



CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

Developing desired knowledge, skills and abilities of the employees to utilize their full potential is imperative for all human resource professionals. This study examines the effect of career development on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The study specifically examines the effect of career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. A sample of 389 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula from a population of 13,784 staff of thirteen (13) public universities in North-Central Nigeria. A survey design was adopted for the study and questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A pilot test was carried out to ensure validity and reliability of the instrument. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used for presentation of research questions. The study employed correlation statistics and regression analysis for data analysis and test of formulated hypotheses with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23). Result of the correlation analysis showed significant relationship between the variables. Results of tested hypotheses indicated that all independent variables (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) have a positive significant effect on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The study concludes that the quality of human resources in an organization depends on effective career development practices which lead to improvement in organizational performance. It recommends amongst others that management of public universities in Nigeria should always provide workshops and seminars that will help academic and non-academic staff make appropriate career decisions in their institutions.

Keywords: Career Development, Career Advancement, Career Counselling, Career Mentoring, Career Planning, Organizational Performance.

1. Introduction

Organizations in the 21st century have faced enormous challenges emanating from technological advancement, workforce diversity, frequent changes in customer expectations, labour turnover and rapid market changes. In today's dynamic and competitive business environment organizations must adapt to these changes to survive and improve performance. Every organization needs competent employees who possess relevant skills and knowledge in contributing towards the achievement of set goals (Irene & Gachunga, 2016). Organizations therefore put in place different structures and processes to retain and develop the workforce require continuous professional and managerial development and stakeholders (Armstrong, 2001). Proficient human resource remains the key success factor and an inextinguishable component of organizational success in both public and private organizations (Dermol & Rakowska, 2014). Since employees are regarded as veritable sources of competitive advantage, the development of their careers is enormous. To accomplish



organizational goals, human resources should be managed effectively, rightfully and justly, and the needs of workers at work should be satisfied (Nankervis, Compton, Baird & Coffey, 2011).

Career development refers to an ongoing, formalized effort by an organisation that focuses on developing and enriching the organisation's human resources in light of both the employees' and organisation's needs (Byars & Rue, 2004). Career developments practices are implemented by organizations to make sure that employees are adequately equipped with requisite skills and knowledge that will enable them consistently contribute towards the achievement of organizational goals thereby meeting their expectations of job security, and growth prospect (Adamu, Daddie & Ebikeseye, 2017). Similarly, employees want career progress in the workplace to keep them engaged (Dixon, 2017). Career development thus assists in the identification and development of employee competencies, which is a source of competitive advantage for organizations. Career development programmes fundamental to organizations as identified in literature include career planning, career coaching and mentoring, career counselling, career advancement and talent management (Oduma & Were, 2014; Irene & Gachunga, 2016; Hakim, 2020; Anekwe, Ndubuisi-Okolo & Chizoba, 2020).

Career planning refers to activities that involve self-assessment, the search for new opportunities and goal setting by organizations to encourage employees to make suitable changes about their career paths (Hakim, 2020). Career mentoring entails developing formal relationships in the workplace through which less experienced employees tap into the knowledge of more experienced employees (Hayes, 2015). Career advancement is another career development practice that involves the progression of individuals in their careers or the acquisition of new competencies by employees to meet future career needs (Chanin, 2012). Career development is also carried out through career counseling, which is carried out to help develop and strengthen the ability of employees by career counselors (Mwashila, 2017).

Organizations that want to optimally perform and outsmart their competitors have increasingly place prominence the legitimacy of recruitment practices and career development practices (Mwanje, 2010). Organizational performance is the degree with which organizations achieve set goals which is usually measured by financial and non-financial indicators such as increase in number of employees, assets, market share, cash flow and net income margin (Gavrea, Iliès & Stegorean, 2011). In Nigeria, organizations in the public and private sector have invested resources and made conscious efforts in training employees to enable them acquire relevant skills that have fundamental effect on organizational performance. Oduma and Were (2014) argued that due to rapid expansion of university education career development practices have become a necessity. Public universities in Nigeria have been faced with the challenges of inadequate funding which has hampered the quality of service delivery of such institutions and goals of education been defeated. Arguably, most staff of public universities in Nigeria do not advance in their careers as a result of inadequate linking of career development practices to job productivity (Nyambura & Kamara, 2017).

There are abundant studies on career development and organizational performance in Nigeria. For instance, Onukwufor, Umoh and Amah (2018) investigated on career development and organizational success of government parastatals in Rivers State, Nigeria. A study by Dialoke and Wabara (2017) focused on career development and employee commitment in selected higher



institutions in Abia State while Ikechukwu and Nkechi (2017) examined the effect of career growth and development on employee performance in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike Abia State, Nigeria. Also, Agba, Nkpoyen and Ushie (2010) carried out a study on career development and employee commitment in industrial organisations in Calabar, Nigeria. However, few studies are carried out on career development and performance of public universities in Nigeria and few of the studies were carried out on same topic are conducted in other geo-political zones in Nigeria. This has created a gap in literature hence the need for this study which examines the effect of career development on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of career development on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include to:

- i. Determine the effect of career planning on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- ii. Evaluate the effect of career mentoring on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- iii. Ascertain the effect of career advancement on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- iv. Examine the effect of career counselling on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Based on the above objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Ho₁: Career planning has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- Ho₂: Career mentoring has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- Ho₃: Career advancement has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria;
- Ho₄: Career counselling has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Career Development Practices

Organizations that desire to gain competitive advantage in today's turbulent environment require employees that possess the right competencies, and this is achievable through career development practices. Career development refers to efforts made by organizations in developing and enriching employees with relevant skills to help them meet career needs (Byars & Rue, 2004). It is a logical arrangement used to link employee objectives in the workplace with the corporate career needs (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016). This implies that career development involves activities geared towards improving the career prospects of employees in the workplace. Career development thus plays a strategic role in goal attainment of organizations of all types (Robbins, 2010). Career development practices are programmes designed and implemented by organizations to assess workers' potentials thereby identifying their probable career paths for increase job performance (Agba, Festus & Ushie, 2010). It is an effectual means that improves employee productivity and fosters organizational performance (Fieldman & Thomas, 2004). Additionally, career development helps in the acquisition new skills and competencies, increased job satisfaction and alignment of



work with personal values in the organization (Mullins, 2005). Conclusively, career development offers opportunities for internal promotions and growth of employees.

The programmes of career development are the processes through which employees' career goals and aspirations are nurtured to fulfillment; and aligned with organizational needs (Schultze & Miller, 2006). Career development benefits not only the individual employee, but also the organization. Irene and Gachunga (2016) identified training and career mentoring as dimensions of career development programmes in organizations. Career development programmes that affect the performance of organizations include employee training, career counselling, employee mentoring (coaching) and career advancement (Mark & Nzulwa, 2018). Career development programmes used by public universities as explained by Mwashila (2017) include career planning, career advancement and career mentoring. In this study, career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling are adopted as dimensions of career development. These career development practices are consistent in previous literatures and relevant to the university system.

Career planning refers to the practice in which organizations or individual gets to know of personal competencies and focuses on plans to achieve specific career goals (Felix, 2012). Organizations usually organize workshops to formulate career development plans after consideration of employees' interests, abilities, and job situations (Mark & Nzulwa, 2018). Career planning activities enable employees to become conscious of in-house career opportunities while appraising their abilities preparatory for appropriate training (Cummings & Worley, 2005). The aim of career planning is to discover the goals of manpower programmes to support their career needs. The imperativeness of career planning lies in its ability to develop employee needs by linking them to corporate needs (Antoniou, 2013).

Career mentoring is another aspect of career development that involves building formal relationships between junior and senior employees within the workplace. In essence, it connotes the establishment of formal relationships between more experienced employees and less experienced employees (Aneeq, 2012). In career mentoring, senior or experienced employees usually play a supportive role in the upbringing of new or inexperienced employees through coaching, facilitation and networking, which leads to increased job satisfaction, commitment and career achievement (Nyambura & Kamara, 2017). Arguably, mentoring encourages the less experienced employees to tap into the knowledge of more experienced employees that improves organizational performance (Hayes, 2015).

Career advancement means the progression of employees at different levels within the organization (Chanin, 2012). Career advancement is relevant in the accomplishment of employee personal goals and is carried out through career growth and job promotions. It is defined as the acquisition of valuable competencies by employees in an organization that help in meeting future career needs (Weng *et al.*, 2010). The resultant effect of career advancement is job security, employee retention and effectiveness of organizations (Okurame, 2005; Savickas, 2012). Career counselling is another career development programme aimed at educating employees to adequately equip them with relevant skills on the job. This is usually carried out by career counselors (Mwashila, 2017). Career counselling guides and strengthens the ability of employees to enable



them cope with career issues in the workplace (Chen, 2004; Morgan, 2008). Proficient career counselors therefore, help to guide individuals with profession related difficulties.

2.2 Organizational Performance

The concept of organizational performance is difficult as there are multiplicities of definitions and no two definitions agree on what constitutes organizational performance (Abusa, 2011). Organisational performance refers to the extent to which the organisation is able to meet the needs of its stakeholders and its own needs for survival (Griffin, 2003). It is also defined by Almajali *et al.* (2012) as the result of an activity which has been achieved by an organisation related to its authority and responsibility in achieving stated goals, and conforming to the morale and ethics of the organisation. Different approaches are adopted in measuring organisational performance, depending on the perspective of the study. Organisational performance is measured through financial and non-financial indicators and the measurement of organisational performance may be affected by the objective of the organization (Hansen & Mowen, 2005). Financial performance measures such as profit maximization and non-financial performance measures such as growth in sales, growth in assets and growth in market shares are frequently used by organizations (Zeitun & Tian, 2007).

2.3 Career Development and Organizational Performance

Extant literatures have established the relationship between career development practices and organizational performance. Career development programmes have significant influence employee performance and organizational performance (Irene & Gachunga, 2016; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018). Oduma and Were (2014) stated that career development practices such as employee training, career mentoring, job orientation and career advancement positively influence employee performance in the university. Corroboratively, Nyambura and Kamara (2017) affirmed that career development programmes (mentoring and training) have significant effect on employee retention in Technical University of Kenya. This is supported by Dewi and Utama (2016) whose study indicated that career development has a positive and significant influence on organizational performance.

In agreement with previous studies, Patrick and Kumar (2011) affirmed that career development has influence on employee performance which significantly affects the performance and effectiveness of the organization itself. Nasution, Mariatin, and Zahreni (2018) asserted that organizational performance is influenced by career development practices such as training, career mentoring and career advancement. Empirical studies (Avey, Nimnicht & Pigeon, 2010; Lyria, Namusonge, & Karanja, 2017) indicated that career development practices increase the commitment of employees in the workplace thereby improving performance of the organization. Adeniji and Osibanjo (2012) in their work argued that career development helps organizations to lessen cost incurred in recruiting and training of new employees.

In Nigeria, Omotayo, Oyewunmi and Ojo (2014) revealed that career development and organizational growth are positively and significantly related. Onukwufor, Umoh and Amah (2018) also found a positive correlation between career development and organizational success. Similar results were affirmed by Osibanjo, Oyewunmi and Ojo (2014) on career development and organizational growth and Agba, Nkpolyen and Ushie (2010) career development and employee commitment and organizational performance. In support of the findings, Dialoke and Wabara



(2017) and Ikechukwu and Nkechi (2017) found significant correlation between career development and employee commitment and organizational performance. The above literatures suggest that career development has effect on both individual and organizational outcomes in sectors.

3. Methodology

This study adopts the descriptive survey research design. This method enabled the researchers to collect different opinions of the respondents on the research variables to help achieve objectives of the study. The population of the study includes 13,784 academic and senior administrative staff from thirteen (13) public universities, made up of six state and seven federal universities. The population comprises of 4,076 staff (1,825, academic and 2,251, senior administrative staff) from the state universities and 9,708 staff (4,378 academic and 5,330 senior administrative staff) from federal universities. The choice of the public universities for this study was because of the several speculations of stakeholders, that the quality education in public universities is lower than the private ones. The assumption for the caliber of staff was that the academic and senior administrative staff are well educated and informed to give relevant information that could enable the researchers address the research questions. A sample of 389 respondents representing 2.8% was drawn from a population of 13,784 staff of public universities (115 from state, 274 from federal) using Taro Yamane’s formula. The sample for the study was drawn from all the state and federal universities in the sampled states and the FCT using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique while the respondents were sampled using the simple random sampling to respond to the questionnaire.

Questions on the questionnaire were designed on a five-point Likert Scale as follows: Strongly Disagree 1, Disagree 2, Undecided 3, Agree 4 and Strongly Agree 5. To ensure validity and reliability of items on the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted using a test–retest method. The pilot study was conducted using 129 respondents selected from four universities in North Central Nigeria (two federal universities and two state universities). The reliability test result presented in Table 1 indicated internal consistency for all constructs.

Table 1: Reliability Test Result

SN	Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of Items
1	Career Planning	0.925	4
2	Career mentoring	0.946	4
3	Career Advancement	0.937	4
4	Career Counselling	0.910	4
5	Organizational Performance	0.905	5
6	Average	0.925	21

Source: Researchers’ Computation from SPSS Output, 2020.

Data collected from respondents were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were employed to address research questions. Data analysis and hypotheses testing were carried out using Pearson’s Correlation Statistic and Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23).



4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected from respondents were presented using descriptive statistics, correlation statistic and multiple linear regression analysis. A total of 420 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in excess of the required sample size and 389 copies of the questionnaire were used for data presentation and analysis.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

This study used a correlation analysis to establish the association among the variables used in the study, and findings revealed that there was a significant association between independent variables (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) and dependent variable (organizational performance). The findings from Table 2 indicate that career planning has a strong and significant relationship with organizational performance as indicated by a Pearson coefficient of 0.818 and significance level of 0.000. Career mentoring has a strong and significant correlation with organizational performance with a Pearson coefficient of 0.719 and significance level of 0.000 respectively. The result further indicates that career advancement also has a strong and significant association with organizational performance as indicated by a Pearson coefficient of 0.761 and significance level of 0.000. Finally, the result shows that career counselling has a strong and significant relationship with organizational performance as indicated by a Pearson coefficient of 0.751 and significance level of 0.000 respectively.

Table 2: Correlation Result

		Organizational Performance	Career Planning	Career Mentoring	Career Advancement	Career Counselling
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.818** .000	.719** .000	.761** .000	.751** .000
Career Planning	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.818** .000	1	.673** .000	.673** .000	.680** .000
Career Mentoring	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.719** .000	.673** .000	1	.716** .000	.638** .000
Career Advancement	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.761** .000	.673** .000	.716** .000	1	.747** .000
Career Counselling	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.751** .000	.680** .000	.638** .000	.747** .000	1
	N	389	389	389	389	389

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

4.2 Regression Analysis Result

The result of the model summary in Table 3 shows an R² value of .776 meaning that 77.6% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables while 22.4 % is explained by other variables outside the model, and this indicates that the model is a strong predictor. The R-value of 0.881 indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the dependent variable (organizational performance) and the set of independent variables (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling).



Table 3: Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.881 ^a	.776	.774	.413	1.502

- a. **Predictors:** Career Counselling, Career Mentoring, Career Planning, Career Advancement
- b. **Dependent Variable:** Organizational Performance

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

The result of the analysis of variance in Table 4 shows that the significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that the model is statistically significant in predicting how the independent variables (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) have effect on the dependent variable (organizational performance). The F critical at 5 % level of significance was 332.300 indicating that the independent variables have effect on performance of universities in Nigeria.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	227.153	4	56.788	332.300	.000 ^b
Residual	65.623	384	.171		
Total	292.776	388			

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Predictors: Career Counselling, Career Mentoring, Career Planning, Career Advancement

The result of data presented in Table 5 shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit change in career planning would lead to a 44.3% changes in organizational performance, a unit increase career mentoring would lead to 14.6% change organizational performance while a unit increase in career advancement would lead to a 21.4% increase organizational performance. Also, a unit change in career counselling would affect organizational performance by 20.5%. At 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence all the variables (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) showed p-values less than 0.05. The regression coefficient further shows that career planning has a more significant effect on performance of universities in Nigeria.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error		T	Sig.
(Constant)	.037	.122		.305	.000
Career Planning	.443	.037	.445	12.036	.000
Career Mentoring	.146	.039	.141	3.778	.000
Career Advancement	.214	.043	.210	5.023	.000
Career Counselling	.205	.040	.201	5.137	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance



4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The four hypotheses formulated in this study were all rejected implying that both career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling have positive and significant effect on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. The summary of the result of tested hypotheses as presented in Table 6 shows that p-values for all the variables were less than 0.05.

Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H01: Career planning has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria	.000 < 0.05	Rejected
H02: Career mentoring has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria	.000 < 0.05	Rejected
H03: Career advancement has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria	.000 < 0.05	Rejected
H04: Career counselling has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria	.000 < 0.05	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

4.4 Findings

Results of the study have shown a positive significant relationship between career development dimensions (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) and organizational performance. The study sought to establish the effect of career planning on performance of public universities in North-Central, Nigeria. Result from hypothesis one revealed a positive significant effect of career planning on performance. This result is consistent with Dessler (2008) and Antoniu (2013) who emphasized the importance of career planning on meeting individual and organizational career goals. Research by Cranshaw (2006) also found similar support for the result. The implication of the finding to universities is that an adequate career succession plan and career development plan for academic and non-academic staff helps in improving organizational performance.

Findings of the study further indicated that career mentoring has a positive significant effect on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Result of the correlation analysis also showed significant association between career mentoring and organizational performance. In support of this result, Devi (2012) contended that mentoring enable employees with less experience to acquire better skills and knowledge from experienced employees for future growth. In line with the result, Galanou (2009) stated that career mentoring enable employees to improve their productivity and align individual goals to corporate goals. In agreement with this result, Nyambura and Kamara (2017) and Hayes (2015) affirmed that mentoring help to develop formal relationships between less experienced and experienced employees, which leads to increased job satisfaction, commitment, career achievement and improved performance. The implication of the finding to public universities is that they should regularly organize seminars, and workshops to fully equip staff with adequate skills. Newly recruited staff should be allowed to receive training under mentors to help improve their productivity.

The result of hypothesis three indicated that career advancement has a positive significant effect on the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Correlation analysis result also showed significant relationship between the variables. This result is agreed by Weng *et al.* (2012), Obwaya (2012) and Avey (2010) who argued that career advancement results to job effectiveness,



job satisfaction, employee retention and performance. This is corroborated by Savickas (2012), who asserted that employees who are provided career growth opportunities and promotions carry out their work more efficiently and effectively. The implication of the finding is that career progression is important in increasing the productivity of both academic and non-academic staff of public universities in Nigeria hence, the need to ensure equity, merit and competencies during career advancement programmes.

Finally, findings from hypothesis four revealed that career counselling has a positive significant effect on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. This agrees with the findings of a study by Morgan (2008), who argued that career counseling practice is necessary for employees and paramount in achieving organizational goals. Chen (2004), agrees that career counselling help to develop and improve the talents of employees. The implication of the finding to organizations is that counselling in the workplace enable employees to identify their hidden talents hence the need for public universities to have proficient career counsellors who will help to guide staff on challenges in the workplace.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigates the effect of career development on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Findings of the study showed significant relationship between career development dimensions (career planning, career mentoring, career advancement and career counselling) and performance. The study concludes that career planning is an essential career development practice in Nigerian universities. The study also concludes that mentoring encourages junior staff to acquire better skills from their seniors. The study further concludes that career advancement has a positive significant effect on performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Career progression among the universities studied was guided by specific criteria. Finally, the study concludes that career counselling is imperative for the performance of public universities in North-Central Nigeria. Career counselling helps in improving corporate performance and achievement of career needs of individuals.

The following recommendations are made based on findings of the study:

- i. Public universities in Nigeria should always provide workshops and seminars that will help academic and non-academic staff make appropriate career decisions in their institutions.
- ii. Management of public universities in Nigeria should always encourage less experience employees to learn from their superiors through job coaching. Management should organize seminars and workshops for academic and non-academic staff to enable them gain competencies in handling their work and help identify talents that need to be developed on the job.
- iii. Public universities in Nigeria should ensure regular appraisal of staff and provide career growth opportunities by developing training needs to encourage deserving staff in creditably discharging their duties.
- iv. Management of public universities in Nigeria should have counsellors who will provide career advisory services to staff of their institution to help identify their potentials and talents to prepare them for future opportunities.

Suggestion for Further Research

This study was conducted on the career development and performance of public universities in Nigeria. Therefore, the sample size was limited to thirteen (13) public universities in North-Central



Nigeria and generalizations cannot adequately extend to other public universities outside the region. The study therefore, suggests that further research should be conducted covering other regions in the country to confirm findings of this study. Also, further studies should consider other career development practices such as succession planning and career guidance and their effects on individual and corporate performance. Additionally, further studies should focus on career development practices and performance of other sectors in Nigeria such as the banking and telecommunication sectors.

Practical Implications of Findings

Career development is a fundamental aspect to modern organizations since it helps in matching of individual and organizational career goals. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing a clear understanding between career development and performance of educational institutions. It has undoubtedly provided information on how career development programmes within universities will help in developing the career path of employees to boost their morale, and ultimately their productivity. Findings of the study will be beneficial to human resource managers and development practitioners and it provides suggestions for effective linking of career development practices with performance, which would aid management of universities to develop superior human resource development policies in their institutions of learning.

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