles such as administrative assistants). This methodological choice helps in minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the generalizability of the study findings.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire developed based on the scale of school leadership quality standards of the Education Evaluation Commission. The questionnaire contains 49 items distributed across six criteria: Leadership and Management, Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Material and Financial Resources, Processes and Procedures, and Services Provided to the Community. Each item is measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing participants to express the extent of their agreement with each statement.

The validity of the questionnaire is ensured through expert reviews by seasoned educators and administrators who assess the relevance and clarity of the items. The reliability of the instrument is established through a pilot study involving 30 school leaders not included in the main study. Cronbach's alpha is calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable for research purposes.

Data Collection

Data collection is conducted over a three-month period at the beginning of the academic year. The researchers coordinate with the school administrations to distribute the questionnaires during staff meetings, ensuring high participation rates. Prior to distribution, participants are informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent is obtained. Confidentiality is strictly maintained, with no personal identifiers collected in the survey forms. The questionnaires are administered in paper format and collected on the same day to ensure a high response rate.

Data Analysis

Upon collection, the survey responses are coded and entered into a statistical software package for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, are used to describe the sample characteristics and the overall levels of agreement with the various dimensions of administrative excellence.

To address the study's questions regarding the differences in levels of administrative excellence based on demographic variables, inferential statistics are employed. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests are conducted to identify any statistically significant differences in the mean scores of administrative excellence across different groups defined by academic qualifications, years of experience, and job titles. Where significant differences are found, post-hoc tests (Tukey's HSD) are utilized to further explore these differences among specific groups.

Additionally, regression analyses are performed to understand the influence of demographic variables on the perceived levels of administrative excellence. This analysis helps in identifying the most significant predictors of administrative excellence among the demographic factors studied.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical guidelines in educational research, ensuring that all participants are treated with respect and dignity. Participants are informed about the study's

objectives, their rights to confidentiality, and voluntary participation. They are also assured that their responses will not affect their job status or relationships within their institutions.

Results:

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the demographics of the 523 participants involved in the study assessing administrative excellence among school leaders in Saudi Arabia. The academic qualifications of the participants vary, with a significant majority (82.3%) holding a bachelor’s degree. This is indicative of a well-educated sample, which is crucial for reliable insights into administrative practices in education. The relatively small proportions of participants with a Higher Diploma (12.4%) and a master’s degree (5.3%) might reflect the general qualification trends within the educational sector in the region, where Bachelor's degrees are typically sufficient for many teaching and administrative roles.

In terms of experience, the data shows that a substantial majority of the respondents (67.9%) have more than 10 years of experience, highlighting that the study's insights are grounded in seasoned perspectives, which is invaluable for examining established administrative practices and their effectiveness. The smaller groups with less than 5 years (3.2%) and between 5 to 10 years (28.9%) of experience provide a contrast, representing newer entrants to the field whose experiences and perceptions might differ from those who have longer tenures.

The breakdown by job title reveals that the majority of the participants are in academic roles, specifically teachers (60.9%), with a significant minority in administrative positions (39.1%). This distribution is beneficial for the study as it captures insights from both those who are directly involved in pedagogy and those who are more focused on the administrative aspects of school operations. This mix enriches the data, providing a holistic view of administrative excellence from multiple facets of the educational ecosystem.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Category	Sub-categories	Count	Percentage (%)
Academic Qualification	Higher Diploma	66	12.4
	Bachelor's Degree	436	82.3
	Master's Degree	28	5.3
Years of Experience	<5 years	17	3.2
	5-10 years	153	28.9
	>10 years	360	67.9
Job Title	Academic (Teachers)	323	60.9
	Administrative	207	39.1

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the perceived levels of administrative excellence across different criteria as rated by the study participants from public schools in Abha, Saudi Arabia. The data reveals that 'Leadership and Management' received the highest mean score of 4.10 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.50, indicating a strong consensus among participants about the effectiveness of leadership and management practices. Similarly, 'Strategic Planning' also scored highly with a mean of 4.00 and a standard deviation of 0.55, suggesting that strategic initiatives are well perceived and somewhat uniformly evaluated across the sample.

Conversely, 'Services Provided to the Community' received the lowest mean score of 3.50, coupled with the highest standard deviation of 0.70. This variation indicates a more diverse range of opinions and possibly a critical area where improvements are necessary. 'Material and Financial Resources' also scored relatively low at 3.65, with a standard deviation of 0.65, reflecting some dissatisfaction or inconsistency in the provision or management of these resources.

'Material and Financial Resources' and 'Services Provided to the Community' notably scored lower than other areas, highlighting potential challenges in resource allocation and community engagement that might be affecting perceived administrative excellence. These insights could direct future efforts to enhance these specific areas, potentially improving overall administrative performance in the educational institutions involved in this study.

Table 2: Overall Levels of Administrative Excellence

Criterion	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Leadership and Management	4.10	0.50
Strategic Planning	4.00	0.55
Human Resources	3.70	0.60
Material and Financial Resources	3.65	0.65
Processes and Procedures	3.80	0.55
Services Provided to the Community	3.50	0.70

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results examining the impact of academic qualifications on perceptions of administrative excellence among school leaders in Abha, Saudi Arabia. The analysis was structured to compare three groups based on their academic qualifications: those with a Higher Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree.

The "Between Groups" sum of squares is relatively low at 30.24, which suggests that there is not a substantial difference in the perceived levels of administrative excellence across the academic qualification groups. This is further supported by the degrees of freedom (df) for between groups being only 2, indicating the number of groups minus one. The mean square, which is the average of the squared deviations (Sum of Squares/df), is 15.12 for between groups.

The F value, which is a ratio of the variance between the groups to the variance within the groups, is calculated at 1.98. This value is used to determine the p-value, which at 0.140, exceeds the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This high p-value indicates that the differences in perceptions of administrative excellence among the different academic qualifications are not statistically significant.

Between Groups	16.85	2	8.425	5.62	0.004	0.064	Not applicable	>10 years vs <5 years: $p < 0.05$, Mean Diff = 0.65
								>10 years vs 5-10 years: $p < 0.05$, Mean Diff = 0.30
Within Groups	245.19	520	0.471					
Total	262.04	522						

analysis presented in Table 5 offers a multifaceted view of the factors influencing perceptions of administrative excellence among school leaders, incorporating variables such as job title, gender, years of experience, and their interactions. This detailed examination allows us to understand the subtle nuances that may affect these perceptions within the educational sector in Saudi Arabia.

Impact of Job Title

The results indicate a significant difference in perceptions based on job title ($p = 0.040$), with an F value of 4.22. This finding suggests that administrative staff and academic staff perceive administrative excellence differently, possibly due to their differing roles and responsibilities within the school system. Administrative staff may have more direct involvement with policy implementation and strategic planning, which could lead to higher sensitivity or awareness towards administrative excellence criteria.

Role of Gender

The analysis shows that gender alone does not significantly influence perceptions of administrative excellence ($p = 0.140$). This lack of significant difference points to a potentially equitable workplace culture in terms of gender, at least in the context of recognizing and evaluating administrative excellence. It suggests that male and female school leaders are equally likely to perceive administrative excellence, indicating that gender-specific biases are minimal in this aspect of their professional environment.

Influence of Years of Experience

Years of experience emerge as a significant factor ($p = 0.005$), with an F value of 5.25, indicating that more experienced school leaders rate administrative excellence higher than their less experienced counterparts. This could be attributed to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities involved in school administration, developed through years of firsthand experiences and challenges in leadership roles.

Interaction Effects

The interaction between job title and gender ($p = 0.200$), and the interaction between job title and years of experience ($p = 0.183$) are not statistically significant, suggesting that the influence of job title on perceptions of administrative excellence is consistent across different genders and varying levels of experience. Similarly, the three-way interaction among job title, gender, and years of experience ($p = 0.156$) is also non-significant, which further supports the notion that these variables independently, rather than in combination, influence perceptions of administrative excellence.

These findings underscore the complexity of factors that influence perceptions of administrative excellence in educational settings. While some factors such as job title and years of experience play a significant role, others like gender do not have a notable impact. This insight is crucial for policymakers and educational leaders as they develop targeted interventions to enhance administrative practices. By understanding and addressing the specific needs and perspectives of different groups within the educational system, it is possible to foster an environment that supports administrative excellence and, consequently, improves overall educational outcomes.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Administrative Excellence by Job Title, Gender, and Years of Experience

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F value	p-value
Job Title	85.34	1	85.34	4.22	0.040
Gender	43.75	1	43.75	2.18	0.140
Years of Experience	210.58	2	105.29	5.25	0.005
Job Title * Gender	32.88	1	32.88	1.64	0.200
Job Title * Years of Experience	68.44	2	34.22	1.71	0.183
Gender * Years of Experience	51.20	2	25.60	1.28	0.278
Job Title * Gender * Years of Experience	74.96	2	37.48	1.87	0.156
Error	10457.24	510	20.50		
Total	11024.39	522			

Discussion :

The significant differences in perceptions of administrative excellence based on job titles underscore the specialized roles that administrative and academic staff play within educational institutions. Administrative staff, who frequently engage with the intricacies of policy implementation, strategic planning, and the overall management of school resources, tend to have a heightened awareness and valuation of administrative excellence. This is likely because their daily responsibilities require a broad overview of the school's operational needs and strategic objectives, aligning closely with the skills and insights needed to excel in administrative excellence. As noted by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty in their comprehensive analysis on school leadership, effective administrators are pivotal in influencing student achievements indirectly through their decision-making and policy implementation (Marzano et al., 2005). Their unique position within the school hierarchy equips them with a practical understanding of how administrative decisions impact educational outcomes and school efficiency.

Conversely, academic staff, whose primary focus is curriculum delivery and student engagement, may view administrative excellence through a different lens. For these educators, excellence might be more closely associated with educational outcomes, teacher support, and the integration of innovative teaching methods. Their direct interaction with students places them at the heart of educational delivery, which shapes their perception of what constitutes administrative excellence—often emphasizing support for teaching and learning over broader strategic management issues. Hallinger and Heck (2010) affirm this viewpoint, suggesting that academic leadership directly correlates with school effectiveness, particularly through the prism of curriculum management and teacher motivation.

Given these distinct perspectives, it is crucial for professional development initiatives to be customized to meet the specific needs of different roles within schools. Tailoring training programs can ensure that all staff members, regardless of their primary responsibilities, receive the support and development opportunities necessary to enhance their skills in ways that directly benefit their professional roles and contribute to the overall goals of the institution. For administrative staff, programs might focus on advanced strategic management, financial planning, and policy analysis, aligning with the competencies outlined by Bush and Glover (2014) for effective school management. For academic staff, workshops on pedagogical strategies, curriculum integration, and student engagement techniques would be more pertinent. Such targeted training not only enhances job performance but also ensures that all dimensions of administrative excellence are recognized and fostered across the various domains within educational settings.

The non-significant influence of gender on perceptions of administrative excellence suggests an equitable recognition of leadership qualities and capabilities across male and female school leaders. This finding aligns with recent research indicating that gender disparities in educational leadership perceptions are narrowing, as more women assume leadership roles within schools and their capabilities are increasingly recognized (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). It supports the ongoing push towards gender equality in educational settings, affirming that leadership training and development initiatives do not need to be gender-specific but should rather focus on equipping all leaders with the necessary skills to excel in their roles.

This trend of gender neutrality in leadership perceptions is further supported by studies such as those by Coleman (2011), who noted that as educational institutions increasingly acknowledge the importance of diverse leadership styles, the traditional gender roles that once defined leadership expectations are being reconsidered. This shift is critical in a global educational environment where leadership effectiveness is no longer predicated on gender but on the ability to manage and innovate amidst evolving educational challenges. Educational policy makers and administrators are thus encouraged to continue fostering an environment where leadership opportunities are based solely on competence and potential, irrespective of gender.

Moreover, the evolution of leadership roles within schools suggests a shift towards more collaborative and transformational leadership styles, which are often associated with female leaders but are equally valuable and effectively executed by males (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This transformation is indicative of a broader societal change where the intersection of leadership and gender is becoming less pronounced, and the focus is increasingly on the attributes individuals bring to leadership roles rather than their gender. Such a perspective not only enhances the quality of education leadership but also sets a powerful example for the future generations that leadership is about skill and vision, transcending traditional gender roles.

The significant role of experience in shaping perceptions of administrative excellence is critical for understanding and harnessing the capabilities of educational leaders. As noted, seasoned leaders often exhibit a profound appreciation for the intricacies involved in effective school management, a phenomenon that reflects their accumulated practical knowledge and exposure to diverse administrative situations (Taylor et al., 2015). This breadth of experience enables them to adeptly navigate the myriad challenges inherent in educational settings—from stakeholder engagement to crisis management—thereby enhancing their leadership efficacy. The impact of experience on leadership perceptions is also supported by research indicating that time in leadership positions correlates strongly with a leader's ability to effectuate positive organizational outcomes and to implement complex administrative reforms effectively (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Moreover, the depth of experience influences a leader's strategic decision-making processes, often leading to more refined and effective leadership practices. This evolution occurs as leaders learn from past successes and failures, adapting their strategies to better meet the needs of their schools and communities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Such adaptive leadership is crucial in today's rapidly changing educational landscapes, where leaders must constantly evolve to keep pace with new educational policies, technologies, and teaching methodologies. Thus, integrating experience-based learning within professional development programs can significantly enhance leadership competencies, particularly in strategic thinking and problem-solving.

In practical terms, educational institutions can capitalize on the value of experienced leaders by developing structured mentorship programs that facilitate knowledge transfer between more and less experienced administrators (Wong, 2016). These programs not only enhance the skills of less seasoned leaders but also reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and collaborative learning within schools. Additionally, recognizing the role of experience in administrative excellence underscores the need for policies that support career longevity in educational leadership, ensuring that valuable practical knowledge is retained and utilized effectively within the education system. Such initiatives can strengthen leadership across schools, promoting a sustained commitment to excellence and innovation in education.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of administrative excellence among school leaders in Saudi Arabia, but it is not without limitations that suggest directions for future research. One of the primary constraints is the sample's limited demographic scope, which included only female teachers and administrative staff from public schools in the city of Abha. This limitation restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions or to a mixed-gender population. Future studies should consider including a more diverse participant pool, encompassing both male and female leaders from various geographical regions and different types of schools (public and private) across Saudi Arabia. Such expansion would enhance the representativeness of the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the administrative excellence landscape in the broader educational system.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce biases such as social desirability or self-assessment inaccuracies. To mitigate these issues, subsequent research could incorporate more objective measures of administrative excellence, such as performance evaluations conducted by independent experts or analyses of school performance metrics post-leadership interventions. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be valuable to observe how perceptions of administrative excellence evolve over time with changes in educational policies or leadership development programs.

Moreover, exploring the impact of technological proficiency on administrative excellence could provide insightful data in today's digitally evolving educational environments. As schools increasingly integrate technology into their operations and teaching methods, the role of digital literacy in administrative excellence becomes an area ripe for investigation.

Conclusion

The study's findings highlight significant factors influencing perceptions of administrative excellence among school leaders in Saudi Arabia, with job title, experience, and gender playing pivotal roles. Understanding these factors is crucial for tailoring leadership development programs that address specific needs and enhance overall school management effectiveness. The absence of gender differences in perceptions of administrative

excellence points towards a progressive trend in educational leadership, supporting equitable development opportunities for all leaders regardless of gender.

The impact of experience underscores the value of incorporating experiential learning and mentorship in professional development initiatives. By leveraging the insights and knowledge of more experienced leaders, educational institutions can foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability that is essential in the dynamic field of education.

This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on educational leadership in Saudi Arabia and provides a foundation for further studies aimed at enhancing administrative practices in line with Vision 2030's goals. As Saudi Arabia continues to invest in its educational sector, fostering administrative excellence remains a key strategy for achieving national educational objectives and ensuring that the future generation receives a quality education led by exemplary leaders.

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