

Dilemma of Human Resources in Public Services: An Analysis of Performance among Honorary Employees

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji strategi manajemen sumber daya manusia yang berdampak pada hasil kinerja pegawai honorer di pemerintah Kota Bandung. Metodologi penelitian kualitatif digunakan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang komprehensif. Penelitian ini dilakukan di pemerintah Kota Bandung dengan melakukan observasi dan wawancara dengan 10 partisipan. Selanjutnya, data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan perangkat lunak kualitatif Atlas.ti. Semua informasi yang ditranskrip diteliti dan disortir berdasarkan pertanyaan penelitian. Data yang memenuhi tujuan penelitian disusun ke dalam sub-kategori, yang mencerminkan karakteristik yang serupa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kinerja pegawai honorer di pemerintah Kota Bandung dibentuk oleh kombinasi pendekatan "keras" dan "lunak" dalam manajemen sumber daya manusia. Peningkatan kinerja pegawai di lingkungan pemerintah Kota Bandung merupakan prioritas utama untuk efektivitas pelayanan publik, sehingga membutuhkan perbaikan lebih lanjut dan penilaian strategis yang lebih mendalam. Studi ini mengusulkan untuk menerapkan pendekatan terpadu yang mencakup teknik manajemen sumber daya manusia yang "keras" dan "lunak" serta pengembangan budaya pembelajaran yang berkelanjutan dan dedikasi manajemen yang kuat.

ABSTRACT

This study proposes to examine human resource management strategies that impact the performance outcomes of non-permanent (honorary) employees in the Bandung government. Qualitative research methodology was applied to gain a comprehensive understanding. This research was conducted in the Bandung City government by conducting observations and interviews with 10 participants. Furthermore, the collected data was analyzed using Atlas.ti qualitative software. All transcribed information was scrutinised and sorted based on the research questions. Data that met the research objectives were organized into sub-categories, reflecting similar characteristics. The research findings show that the performance of honorary employees in the Bandung City government is shaped by a combination of "hard" and "soft" approaches in human resource management. Improving employee performance within the Bandung City government is a top priority for the effectiveness of public services, thus requiring further improvement and a more in-depth strategic assessment. This study proposes implementing an integrated approach that includes both "hard" and "soft" human resource management techniques and the development of a culture of continuous learning and strong management dedication.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) is positioned as a strategy to improve employee performance (Sanders & Yang, 2016). It becomes even more essential in urban areas, which must provide services to the public (Yazan & De Vasconcelos, 2016). A specialized human resource management approach is needed for the public service sector in urban areas. This is because population density is directly proportional to the increase in public service requirements (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Jouda et al., 2016; Payne & Williams, 2005). Therefore, it is important to have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by employees in the public service sector, especially in the context of local governments that have been given greater rights to manage government since the decentralization era (Beszter et al., 2015; Wahyuni & Qodir, 2021).

Human resource management involves managing the employee life cycle by considering the goals of government organizations and individuals (Senge, 2017). This has been proven in previous research that the effectiveness of the human resource management function has an impact on the contribution of employee quality to the achievement of the organization's main objectives (Boxall et al., 2016). In addition, the services an organization provides are highly dependent on the expertise and skills employees possess as part of team members (Adler et al., 2016). Therefore, when management by local governments is ineffective, it can hurt employee performance. To improve employee performance management, Howard et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of motivation and appreciation so that employee performance continues to increase. On the other hand, Garg & Dhar (2017) found a link between weak human resource management systems and poor employee performance in cities, especially in the recruitment process of potential employees.

From the previously mentioned research, this research fills the void of previous research, especially related to honorary employees in Bandung City who have encountered many problems. The problem often arises when employees who have not yet become state civil apparatus (ASN) work as public servants. Problems that are often encountered include irregular work status that causes uncertainty in terms of job continuity and income stability, often not getting the same rights as ASN employees, such as benefits, social security, leave, and training, lack of appreciation due to the status of honorary employees which can affect the motivation and morale of honorary employees, limited career development and competency improvement. These limitations can hinder their professional progress and limit opportunities for better positions. Moreover, other problems are related to the lower salary gap compared to ASN employees with the same duties and responsibilities (Marshall & Stephenson, 2020). Therefore, the Bandung government must innovate its human resource management strategy (Eryanto, 2015) related to recruitment and selection, training and performance development, and rewarding work performance.

Thus, this study offers a comprehensive perspective into how human resource management practices impact honorary employees within the context of Bandung City. Drawing from prior research that has focused on human resource management in the public sector (Govender, 2017; Katou, 2017; Nahariah, 2021; Utamy et al., 2020; Mulianingsih et al., 2022), this investigation uncovers a strong correlation between human resource management and the performance of honorary employees in Bandung City. Through thoroughly exploring the existing performance dynamics of honorary employees, this study provides valuable perspectives on critical issues that can guide improvements in human resource management in other cities, particularly in Indonesia. Thus, the research question that became the focal point of this study is: How do human resource management practices influence performance

outcomes in Bandung?

Literature Review

Recruitment practices involve attracting potential candidates, while selection involves identifying individuals who possess the qualities required for proficient task performance in a particular role (Klinck & Swanepoel, 2019). The quality of skills acquired and retained directly affects the quality of outcomes, given that the success of an organization largely depends on its personnel (Mauerhoefer et al., 2017). Therefore, employee recruitment should prioritize acquiring and retaining individuals with exemplary talent. The "hard" approach to human resource management emphasizes measurable, results-driven factors. This approach prioritizes efficiency, productivity, and adherence to established policies and procedures. In the hard approach, decision-making is based on robust data and analysis, highlighting performance and target achievement. This ensures the organization maintains an optimal workforce aligned with its goals (Ndevu & Muller, 2018).

In contrast, the "soft" approach focuses on more subjective and qualitative elements. This entails attention to interpersonal relationships, motivation, employee growth, and job satisfaction. The soft approach also underscores the importance of effective communication, employee engagement, and sufficient support to foster a positive and uplifting work atmosphere (Kumari & Singh, 2018). As a result, using the "soft" approach, human resource management will influence organizational culture by pinpointing employees who possess the right values needed to uphold the desired level of organizational performance. Employee skill shifts are influenced by push and pull factors within the organizational environment. Human behavior tends to react to these push-and-pull elements (Sussman & DeJong, 2018; Umari & Frinaldi, 2022). Therefore, organizations should uphold the push factors to sustain performance and reduce the pull factors that may hinder optimal achievement.

In addition to recruitment and selection, there is a need for organized efforts in performance management and professional development. Employee professional development mainly involves initiatives related to training and competency enhancement. The aim is to improve individual skills to meet performance targets (Ryazanova et al., 2017). Training has been shown to improve employee performance (Armstrong & Landers, 2018) and is usually centered on the needs of participants (Nxumalo et al., 2018). Common training processes include identifying needs, planning, implementing, and evaluating (Marshall & Stephenson, 2020). In contrast, development takes a forward-looking perspective to equip employees with essential competencies to address future challenges (Ndevu, 2019). The effectiveness of training and development depends on selecting the right employees, as inappropriately selected individuals prove difficult to train and develop (Siregar et al., 2023). In addition, training and development should motivate employees to voluntarily adopt the organization's culture and values (Cafferkey et al., 2019). From a different perspective, Barwani (2019) argues that integrating various HR practices can be advantageous in achieving effective employee performance. Similarly, Paltu & Brouwers (2020) stated that training and development serve as a tool to motivate individual achievers while enhancing organizational capabilities, thus combining human resource practices to achieve high-performance levels. Therefore, the relationship between employee capacity building and performance is reinforced from various viewpoints.

The next aspect of resource management is reward management. Reward management entails identifying methods to recognize employees' performance and express gratitude for their contribution to achieving organizational goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2020; Potgieter & Mokomane, 2020). The "hard" approach in human resource management ensures that rewards match employee compliance (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). In contrast, the "soft" approach uses rewards as a motivational tool to improve service delivery. Reward systems reflect valued behaviors and can reinforce a culture of high performance (Kumari & Singh, 2018). Rewards that are effective in sustaining employee performance often involve a total reward system that combines transactional and relational elements (Blom et al., 2020; Cregan et al., 2021). Transactional rewards can attract talent but usually have a temporary motivational effect (Kumari & Singh, 2018). On the other hand, relational rewards strengthen employee commitment and contribute to performance development (Cregan et al., 2021). Adopting a total rewards approach ensures a balanced integration of transactional and relational aspects, optimizing overall performance.

Cregan et al. (2021) propose that performance appraisal includes an assessment of an employee's contribution to organizational goals, thereby fostering a performance-oriented culture essential for organizational prosperity. Performance appraisals are important in optimizing employee performance by ensuring coherence between performance objectives, recruitment criteria, training, and reward systems. A "soft" approach fosters employee motivation and cultivates positive work attitudes. A well-structured performance appraisal should encourage positive attitudes, given its influence on other HR activities, as shown in research (Makapela & Mtshelwane, 2021; Suzuki & Hur, 2020). However, some organizations fail to harness the full potential of performance appraisals due to a lack of attention to feedback in human resource management planning (Collins, 2021; Els et al., 2021; Utamy et al., 2020). This study introduces a new perspective by synergistically integrating "hard" and "soft" human resource management approaches to improve employee performance and organizational success while underscoring the critical role of feedback in performance appraisal. This aspect has been overlooked in previous research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods were used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of human resource management that affect employee performance in the context of the research objectives. This method allows for previously unknown explanations and opens up the possibility of new views (Creswell, 2009). In contrast to quantitative research methods that are more structured and limited to predetermined choices, qualitative methods provide the flexibility to investigate deeply in the field about things that are not yet known (Yin, 2016). Therefore, this research uses an inductive approach, where theory is discovered from existing data rather than the other way around, following a predetermined research path.

This study was conducted in one of the government offices of Bandung City, aiming to identify factors related to human resource management that contribute to optimizing honorary employees' performance. The research was conducted through on-site observation in a typical work environment, which involved identifying practices geared towards improving the performance of honorary employees. To gain insight into specific challenges, interviews were conducted with honorary employees and their supervisors to gain their perspectives in proposing potential solutions. The honorary employees who participated in this study were carefully selected as participants. Before the research began, an agreement was made with the relevant requirements to ensure that the research was conducted ethically and without bias.

towards either the participants or the organization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The study involved 10 participants, with five women and five men. The selection of participants was made purposively, with the assistance of a senior official, to identify individuals with substantial knowledge of human resource management and honorary employee performance. The number of 10 participants reflects the number of informants considered sufficient to represent various perspectives within the boundaries of the research topic. We selected 5 organizations spread across Bandung City. The selection of the 10 people considered the depth of information obtained. This approach was considered optimal as the research focuses on a group of participants who have expertise but are honorary employees. The sample size, although small, was considered sufficient after reaching saturation point.

After collecting the data, it was analyzed using *Atlas.ti* software. All transcribed information was carefully examined and organized according to the research questions. Data aligned with the research objectives were coded and sorted into sub-categories, which showed similar characteristics, thus illustrating their relevance to different objectives. These subcategories were then combined into overarching themes, representing common data positions. These themes were then scrutinized about similar research conducted previously and related literature. The emerging findings explain existing behaviors and question certain practices that impact employee performance. As a result, conclusions are drawn regarding how to improve the current state of the organization's human resource management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the research findings about the stated research objectives. These objectives primarily revolve around identifying human resource management practices that influence performance outcomes in the context of Bandung City. These practices include the recruitment and selection procedures of honorary employees and aspects related to performance evaluation, professional development, and rewarding honorary employees. These practices will be further explained in the next presentation.

Recruitment and position attraction

According to participants, the attraction of becoming an honorary employee is the prestigious position and the value of high social status. Parents are the main drivers for their children's future to become State Civil Apparatus (ASN). In addition, the hope of becoming a young ASN is the most widely conveyed attraction. However, the reality is that many obstacles emerge in the area of work over time:

Recruitment uses a test system. Whoever scores the best is accepted. I was interested in becoming a contract employee (non-permanent employee) since it offered very good benefits in the future. However, after entering, there were many demands from my superiors, who expected me to work well. I felt that to avoid being too vocal about something; the superiors would demand that I focus on working according to the job desk, which sometimes exceeds the duties of a civil servant or government officer (interview with the female employee).

I was interested in joining as an honorary employee in the Bandung City government because my parents encouraged me to become an ASN, even though the initial salary was still very low. I was a little disappointed because the salary I received did not meet my needs after living it; it was even inferior to that of factory workers. I think that's because workers have strong trade unions that voice their demands. I think honorary

workers have low bargaining power, so I often do business outside of working hours (interview with male employees).

When I was a non-permanent employee, the selection process was not as rigorous as it is now. But the struggle needs to be done to become an ASN. Even though they are honorary, employees still have to work hard for their duties. In the future, we will push to become ASN through selection (interview with male leader).

This kind of employee interviewed was keen on the idea of being employed on a contract basis, hoping to eventually secure a civil servant position. However, they complained about the unequal workload distribution and dissatisfaction with salaries. Some employees mentioned needing additional income, while their superiors regarded their work as mandatory. The recruitment process for honorary employees is conducted through tests, but there is also implicit recruitment through personal connections. The prospect of attractive future benefits motivates individuals to work as honorary employees. However, honorary employees feel they have limited negotiating power and receive inadequate salaries. Despite these challenges, they remain committed to fulfilling their responsibilities while actively working towards gaining civil servant status through a rigorous selection process.

Inconsistency in rewards and performance appraisal

Honorary employees expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries. However, some employees still feel that their salaries are inadequate:

I am still grateful for my salary. However, some jobs exceed our status by overloading us with work and making us feel very overwhelmed because we feel that we are not appreciated, while there is no reward for our hard work in the form of additional salary (interview with a female employee).

We are under pressure from our superiors to ensure that we perform well, and if performance is judged to be poor, we risk losing our jobs, so we have no choice but to follow directions to perform well (interview with a male employee).

Their salaries are paid based on a contract at the beginning and can increase at the discretion of the leadership. The motivation of each employee to do more than what they are paid for and the desire to be innovative is quite good. However, it differs from ASN, which gets many allowances and periodic increases. So, honorary employees' salaries are not based on performance, so we only ensure that these honorary employees do their job of serving the community well. Don't let because of their status it can impact performance that adversely affects the community (interview with male leader).

Certain temporary employees expressed dissatisfaction at feeling inadequately recognized, and there was occasional dissatisfaction with their supervisors. Rewards for their performance do not depend on their creativity and professional advancement, leading to a lack of emphasis on innovation. In contrast, senior civil servants undergo regular performance evaluations that affect their compensation. This difference in the reward structure for honorary employees and senior civil servants contributes to different interpersonal dynamics. Some honorary employees have voiced concerns about the high expectations placed on them by their superiors and the wider community and consider the targets associated with their work unrealistic.

Our leaders hold us to exceedingly high expectations, often setting impractical targets due to resource constraints. We require additional time and resources to enhance our efficiency. There's an insistence on immediate implementation of service changes (interview with a male employee).

The performance measurement system is very weak because our status is not yet a permanent employee, so sometimes we only get performance appraisals from our superiors' perceptions which sometimes have no clear performance basis... Closeness to superiors is very influential in getting better appraisals because it is more subjective (interview with a male employee).

Temporary employees do not have a standardized evaluation method, leading to widespread criticism of the performance appraisal process. In addition, there have been cases where employee disputes have been reported, further contributing to workplace disputes (interview with male leader).

In certain cases, leaders and institutions set performance standards too high, resulting in heavy workloads and sometimes grievances. In addition, the absence of a clear link between rewards and performance can lead to demotivation among employees who perceive appraisals as subjective. Supervision of performance evaluations is lacking, resulting in a negative impact on employee performance.

Insufficient training and development

All participants agreed that the organization does not conduct development that is used for career advancement, only a few training that is aimed at training people to do their jobs well:

Leaders prioritize allocating resources to activities that directly influence organizational performance, such as procuring equipment for service delivery. From my perspective, this is because the benefits of training are not fully realized and are not immediately visible within the organization. Training sessions are rarely conducted, leading to employees' lack of enthusiasm to acquire new skills, as the training policy does not sufficiently promote technological advancement (interview with male employees).

I am not very good at technology in my job, but many young people are good at it... I think if the organization can promote the use of the latest technology; it will make it easier to do tasks with better efficiency (interview with male leader).

As a recent graduate with a youthful perspective, I believe that the organization has yet to fully harness the potential of technology to digitally revolutionize work processes. This could greatly improve the efficiency of public services provided to the community and foster a culture of knowledge creation and sharing among colleagues (interview with female employees).

Certain training programs are outdated; training and development are now needed to focus on the digitalization of services. In addition, organizations no longer conduct thorough assessments of training needs, leading to wasteful spending on irrelevant courses. Employees are also not motivated enough to share knowledge. As a result, some skilled temporary staff members leave, impacting the remaining employees' overall competence (interview with male employees).

Organizations view training as an expense rather than an investment, resulting in a limited training budget. Some employees have raised concerns that current training programs do not match the organization's current needs. In particular, there have been calls to prioritize

training in digital technologies to encourage knowledge sharing, improve productivity, and stimulate innovation. The organization's culture does not effectively support an appropriate learning environment, thus contributing to a lack of learning initiatives among employees.

The organization rarely invests in sending employees for up-skilling training... (interviews with female employees).

Although performance reviews were conducted, the absence of a performance development plan meant that we consistently observed similar performance declines each year (interviews with female employees).

The learning culture in the workplace is poor, and employees are not interested in continuing to develop themselves due to a lack of environmental support. As a result, skills shortages become a long-standing condition, and employee performance does not improve significantly. In an environment where learning is not valued or encouraged, initiatives to develop and improve skills tend to be stifled. This can hurt employees' ability to cope with the evolving demands and changes in their work.

The results of this study revealed several findings. First, although each organization (city government) initially successfully recruited based on skills, they struggled to retain employees' performance after joining. Second, employee satisfaction with the rewards (gifts or bonuses) received is low. Third, the performance appraisal system proved ineffective in motivating employees to achieve high performance. Finally, the employee training and development system fails to provide the necessary support or add value to organizational goals. The emphasis on the more "soft" aspects of human resource management in Bandung City positively impacts employees' ability to develop competencies. Push and pull factors can influence competency attraction and retention (Ferine et al., 2023; Boxall et al., 2016). Factors that can make employees consider leaving the workplace due to lack of commitment (Howard et al., 2016) and factors that attract potential employees to join the organization (Azmi et al., 2021; Garg & Dhar, 2017) are also significant. This research underlines those organizations (city governments) that offer extrinsic rewards (prospective civil servants) successfully attract quality talent. A more "hard" approach to human resource management is essential to match competency needs and individual qualification specifications (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). Meanwhile, a more "soft" approach to human resource management complements the "hard" approach by creating an attractive environment for highly talented employees (Blom et al., 2020; Cregan et al., 2021).

Concerning the research question, the city government has successfully attracted suitable talent, but its main weakness lies in its inability to improve employees' potential. This is in line with the challenges faced by human resource management in the public sector, particularly the limited authority of superiors (heads of departments) (Howard et al., 2016). The results show that organizations fail to recognize commendable performance, there is a disconnection between rewards and performance, training programs do not adapt to current organizational needs, and there is tension in the relationship between certain employees and their colleagues and superiors. When high expectations of employees are not met, this leads to frustration and reduced commitment to the organization (Ndevu, 2019; Nxumalo et al., 2018). In cases where human resource management falters, employees can become disconnected from organizational values (Sussman & DeJong, 2018). Nevertheless, improved employee performance can be achieved by developing a strong employee value proposition. Employees must find motivation in their work, and training programs must address performance gaps in the workplace (Cregan et al., 2021). Consistent with the perspective of Blom et al. (2020) on the inadequacy of adequate workplace training, this study highlights that some training

programs remain relevant, as they do not meet specific training needs. Organizational human resource management should adopt a more proactive approach, engaging in development initiatives in collaboration with external stakeholders (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022).

In the context of the research question, the study's findings suggest that inadequate human resource management practices lead to diminished commitment and a weakened learning culture aimed at enhancing performance (Collins, 2021; Makapela & Mtshelwane, 2021). Employee turnover results in a loss of institutional knowledge, ultimately eroding the competitive advantage dependent on human capital (Paltu & Brouwers, 2020). Kumari & Singh (2018) observed that employee turnover breeds insecurity, negatively impacting performance. These insights emerged from a series of conducted interviews. The study uncovered that most employees felt uncertain about their honorary status, leading to a decrease in their commitment and, subsequently, a decline in their work quality. Employee morale and commitment are directly correlated (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). When commitment wavers, unethical behavior can surface within the organization (Klinck & Swanepoel, 2019; Mauerhoefer et al., 2017). Commitment cannot be imposed; it's an organic sentiment that flourishes when employees feel a genuine connection (Senge, 2017). Jouda et al. (2016) affirmed that relational rewards are more effective than transactional rewards in fostering commitment.

Training and development enhance an organization's ability to adapt to a constantly evolving work environment (Sanders & Yang, 2016; Yazan & De Vasconcelos, 2016). In addition, they also improve skills within the organization and encourage innovation (Senge, 2017). However, employee skills development must be aligned with organizational goals and effectively address contemporary challenges (Garg & Dhar, 2017; Govender, 2017). This study shows that organizations often implement outdated training programs and face constraints in leveraging technology due to a lack of relevant skills. As a result, their capacity to innovate is limited. In the literature, talent management is often broadly discussed, covering all management levels. This tends to lead research on talent management to focus on issues such as low commitment and high turnover resulting from employees opting out (Collins, 2021; Makapela & Mtshelwane, 2021). The findings of this study differ from previous research, which suggests that talent management should be customized based on seniority level. The relatively favorable conditions at lower levels are due to the influence of collective bargaining structures, which aligns with previous studies' observations (Prasetyo & Saefudin, 2023; Makapela & Mtshelwane, 2021).

The findings contribute by introducing the concept of "adequate conditions," suggesting that investments in both "soft" and "hard" approaches to human resource management are becoming increasingly important for leadership teams and permanent employees. Investment in "soft" human resource management for leadership teams or permanent employees is critical to navigating the challenging and often conflictual urban environment characterized by politicization and collective bargaining. This dual contribution highlights the multidimensional nature of human resource management in a public sector context (Blom et al., 2020; Cregan et al., 2021). This research has some limitations. This study used a purposive sampling method, which targeted individuals considered more knowledgeable than others. As a result, the sample may not comprehensively represent the entire population. It is recommended that future research consider more representative sampling methods. In addition, the number of participants interviewed was small, limiting the findings' generalisability. Future research may benefit from methodologies that can capture perspectives from a larger sample. In addition, the direct involvement between the participants and the researcher may have increased the

risk of researcher bias. To mitigate this, it is recommended that future research utilize questionnaires.

CONCLUSIONS

Optimal employee performance does not happen automatically; employee performance is significantly affected by both "hard" and "soft" approaches to human resource management. Humans cannot be treated like machines; they are more motivated to perform well when a "soft" approach is applied to human resource management. A combination of "hard" and "soft" approaches in human resource management is required to achieve optimal performance. Although the local government context may differ from the private sector, the difference between "soft" and "hard" approaches in human resource management is negligible. Improving the performance of honorary employees in Bandung City government is an important priority for the success of public services and requires comprehensive research and strategic analysis. The implications of this study underscore that optimal employee performance does not happen automatically. It is mainly influenced by "hard" and "soft" approaches in human resource management. To improve employee performance in the Bandung government, prioritizing the success of public services is imperative. This goal requires in-depth strategic research and analysis to develop appropriate and effective human resource management approaches. This research provides important suggestions for implementing human resource management to maximize the performance of honorary employees. These recommendations include implementing a human resource management approach that combines "hard" and "soft" approaches, fostering a culture of continuous learning and strengthening management commitment, ensuring consistent income increases, fostering employee dedication, establishing an appropriate performance appraisal system, implementing appropriate reward practices, and investing in senior staff management development. By implementing these suggestions, it is expected that the performance of honorary employees can be improved, leading to an increase in the effectiveness of human resource management within the Bandung City government.

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