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## LESS EMOTION BUT MORE FATIGUE: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES, AND COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG EDUCATORS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Syamsul Gultom<sup>1\*</sup>, Dewi Endriani<sup>2</sup>, Agustin Sastrawan Harahap<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Sport Science, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Driven by a qualitative study which data from individual interviews were analyzed using Malterud's systematic text condensation, this research analyzed how educators perceived Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and compassion fatigue during online teaching in the COVID-19 pandemic among 20 educators at Universitas Negeri Medan. This study discovered two emotions such as satisfaction and relief. Enjoyment of and satisfaction with teaching, contentment with teaching, and pride might all be classified as satisfaction, while sentiments of finding teaching scary, burdensome, and unpleasant, as well as a lack of technological capability, could be classified as relief. The educators also show the characteristics of compassion fatigue that have increased since the pandemic, including physical or emotional exhaustion, feelings of being overwhelmed or helpless, feelings of sadness and anxiety, and reduced empathy.

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Corresponding address : Jalan Willem Iskandar, Pasar V Medan  
Estate, Percut Sei Tuan, Deli Serdang

\*Corresponding email : [syamsulgultom@unimed.ac.id](mailto:syamsulgultom@unimed.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced a pandemic on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, of the rapidly spreading SARS-CoV-2 virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020). Over 345 million cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed since then in 200 territories, leading in over 5 million deaths (Johns Hopkins University & Medicine, 2022). SARS-CoV-2 causes severe pneumonia with a death rate of 2.9 % (Wang, et.al., 2020). A truly global historical event, this pandemic has had a tremendous effect on our "normal" and will continue to do so. The United States has the highest death toll from COVID-19 in the world, owing to fast community spread and a poorly organized response. Local healthcare systems have been severely disrupted as an overwhelming number of patients seek care beyond the capability of the system.

In February, when Singapore and Malaysia experienced a fast increase in the virus's spread, Indonesia maintained that it had no cases of Covid-19. In Indonesia, the first case was reported on 2 March 2020, when two Indonesians became sick following interaction with many Japanese nationals (Ratcliffe, 2020). By 9 April 2020, COVID-19 instances had been detected in all of Indonesia's provinces (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Without rigorous containment efforts, the number of coronavirus mortality in Indonesia increased to the highest level in Southeast Asia. Indonesia had recorded 4 million cases and 144,199 deaths as a result of Covid-19 through 22 January 2022. (Johns Hopkins University & Medicine, 2022).

To assist the World Health Organization's (WHO) plan, the public must take a variety of preventive

measures, including physical separation, frequent washing hand with soap, building immunity through enough vitamin C and E intake, wearing masks, and sanitizer (Sawitri, 2020; Oh et al., 2020). In Indonesia, the government has set laws on social and physical distancing, as well as work from home (WFH), which must be implemented across all sectors, including education (Sofyanti, 2020). As a result, the Indonesian government suspended all educational institutions, from preschools to universities, in order to contain the spread of COVID-19. As a result, face-to-face teaching and learning methods have to be adapted to an e-learning environment. In practice, e-teaching and e-learning activities take place electronically (Wu & McGoogan, 2020) via WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, and Zoom Meeting. As a result, all academic institutions in Indonesia now offer online education as a means of overcoming the pandemic scenario.

Regrettably, some teachers have encountered challenges as a result of inadequate training in online teaching and learning (Li et al., 2020). Teachers usually required more time to become familiar with internet tools through file sharing or live lessons (Arribathi, et.al, 2021). These technical difficulties have had a psychological impact on educators (Li et al., 2020). A bad psychological state may impair immunity, resulting in an imbalance of physiological systems (Wajdi et al., 2020). Numerous studies have revealed that educators frequently experience overwhelming workloads, high levels of stress, and a high risk of secondary traumatic stress (Borntrager et al., 2012; McCarthy, 2019). The pandemic of COVID-19 has exacerbated these risk factors for educators (Green &

Bettini, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, a growing body of research established a link between educators' attitudes about their social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies and their classroom management efficacy, as well as their students' learning and social-emotional well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The current study assessed the effect of COVID-19 on educators' attitudes about their own SEL competence and to investigate educators' compassion fatigue when social and physical separation become alternate methods of preventing this deadly infection.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### Online Learning in University in Indonesia

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Indonesian government has implemented a program of suspending classrooms without interrupting the educational process, allowing schools and universities to do online learning. To implement this strategy, the Ministry of Health and Human Services issued a circular on March 17, 2020, which addressed online learning and working from home in the context of avoiding the spread of COVID-19. In its simplest form, online learning is the absence of face-to-face communication between lecturers and students in the classroom (Midgely, 2018). There is a significant distinction between online learning and face-to-face learning in that students of all educational levels can acquire instruction without ever having to physically attend a classroom. As a result, online learning provides a one-of-a-kind alternative for ensuring that learning continues during times of crisis, such as the recent global coronavirus pandemic.

Several countries, including Indonesia, confront significant challenges and limitations in the process of distant learning (Favale et al., 2020; Goldschmidt, 2020; Guernsey et al., 2020; Masters et al., 2020). However, this form of online learning must be maintained in order to allow students to finish their education even if the COVID-19 pandemic occurs. As a result, governments in a number of countries seek to establish structured home-based learning and guidance through their education ministries (Cao et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Setiawan & Ilmiyah, 2020). There has been an effort in Indonesia to produce a remote learning application named 'Rumah Belajar' that can be used on Android and PCs by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Abidah et al., 2020; Zaharah & Kirilova, 2020). Online courses and programs are essentially a mix of online learning and in-person instruction. "Zoom" and "Google Meet" are two examples of most commonly used software that allow students to participate in online classes and classrooms.

During this online learning, educators should manage things to provide online teaching and digital resources, regardless of their various levels of knowledge about technology. This has become like a new necessity for them to continue teaching in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This certainly adds to the workload of educators, especially for those who have a low level of knowledge of technology. The COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated the severity of these potential risk factors (Green & Bettini, 2020). Prior to the epidemic, a study discovered a link between instructors' perceptions of their own Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competency and classroom efficiency and student learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, their Social-Emotional

Learning (SEL) grows or decreases in a positive or negative manner depending on the lecturer's fatigue tolerance in this online learning environment.

In order to fill the research gaps identified above, this study explored the influences of educators' online teaching on SEL competence perceptions on their compassion fatigue. It also looked at how educators' SEL attitudes influenced the relationship between online teaching and compassion fatigue.

### **Emotion and Online Learning**

Identifying the links between emotions, online learning, and other difficulties can help us better comprehend the situation. Knowing how factors affecting the online learning experience and lecturers' emotional responses interact may help educational institutions support their online lecturers and encourage positive emotions, which could lead to increased lecturer satisfaction and student learning (Rowe, Fitness, & Wood, 2013).

This literature review discovered few classifications of emotions engaged in university teaching. Few distinguished between positive and negative emotions. Trigwell (2012) examined two ways lecturers emotionally view the teaching scenario, categorizing the feelings as motivation, shame, aggravation, worry, and pride. Rowe et al. (2013) identified positive emotions in online learning as joy/happiness, interest/excitement, love, self-awareness, and relief. Löfström and Nevgi (2013) categorized emotional responses to teaching as positive, neutral, or negative in another study.

However, few researches have focused on the emotions associated in university online instruction. Students' lack of preparation in regards to technology and their capacity to be self-disciplined in learning are all concerns expressed by online instructors,

according to Wickersham and McElhany (2010). Regan et al. (2012) went farther and found that some lecturers' feelings towards teaching online were negative. This made them frustrated, anxious, and undervalued (helpless and insecure). Additionally, they felt validated (grateful, proud, confident, and content) and energized (convenient, intrigued and liberated). When online educators make the transition from a student-centered learning environment to a direct instructional style, their self-esteem suffers (Santilli & Beck, 2005).

Numerous studies have discovered that lecturers' pedagogical knowledge also has an effect on their emotional responses to online learning. For example, when confronted with educational changes, lecturers with a more developed knowledge of education, individuals experience a broader and more complex range of feelings, such as befuddlement and worry (Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005). Additionally, lecturers' perceptions of their own knowledge are greatly and positively influenced by their degree of confidence in the classroom (Sadler, 2013).

A further part of a lecturer's personality that is related to the emotions experienced while teaching is his or her approaches to teaching. As demonstrated by Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi (2007), lecturers who regard themselves as efficient take a student-centered approach. Similarly, Kordts-Freudinger (2017) proved the emotional components of online learning methodologies by establishing a link between good emotions and a student-centered approach. Additionally, he believed that the cultural-educational background has an effect on emotions and approaches. As found by Badia et al (2014) The adoption of a student-centered approach to online learning was positively linked with motivation to

teach, pride, and self-evaluation as a lecturer, while the adoption of a lecturer-centered approach was positively connected with humiliation and anxiety (Trigwell, 2012).

Finally, views of online learning performance are related to teaching emotions. Numerous good feelings are associated with the delivery of the curriculum and with supportive student/staff relationships. Promoting learning objectives brought joy, happiness, and pride to being an educator, and building an effective teaching and learning process piqued the interest and excitement of both lecturers and students (Rowe et al., 2013). Thus far, it has been demonstrated that experience, expertise, techniques, and teaching performance all have an effect on instructors' emotional responses to teaching. Additionally, other well-studied components of lecturers' emotion, such as instructors' roles in online education will be considered to account for the purpose of our study.

### **Fatigue and Online Learning**

Although the literature has emphasized the relevance of educators' social and emotional competence (Collie et al., 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), the absence of a significant association between educators' social and emotional competencies and compassion fatigue may be explained by the changing nature of educators' work responsibilities and task demands in the new online learning environment. Working with students that demonstrate problematic behaviors, such as attention deficits, academic deficiencies, and violent and aggressive behaviors, has been shown to cause instructors to experience compassion fatigue. Tiesman et al., 2014; Brunsting et al., 2014).

Educators may spend additional time developing online teaching materials and learning new online teaching

technologies throughout online learning to adapt to the new teaching environment. They may spend significantly less time managing classrooms and resolving difficult behavioral issues than they do in traditional schools. Due to the diminished options for face-to-face interaction with kids and families with difficult behavioral difficulties during the social distancing and shelter-in-place situations, an insignificant correlation between SEL competencies and compassion fatigue may exist. Another possible explanation for the insignificant correlation is the data collection period. Although educators confront increased problems in assisting children and families through major transformations and tragic occurrences, the negative impacts of such experiences on educators' compassion fatigue may take longer to appear. Additionally, future research should evaluate how educators' ideas about SEL implementation affect their compassion fatigue throughout the epidemic.

### **METHOD**

This is a qualitative interview study. The study consists of 20 respondents, 10 women and 10 men, who are all online educators at Universitas Negeri Medan. The data collection procedure was carried out simultaneously for the online lecturers' emotions and fatigue during online teaching by interviewing them. The data were gathered through interviews that lasted approximately 30 minutes and were conducted via Whatsapp. Participants were asked to give their comments regarding their experience with online teaching. The writers conducted the interviews, who were educators at the same university. The interviewer recorded and transcribed the interviews. All writers collaborated on the analysis, which followed Malterud's 2001 system

of text condensation. The analysis was conducted in the following stages: i) reading all of the transcribes to form an overall impression (ii) identifying units of meaning, representing various aspects of the educator's and coding for these; (iii) abstracting the meaning within each of the coded groups; and (iv) summarizing the contents of each coded group to generalized descriptions and concepts reflecting the most significant attributive. The analysis was guided by a perspective on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competences and compassion fatigue, with a particular emphasis on the characteristics that educators considered as more important during online teaching.

## RESULT

### Association of SEL Competencies among Educators

Two distinct emotions have been identified in relation to teaching online at the university, which we have labeled satisfaction and relief with online teaching. The emotions identified by Löfström and Nevgi (2013) are easily associated with the categories included in the classification: teaching delight, fulfillment, and contentment may all go under the umbrella term "satisfaction," whereas negative emotions like "fear, burden, and discomfort" could be considered "relief.". The following chart depicts the average percentage of emotions experienced by lecturers at Medan State University when doing online teaching as a result of COVID-19.

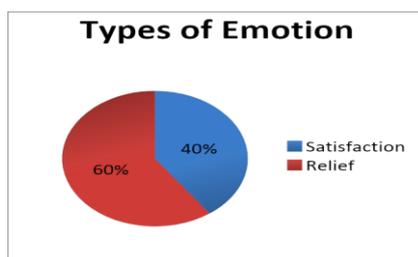


Fig 1. Types of Emotion

## DISCUSSION

### Satisfaction

Lecturers' feelings of fulfillment, joy, and interest in their online classes are described as satisfaction with online teaching. There are a variety of elements that can have a favorable impact on the emergence of feelings connected with satisfaction. Specifically, the emotions associated with lecturer satisfaction are strongly associated with the ability of students to use an online or electronic environment to complete their learning objectives correctly. This enables educators to implement online instruction that is not constrained by a lack of social connection throughout the course, a lack of technological preparedness on the part of students, or their capacity for self-disciplined learning. Lecturers' attitudes toward online (adaptable, participative) instruction are influenced not just by their roles as instructional designers and student guides, but also by their commitment to creating strong social relationships with students and with one another.

In this research, eight out of twenty participants (40%) expressed satisfaction with their online teaching experience. This is owing to the fact that their students have the ability to utilize technology. It is explained by one of participant, as one of the said:

“I feel comfortable teaching in this online manner. Because, this is the most effective way to continue learning during this COVID-19. Additionally, I have no serious difficulties teaching online. Because students are genuinely more proficient than I am at using educational technologies. This presents no difficulties in terms of online learning strategies”.

Happiness and pride in being a lecturer are two other aspects of educator satisfaction, and constructing an

appropriate teaching and learning process was a source of interest and excitement. Pride is one of the emotions that fall under the category of satisfaction (Trigwell, 2012). As one of a participant said:

“I have no preference for either online or face-to-face teaching. I enjoy and am comfortable in my career. Because teaching has been ingrained in my life, no one can prevent me from teaching, even remotely. Additionally, technology has advanced to a point where there is no reason to complain, since everything has been simplified”.

Lecturer's role including motivation for teaching, evaluation of oneself as a lecturer and teaching accomplishment is also the emotion that falls under this satisfaction category. To assist students in gaining access to content quickly, easily, and securely while also allowing lecturers to track students' specific study, instructors must employ and understand multimedia technology with interconnected digital content. As one of the participant said:

“I am aware that the role of a lecturer is to teach, and it must still be done even in conditions that are not too comfortable for the lecturer because of the changes in methods. It's the same as learning online like this. For me, who has never had experience in online teaching before, this is a bit difficult. But I have motivation as a lecturer, which is to continue teaching whatever the method. It also allows me to learn new things, such as how to use technology for online learning. I have to master it to present my material in a virtual class. It was a bit complicated at first, but as I kept trying and learning, I got used to it and had fun doing it.”

Effective online learning is only possible if both lecturers and students understand how to use media to learn. Lecturers' professionalism in the

classroom will increase their drive and dedication to teach something new using ways they have never used before (Badia, et al, 2018).

### **Relief**

Emotions associated with the ease or tension of teaching online is referred to as relief. The content acquisition method has an inverse effect on relief. (Badia, et al, 2018). There are a variety of elements that can have a favorable impact on the emergence of feelings connected with relief. According to Trigwell (2012), anxiety can be classified as a type of relief emotion. According to Regan et al (2012), worried, apprehensive, assured, communication anxiety, detached, powerless, or insecure are all easily related with the relief category. The findings indicate that there is a statistically significant negative link between the educators and the emotion of relief. Some of the participant's feelings about teaching being intimidating, burdensome, and unpleasant may be applicable to this online learning and teaching environment.

In this research, twelve out of twenty participants (60%) expressed relief with their online teaching experience. This is due to the fact that they are more flexible in one area, which is face-to-face learning. This type of change (online learning) will have an impact on the ability of lecturers to communicate effectively, particularly when delivering material. This can have a negative impact on students' feelings of empowerment and emotion toward the course as a result of the course design. As one of participant said:

“I felt like disconnected with students when I was teaching online. Like they have different understanding from what I have explained about the material. I am sure it is because I don't really good at communicating with them through this media, and they also don't feel free to ask me in this virtual class.”

Titsworth et al. (2010) discovered that when lecturers are good listeners, their verbal competence has a positive effect on student emotion, whereas when lecturers are poor listeners, their speaking ability has a negative effect on student mood.

Also, lecturers' lack of social awareness can lead to misunderstood perceptions of others' intentions and communication, which can prolong unfavorable interactions between educators and students. For instance, educators who are socially aware are more likely to detect and comprehend their students', colleagues', and family members' emotions. Educators who are not socially aware are less prone to unknowingly engage in coercive cycles with students (Buettner et al., 2016; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As one of the participant said:

“I only interacted with students while teaching in class, and even then I never discussed other things besides lecture material. Therefore, online teaching tends to be a burden for me where I have to interact more than with students to increase their willingness to attend my class which tends to be monotonous especially if it is done virtually”.

Inadequate grasp of how to use technology is the final indicator in this category of relief. According to several participants, they were required to spend a significant amount of time designing and developing online learning using these technology mediums. The educators' lack of preparedness for technology and their inability to exercise self-discipline in teaching went a step further in demonstrating that some of the feelings teachers had about online teaching were truly negative (Regan et al, 2012). As one of them said:

“Because I teach online, I have to spend more time learning how to use this virtual classroom media than I do making learning materials.” When I go to class, I don't have

to go through all of this. This is a waste of my time. So, I think that my workload has gotten bigger because I took this online class. But, what can I do? This must still be done for the benefit and safety of many people”.

### **Compassion Fatigue among Educators**

After the interview transcripts were evaluated, the interview findings were grouped based on many features of compassion fatigue felt by the educators. Compassion fatigue is characterized by physical or emotional exhaustion, feelings of being overwhelmed or helpless, feelings of sadness and anxiety, and reduced empathy arising from frequent exposure to the misery of vulnerable groups (Najjar, et. al, 2009). With a major decline in their compassion and empathy, those experiencing compassion fatigue no longer feel psychologically competent at delivering care to their clients.

### **Physical or emotional exhaustion**

The educators experience tremendous exhaustion both physically and emotionally. The physical fatigue that they always feel, both male and female, lies in the eye resistance which requires them to look at the laptop screen during the teaching process. Some of them also admit that their eyes water quickly and are increasingly sensitive to light. If it continues for a long time, then this will become a serious problem for educators

“Because I have to stay in front of the laptop screen for hours, my eyes get tired quickly. So, I can't teach for long, I just want to keep my eyes closed. That's why sometimes I turn off the front camera, so they can just listen to my explanation without having to look at my face.” (No. 3)

Body aches are also an impact that educators experience when teaching online. Being in front of a laptop or computer requires them to stay in a sitting position until teaching hours are over. They complain of muscle pain and stiff back, this can happen because they do not have the opportunity to stretch as in face-to-face teaching.

“The physical pain that hurts the most is in the back because I sit a lot, when I used to study offline, I stood a lot while explaining.” (No. 19)

Emotionally, educators feel they become more emotional and cynical more quickly. They do not believe some of the reasons given by students for their absence, they think that indeed the students become lazy because they are not physically close. They also admit that these emotional changes have occurred since the pandemic started, even though they are sure that before Covid-19 existed they were not so emotional.

“I get angry when a student doesn't turn on the camera, I feel like I'm not being noticed. Even before the pandemic, if there were students who didn't focus on me, I would at least reprimand them. If it's hard to negotiate now, they just have a reason.” (No. 4)

“Due to online lectures, students give various reasons for not attending, even though they are lazy. Some say the network doesn't exist, even though last week he came in and the network was good. Some say the internet package has run out, their siblings are busy coming to their house, the cell phone memory is full, and so on.” (No. 16)

### **Feelings of being Overwhelmed or Helpless**

Not infrequently, educators also feel overwhelmed, especially in

managing their daily schedules and in operating technology during the early stages of a pandemic. For old lecturers, they feel they can no longer keep up with technological sophistication, such as operating various online teaching support software. They always need the help of tech-savvy people around them during class.

“I've been a lecturer for a long time, I'm old too. That's why I'm less responsive to technology. At the beginning of the pandemic there was socialization but still I didn't understand. My grandson taught me many times, but he couldn't remember me.” (No. 8)

Educators also find it difficult to remember their teaching schedule. Because usually when the face-to-face learning process is done, they are still in the campus environment until the teaching hours are over, their minds are focused on teaching. But when the pandemic started, they were at home all day, and their focus was broken.

“Because I teach from home, I often get carried away with time. A lot of homework makes me sometimes forget my teaching hours, but fortunately there are some students who want to remind me first, and some don't. And mostly, they don't remember me.” (No. 2)

### **Feelings of Sadness and Anxiety**

The educators also began to feel less about their abilities when faced with the suffering of students continuously. They are afraid that the knowledge they provide is not commensurate with the suffering that students go through to attend their classes. Some of the problems faced by students are the absence of a signal, lack of concentration, the economy is difficult to buy internet quota, and the absorption of the material being taught.

“Every night I wonder if my students understand what I teach. They were nice, listened to me, and turned on the camera. But I'm afraid that their minds will wander and they won't be able to absorb the material I explain, in the end it's useless for them to study expensively but they don't understand.” (No. 15)

I feel sorry for the students in the village, they often don't have a signal. So, I have to go a long way to get that signal for my class. Sometimes their struggles make me afraid that the knowledge I give is worth it. Not to mention there are students whose economy is difficult, they have to buy internet quota even though it is difficult to eat.” (No. 20)

### **Reduced empathy**

As the pandemic progressed, the empathy of educators towards students began to fade. This is the final characteristic of compassion fatigue, educators are used to some of the suffering experienced by students.

“I rarely appreciate student exam results since this pandemic, because I know they must be cheating not from their own thoughts.” (No. 17)

“Since this covid, whether students want to attend or not, that's their business, maybe they have many things that are more priority than class, I can't force it either.” (No. 19)

Since the pandemic, all educators in the study reported increased levels of compassion fatigue. Teachers with lower compassion satisfaction and greater burnout were more likely to express their intention to leave the area of education, according to research (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). From the results of the interview analysis of educators, they can overcome compassion fatigue if they are accustomed and confident in their ability

to carry out the online learning process, this is in line with the results of previous research. (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Working with students that exhibit problematic behaviors, such as attention deficits, academic shortcomings, and violent and aggressive behaviors, has been proven to lead to instructors' compassion fatigue (Brunsting et al., 2014). Educators may spend additional time developing online teaching materials and learning new online teaching technologies during distant learning in order to adapt to the new teaching environment (Yang, 2021).

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine the types of emotions educators experience and to investigate educators' compassion fatigue as a result of their experience teaching online at a university. These findings create a new classification of emotions in education, which may prove valuable in classifying the plethora of emotions related with university teaching that have been recognized in previous contributions. This study discovered two emotions previously identified by Löfström and Nevgi (2013). Enjoyment of and satisfaction with teaching, contentment with teaching, and pride might all be classified as satisfaction, while sentiments of finding teaching scary, burdensome, and unpleasant, as well as a lack of technological capability, could be classified as relief. The educators also show the characteristics of compassion fatigue that have increased since the pandemic, including physical or emotional exhaustion, feelings of being overwhelmed or helpless, feelings of sadness and anxiety, and reduced empathy.

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