

## **The Influence of Characteristics on Job Satisfaction in the Call Centers in Malaysian Private Institutions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Today's organizational is predominantly dynamic that pose enormous opportunities and challenges to the corporate practitioners and policy makers. In the study, the organizational culture is defined as the element of shaping the characteristics of job satisfaction and job performance that is developed over time. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between aspects of job characteristics and job satisfaction of employees working in the call centers in Malaysian private institutions. The study used quantitative approach design to collect data. The target population was consisting of 13 call centers operating in Malaysia. The researcher used non-probability sampling approach using the purposive and convenience sampling technique for quantitative research. The data was gathered using questionnaires which were filled and 350 completed questionnaires were returned. The R value represents the simple correlation and is 0.394, which indicates a moderate degree of correlation, while the R<sup>2</sup> value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, job satisfaction, can be explained by the independent variable, autonomy which is, 15.5% can be explained. In addition, the table shows that the value of (F) is 58.493 with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, meaning that the regression model is significant and we can assume that there is a linear relationship between the variables in our model.

*Keywords: Call Center Employees, Job Satisfaction, Performance, Job Performance, Private Institutions*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

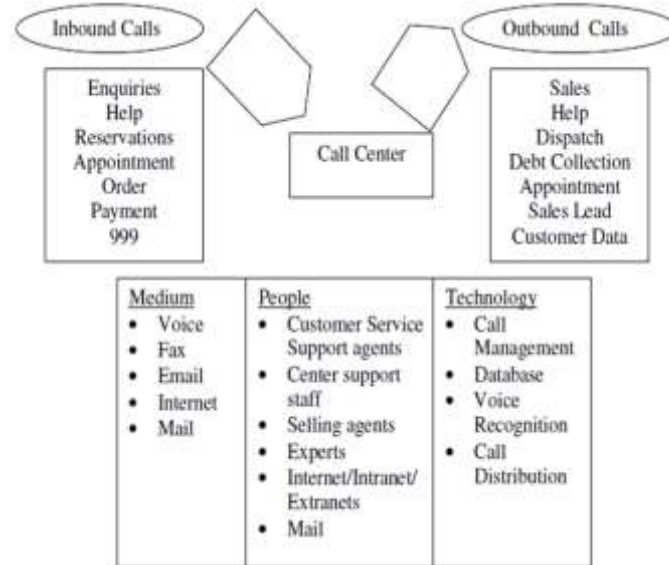
In the field of industrial and organizational psychology, research on job satisfaction has been one of the most intensive subjects. Until the mid of the 1930s, research on job satisfaction did not really exist as a formal area of research. Since then by 1972, over 3000 studies on job satisfaction have been published (Locke, 1976). It has been found from the theories that there are a number of factors playing an important role in leading to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction among the employees of the organizations have been argued since with the appearance of (Maslow, 1943), and since then researchers have been investigating deeply to the matter with various analytical studies. (Conley, Bacharach, & Bauer, 1989), Have indicated regarding the job satisfaction in the organization, as a component of the work environment and one of the main factors determining organizational climate. In addition, (Goldwyn, 2008), have stated that "job satisfaction is viewed as a decisive factor as to the general efficiency of an organization.

It is known that research into job satisfaction started in the field of industry and business administration, with a special emphasis being laid on the working classes. Later on, this research moved into the field of education, with more concentration being placed on the teaching sector. However, (Pfeffer & Langton, 1993), pointed out that the majority of job satisfaction research has been directed towards lower level employees, adding that it is limited with regards to looking at managers, technicians, and professionals. Job satisfaction is regarded as a very important issue within the service industry, especially for the call center organizations due to the fact that it is connected with different aspects of their role and those which consumes most of their time-solving problems and doubts of their customers. Therefore, it is necessary that the employees feel satisfaction and harmony in carrying out their job to ensure effectiveness in delivering their duties and roles. Therefore, this research attempts to identify the job characteristics that enrich jobs in the organizational settings increasing job satisfaction and performance.

In the organization like call centers, they are specialized in activities of utilizing employees receive inbound or make outbound calls telephonically. Such calls are controlled with the help of Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) and through predictive dialing system (Taylor & Bain, 2005). The challenges and innovation that the industries are facing would have never been imagined by our ancestors. In today's corporate world, meeting and keeping up customers' demands for better service have increased considerably. This led to an urgent requirement of call centers in the early 1990s to increase the level of knowledge amongst the people of service users. Call centers also help to increase awareness of consumer rights and the expectations of product and services paid. (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004), Explaining the importance of call centers mentioned in their research that, call centers facilitate the spread of information and communication between firms and their potential customers via telephone. It was also reiterated by (Prabhaker, Sheehan, & Coppett, 1997), that call centers play an important role in allowing a company to build, maintain and manage customer relationship by solving their issues and resolving customer complaints quickly. Every hour of the day throughout the 365 days in the year, call centers are the central point of the companies to answer questions by the customers.

As per the research performed by (Holman, Batt, & Holtgrewe, 2007), business customers and the mass market are the primary targets of the call centers. They also found that almost about 75% of the call centers served the general mass market where the volume of sales and services transactions is the highest. Whereas, about 25% of the call centers focus on providing their services to business to business customers. Below figure 1 shows the call centers system model developed by (Armistead, Kiely, Hole, & Prescott, 2002). There are two types of call centers: They are (1) Inbound and (2) Outbound. Around 80% of call centers are inbound where they serve the organization's own customers. On the other hand, the remaining 20 percent of call centers serve outbound customers.

**Figure 1: Call Center Systems Model**



Source: (Armistead et al., 2002)

## RESEARCH GAP

The major issue that the call center organizations are facing is the job stress and unpleasant working conditions of their employees (Kalleberg, 2009). Call center organizations face many human resource challenges specific to their organizational structures, job characteristics, and workforce demographics. As the number of call centers increases across the country, so do their specific human resource issues such as low employee morale and satisfaction, and high absenteeism and turnover rates (Kabene, Orchard, Howard, Soriano, & Leduc, 2006). Researchers like (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Parker, Ohly, Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008; Rubino, Luksyte, Perry, & Volpone, 2009), in the psychological areas found call center work to have a distinct set of stressors including lower levels of job control or autonomy, limited task variety, and higher levels of job demand and uncertainty. These characteristics have been linked to what could best be described as a “mental health repetitive strain”, which impacts health and well-being.

The essentials of employees for motivation and job satisfaction have been highlighted by several management theories. According to (Hackman & Lawler, 1971), work motivation, satisfaction and commitment are enhanced with there are the presence of two main elements: (1) higher order need strength is salient and (2) a high degree of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and working condition are experienced by the employees. Other management theorists consider higher order needs essential to overall job satisfaction (Alderfer, 1972). It has also been argued that motivational needs are either arranged in a hierarchical order (Maslow, 1943), categorized by two finite sets of needs (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2011), or, in some instances, not in terms of any hierarchical order (Alderfer, 1972). The debate related to work outcomes like job performance and satisfaction continues in the management literature (Saari & Judge, 2004). Despite decades of research on job characteristics, there is a lack of generalizability of research findings concerning their application to job satisfaction and performance in the management research literature. Since employees differ in pay, status, and working conditions, it is likely that they would be satisfied

uniquely in an organization. Within the Malaysian call center organization context there are few researchers dealing with the issue of job satisfaction among the employees at the different levels such as (Voon, 2011), CRM strategy (Abdullateef, Muktar, Yusoff, & Ahmad, 2014), performance, satisfaction and turnover (Ahmad, 2008), but there was lack of research investigating the role of organizational culture between job characteristics, job satisfaction and job performance in the context of employees of call center industry in Malaysia.

This research focuses on exploring the factors that affect the job satisfaction of call center employees. The exploration of this research provides a good opportunity to develop an entire in-depth understanding of the underpinning factors contributing to the job satisfaction and performance of the employees. The findings and the knowledge gathered through quantitative aspects will be of relevant importance to the top management officials of the industry. In short, all the aforementioned studies did not investigate the job satisfaction of employees and were not extensive in exploring in-depth underpinning factors contributing to job performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, this research will bridge the gap by giving call center employees, feelings and attitudes regarding their job satisfaction through the adoption of quantitative method.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Social science research is undertaken to understand the nature in which people live in this world. Such an understanding helps in determining or establishing appropriate guidelines or policies to spur socio-economic growth (Mangan, Lalwani, & Gardner, 2004), Research undertakings are driven by ontological and epistemological assumptions. The ontological assumption is defined as “a branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world” (Wand & Weber, 1993). The epistemological assumption is defined as “the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can possibly be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation” (Hirschheim, Klein, & Lyytinen, 1995), The ontological and epistemological views of a quantitative research paradigm are enveloped within a positivist stance, which views research outcome as singular and objective in nature. The idea is to find one answer that could be true in multiple situations.

On the other hand, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of a quantitative research paradigm are subjective with multiple possible answers (J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Walby, 2001), noted that epistemology is one of the antipathies towards the perception that is common between disciplines but it is difficult to justify philosophically. The research on customers’ perception is more towards a constructionist perspective that is too simple to serve as a research method. Thus, the positivism paradigm is more suitable for this kind of research (Fay, 1996; Smith, 2006), argued that positivism routinely uses facts, random samples, standardized questions, and tabulations. (Bryman, 2006), pointed out that it is important in Social Science to avoid epistemological incoherence between the uses of two main types of data. He suggested that for practical reasons one type of technique is usually primary.

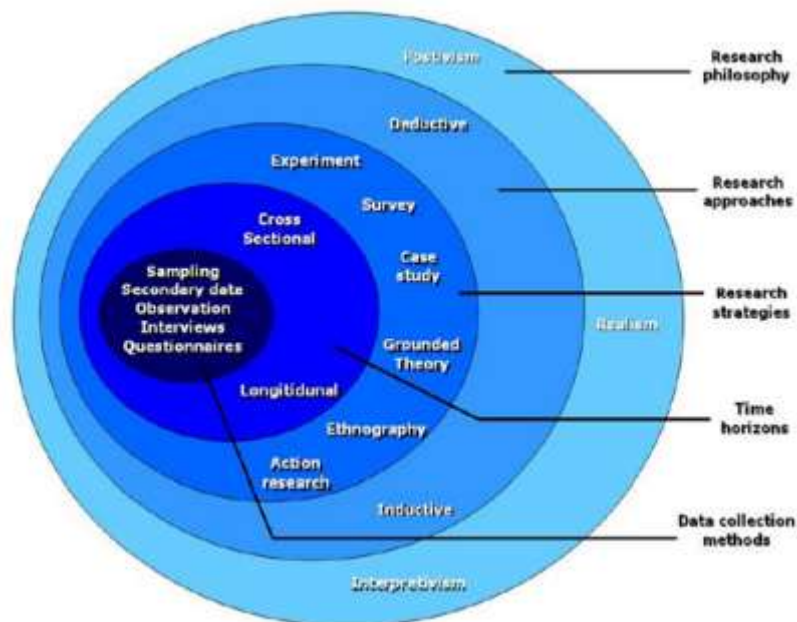
### **Research Design**

This research aims to the investigation on job characteristics, organizational culture, job satisfaction and job performance of call center employees in Malaysia. Survey questionnaire was designed and distributed to get a response from the selected sample. A research design refers to the selection and use of a variety of techniques and research methods that need to be scientifically verified (Craig & Douglas, 2005). The aim of the analysis is to code the research in terms of design for the quantitative data (Grunow, 1995). In the field of organization studies,

it has been found that only around one-fifth of the available articles discuss the relationship between research topics and the overall design of the investigation. Thus, the relative lack of attention to research questions may be a reflection of this tendency which may have some generalization beyond the confines of that discipline. The research design is a plan to choose the resources that can answer the research questions. It is a framework connecting between variables and to assume a form of guidelines about research agenda from hypothesis to data analysis. (J. W. Creswell & Garrett, 2008), research design for quantitative methods includes cross-sectional and longitudinal research. Furthermore, (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016), mentioned that it depends on upon the research questions and objectives for selecting the correct research design. It is very important to choose right research design appropriately to provide a framework for the collection and analysis of data and will reflect decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process.

It is very important to understand and choose a philosophy for an effective planning and carrying out research. The following figure shows the research onion that was proposed by (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), that consists of six layers for designing the research. These layers show the direction of the research and are connected and complement each other. In the former section research goal, objective, question, purpose, and significance are discussed whereas in the following section layer of research onions starting with research philosophies, strategies, time horizon, research technique and finally research process is discussed.

**Figure.2: Research Onion**



Source: (Saunders et al., 2009)

## **Research Approach**

This research employs the research approaches comprising of quantitative research approach. As pointed by (J. W. Creswell & Garrett, 2008), quantitative method designs hold a great deal of promise for the researcher who wants to tackle complex issues that reside at multiple levels. It can enhance the type of information gathered and can serve to increase the validity of a given research. A short definition of quantitative research approach is warranted here. Quantitative research can be defined as an inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the

social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings. The dominant methodology is to describe and explain features of this reality by collecting numerical data on observable behaviours of samples and by subjecting the data to statistical analysis (Gall & Borg). Both research approaches have different contextual differences. Quantitative research has gained a strong foothold in various research disciplines.

The focus of this research approach was to use statistical numbers to represent values to theoretical constructs and concepts. These numbers portray strong scientific evidence of how an event works or takes place. Researchers often transform the concepts or theoretical constructs into quantifiable values using a survey instrument consisting of either closed or open-ended questions. All the questions in this research were closed questions. Using a quantitative research approach can increase the validity of the research findings (J. Creswell & Clark, 2007; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). This is because quantitative method research enhances evaluation of an event or phenomenon by allowing for triangulation of findings through different instruments, thus complementing results from different methods (Verd, 2004; Yin, 2013).

### **Sampling**

This research used the non-probability sampling approach using the purposive and convenience sampling technique for quantitative research. This is purposive since the respondents have already taken part in the quantitative stage and understood the reason for further research using quantitative approach. They were purposely targeted due to their quantitative participation experience. Since there is no specific database on the number of call centers publicly available, the researcher reported to leverage on personal networks to identify those call centers. The unit of analysis was the call center companies itself. The key informant approach was used where employee participated in the data collection as their knowledge and experience will help to capture quality information. In total, there are 13 call centers operating in Malaysia. Thus these companies were considered as the population.

### **Data Collection**

Administering the survey instrument in the quantitative research involves several steps. First, the survey pack (that includes the questionnaire, introductory letter, and other related documents) is delivered to the employees directly as per their convenience. The key informant approach was selected since the respondent is identified by virtue of their position in the organisation and was expected to provide reasonable and valid opinions in the capacity of a key decision maker in the organisation (Atuahene-Gima & Li, 2002; Nasradeen A, Alsnose, Zulkiple, & Abidin, 2016). To encourage participation, it was ensured that answering the questions is made easy as the participants will be required to make a simple circle on a number scale. As a further incentive to increase the response rate, a copy of the findings could potentially be forwarded to the participating respondents, pending their request.

The implementation collecting data was conducted by selecting from front desk employees in Malaysian private institutions such as private colleges and language centers in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. In the end, 350 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate (88.2%). Table 1 shows the questionnaire distribution among those cities.

**Table 1: Questionnaires Distribution Based On Malaysian Private Institutions**

<b>NO</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Distributed</b>	<b>Collected</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Erican Language Center	20	15	4.69
2	Elec Language Center	20	17	5.31
3	ICLS School	15	14	4.38
4	Awesome English Language Center	20	18	5.63
5	Wall Street English, Malaysia	15	12	3.75
6	Lea English Centre	10	9	2.81
7	Ems Language Center	20	19	5.94
8	Pristol Academy	15	12	3.75
9	Prince Language Center	10	9	2.81
10	Gomatika University	40	32	10.00
11	Lamikoqeeng University	40	38	11.88
12	Ucsi University	30	28	8.75
13	Elc	15	11	3.44
14	Dahila Academy	15	14	4.38
15	Sheffield Academy	15	11	3.44
16	Sigi Unversity	30	22	6.88
17	Elit Language Center	15	12	3.75
18	Harmony Center	10	8	2.50
19	Mlc Language Center – Malaysia	10	10	3.13
20	Premier Language Center	10	9	2.81
<b>Total</b>		<b>375</b>	<b>320</b> <b>(88.2%)</b>	<b>100%</b>

## DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative research method is applied to get an appropriate view of the call center employees towards the job characteristics factors affecting them in their firm. In addition, SPSS 21.0 to test the research hypothesis can be viewed as a crucial methodological contribution. Finally, the research suggests avenues for further research. Secondary data is collected by someone other than the user (Nasradeen A et al., 2016). A common form of secondary data includes censuses, organizational records, surveys etc. Secondary data analysis involves the use of existing data, collected for the purposes of prior research. Secondary data is the accessible data that prior scholars and researchers collect to satisfy previous research objectives (Longhofer, Floersch, & Hoy, 2012), The following method and statistical tools were used to analyze the data and test the hypothesis: Descriptive statistics, Reliability and exploratory factor analysis, Correlation analysis.

### Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha has been used to measure the internal consistency of the Likert's Scale for the estimation of the consistency of the individual respond to items extracted from the study variables within the scale. (Sekaran, 2006), states that the closer the alpha value to 1 means the data is more reliable. In general, reliabilities less than 0.60 are considered to be poor or not good, those in the range of 0.60 to 0.70 are acceptable, and those over 0.80 are considered good (Nasradeen A et al., 2016), Initially, the overall internal consistency of the four variables was

tested and the finding showed good Alpha value ( $\alpha = 0.955$ ). Thus, it concluded that the four variables were reliable and internally consistent as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Reliability Test Of Study Variables**

No	Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Job Characteristics</b>			
1	Autonomy	3	0.651
	Competence	3	0.719
	Task Significance	3	0.781
	Task Identity	3	0.803
	Job Variety	3	0.628
	Job Feedback	3	0.826
2	Job Satisfaction	8	0.890

### Correlation Coefficient

The correlation coefficient is a measure of linear association between two variables. Values of the correlation coefficient are always between -1 and +1. A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that two variables are perfectly related in a positive linear sense, a correlation coefficient of -1 indicates that two variables are perfectly related in a negative linear sense, and a correlation coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no linear relationship between the two variables. In the following section, correlation coefficient analyses for the study variables are discussed (Field, 2009).

Pearson's correlation coefficient is used in this study to figure out the correlation between the independent variables and dependent variable.

### Pearson Correlation Coefficient For Job Characteristics And Job Satisfaction

In order to determine the correlation between the independent variable "job characteristics" and the first dependent variable "job satisfaction", Pearson correlation coefficient analysis has been done and the result shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Analysis For Job Characteristics And Job Satisfaction**

Job Characteristics' Factors		Job Satisfaction
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	<b>.394</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>
Competence	Pearson Correlation	<b>.608</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>
Task Significance	Pearson Correlation	<b>.516</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>
Task Identity	Pearson Correlation	<b>.589</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>



Job Variety	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.261</b> <b>.000</b>
Job Feedback	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.580</b> <b>.000</b>

### **Multiple Linear Regressions**

Regression analysis is a statistical technique to determine the linear relationship between two or more variables (Zikmund, 2000). Regression analysis can be performed in multiple linear regressions, multiple linear regressions is used when studying the relationship between one independent variable and two or more dependent variables.

In this study, both of linear regression methods (simple and multiple) are needed for the following relationships:

- Multiple linear regression is needed to examine the influence of all job characteristics factors together on job satisfaction factor, job performance and organizational culture.

### **Multiple Linear Regression For Job Characteristics And Job Satisfaction**

The multiple regression analysis results for the job characteristics factors and job satisfaction factor are shown in the following tables.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression analysis result of (R) value related to job characteristics and job satisfaction**

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Squared</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	.659	.435	.424	83.216	.000

Table 4 provides the R and R<sup>2</sup> values. The R value represents the multiple correlation is 0.659, which indicates a moderate degree of correlation. The R<sup>2</sup> value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, job satisfaction, can be explained by the independent variable, job characteristics which is, 43.5% can be explained.

In addition, the table shows that the value of (F) is 40.134 with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, meaning that the regression model is significant and we can assume that there is a linear relationship between the variables in our model, table 5, represent the regression coefficients results related to job characteristics and job satisfaction.

**Table 5: Regression Coefficient Results Of Job Characteristics And Job Satisfaction**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.936	.217		4.320	.000
Autonomy	.073	.054	.079	1.362	.174
Competence	.306	.072	.342	4.261	<b>.000</b>
Task Significance	.027	.060	.033	.452	.652
Task Identity	.087	.071	.108	1.230	.220
Job Variety	.024	.047	.026	.517	.605
Job Feedback	.239	.055	.294	4.348	<b>.000</b>

The regression coefficients table 5 provides the necessary information to predict job satisfaction from job characteristics, as well as determine whether a job characteristic contributes statistically significantly to the model. The multiple linear regression shows that only competence and job feedback have significant values less than 0.05 which is 0.000 for both which means job satisfaction is influenced only by these two factors (competence and job feedback) in the multiple linear regression model.

### Multiple Linear Regression For Job Characteristics And Job Performance

The multiple regression analysis results for the job characteristics factors and job performance factor are shown in the following table 6 below:

**Table 6: Multiple Regression analysis (R) value related to job characteristics and job performance**

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.845	.714	.708	130.218	.000

Table 6 provides the R and R<sup>2</sup> values. The R value represents the multiple correlation is 0.845, which indicates a moderate degree of correlation. The R<sup>2</sup> value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, job performance, can be explained by the independent variable, job characteristics which is, 71.4% can be explained. In addition, the table shows that the value of (F) is 130.218 with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, meaning that the regression model is significant and we can assume that there is a linear relationship between the variables in our model.

## CONCLUSION

The general objective of this research is to examine the relationship between aspects of job characteristics and job satisfaction of employees working in call centers in Malaysian private institutions; this was done by first doing a literature study in order to determine what the factors should be to be tested. These were then identified and grouped, job characteristic factors affecting job satisfaction and job performance of employees. A debt collecting institutions was approached to test their call Centre the two main themes that were identified through statistical analysis of the data was that of the employee and managerial. These two factors need to be an important part of the way that performance is managed and measured within the call Centre environment. Specifically looking at the confidence that the employees have in the performance appraisal system, the extent to what the employees are devoted to performance management and the value that the employees receive from the self-appraisal process. There were a number of factors that were identified that influence performance in a call Centre environment, thus I would recommend that these factors are looked at in more depth during the next research on this subject. Going forward, the performance appraisal system can also focus on less items. One of the aspects that came out was that of trust, and as stated in the literature review, trust is the basis of all systems, because without this factor it would fail.

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