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Wake up and get some sleep: Reviewing workplace napping and charting future directions

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ABSTRACT

Although research demonstrates the importance of napping for health and well-being within work settings, the topic has resulted in limited empirical investigations, fragmented literary results, and an elusive understanding of whether napping should be normalized in the workplace. Also, what needs to be clarified are the benefits of workplace napping (WN) and the role of human resource managers in promoting the practice of WN. A systematic, narrative synthesis approach is used to review the existing WN literature, conceptualize WN, and discuss its benefits for employee relations, productivity, and the role of human resource managers on WN. Finally, based on this conceptual backdrop, future research questions are proposed that help pave the way for the normalization of WN.

1. Introduction

Many organizations are examining how workplace well-being activities can be improved given global disruptions (Vakkayil et al., 2017). Employee well-being is referred to as the overall sense of contentment and assurance experienced by a person in the workplace (Saunders et al., 2022) and it determines an organization's long-term effectiveness (Litchfield et al., 2016). It is affected by many aspects of work (e.g., physical workspaces, corporate culture, climate, work flexibility, and autonomy, etc. (Pilcher & Morris, 2020). Research shows a direct link between productivity levels and the general health and welfare of the workforce and well-being is a necessity as firms feel that their most important resources are their human resources (the people) (Stirpe et al., 2022; Miller, 2016; Sharpe & Mobasher Fard, 2022). Accordingly, recovery has an important place as a part of well-being-related practices.

Recovery is "returning the psycho-physiological systems that were activated during work to baseline level" by allowing employees space and time to be free of work demands (Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006, p. 483). Like the "incubation effect," the recovery process suggests that temporarily stepping away from problem-solving activities can enhance

creative problem-solving capacity (Ellwood, Pallier, Snyder, & Gallate, 2009). During this time, the mind relaxes and subconsciously processes information, leading to fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Thus, offering employees breaks for activities like getting coffee, listening to music, or chatting with co-workers allows employees to engage in stress reduction, relaxation, and recovery (Gallo, 2017; Meek, 2014). Workplace napping¹ (WN) (aka sleeping at work and workplace sleeping) is one specific type of recovery that is popular among organizations (Alger et al., 2019; Pilcher & Morris, 2020; Magnavita and Garbarino, 2017) and¹ has been a topic of critical importance and a taboo in the workplace.

The concept of napping has experienced significant advancements in recent years with various firms across the globe making it work. Moreover, as evidenced by study results that have substantiated multiple benefits, particularly for those in working environments. For example, taking a 30-min nap in the afternoon in a pleasant and peaceful setting leads to significant enhancements in various areas, such as mental well-being, cognitive abilities, and increased productivity throughout the day (Toma, 2023; Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, although it may appear contradictory to increasing productivity, incorporating regular napping

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¹ A nap is a short sleep that usually occurs during the day (e.g. during lunch break for employees). (Yun and Beehr, 2023 pg. 1322).

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into one's routine has yielded numerous advantages. By promoting the practice of allowing employees to choose sleep over work, you increase the likelihood of improved long-term performance from both your workforce and your firm (Newsom, 2021). Examples of the benefits include enhanced productivity, superior problem-solving skills, and innovative thinking (Schooley, 2023; Davis, 2023).

In addition, employees with disrupted sleep schedules are six times more likely to be involved in work mishaps than other workers (Åkerstedt & Wright, 2009; Jehan et al., 2017; Uehli et al., 2014; Drake et al., 2004). Thus, many employees in the workplace rely on an afternoon nap to get through their workdays (Irish et al., 2015). As the impacts associated with poor and inadequate sleep are vast, some have declared that public health should be concerned about a sleep crisis (Barnes & Drake, 2015; Krizan and Hisler, 2019). Therefore, providing employees access to additional sleep opportunities at the workplace may increase their well-being, creativity and productivity.

However, the acceptance of workplace napping (WN) is not universal. For example, in the United States, napping on the job often carries the stigma of laziness and unproductivity (Alger et al., 2019). While taking a nap at work may have been seen as defiance against organizational objectives, firms are increasingly encouraging their workers to nap or sleep in the office by promoting its recovery qualities and link to enhanced productivity (Robinson, 2021). For example, when Arianna Huffington fainted from exhaustion at work, she regarded it as a wake-up call. She wrote a story titled "The Sleep Revolution" — their New York City headquarters now boasts two napping rooms (Mahdawi, 2016). Employee sleep pods are available at Google and Facebook headquarters for mid-afternoon power naps² (Mattei, 2021). Uber has a designated area for employee power napping. Zappos' Las Vegas headquarters has a nap room with a giant fish tank surrounding it (Blank, 2018). Potato, a tech firm in the UK, has installed sleeping pods, and Swedish firm Forza has Zen rooms in its office to boost productivity and creativity (Benge, 2017). A logistics company in Dubai encourages employees to take power naps post-lunch to cope with work pressure and long hours (Kannan, 2014). In a final example, RentoMojo, a start-up from India, offers nap rooms to reduce employee stress and fatigue and thus improve their work quality (Iyengar, 2019).

As WN may be a new consideration for some organizations and HR managers, questions may remain about whether employees should be permitted to sleep at work and whether WN should be normalized in organizations. If WN is allowed, that may raise additional questions like, "How much should sleep time be provided at work?" and "How should human resource policies and practices respond to, or support, workplace napping?" Given the tension surrounding the impact of sleep deprivation and the growing conversation about whether napping should be allowed in the workplace, this study aims to comprehensively review the dispersed literature on WN and offer directions for HR managers. In addition, the only article that attempted to review WN was published over a decade ago by Baxter and Kroll-Smith (2005). Moreover, Baxter and Kroll-Smith's (2005) research is qualitative, where eight informant interviews and two follow-ups were conducted, including interviews with CEOs of consulting businesses focusing on napping strategies and managers of businesses that have implemented napping policies. The interviews aimed to gather expertise on the emergence of workplace napping and its relationships to time and productivity. Thus, given the research limitations that date back more than a decade ago, a comprehensive review is warranted to contextualize the conversation about WN and develop an agenda for future research.

The current article aims to inform those seeking to explore the concept of WN within business and management disciplines and, more specifically, within the context of human resource management. Our review and synthesis approach significantly contributes to the

management and human resources literature in multiple ways. To begin, we develop a refined and succinct definition of WN that accurately captures the fundamental nature of this phenomenon: WN is "the active form of recovery process via sleep whereby an employee detaches from work to conserve physical and psychological resources". The psychological detachment might last an ongoing duration ranging from 10 to 45 min. Our definition expands the boundaries by exploring the subtle aspects of WN, enabling researchers to understand the phenomena comprehensively by considering diverse theories and causes at various levels of investigation. The overall outcome is enhanced clarity of concept, which establishes a solid basis for management researchers.

To do so, the article is structured as follows: a) the methods used for the literature review are presented, b) the current body of published WN literature from various sources (e.g., journal articles, conference papers, anecdotal evidence, news articles, etc.) is reviewed, c) the WN literature is thematically analyzed to identify WN themes to prompt theory development, and d) a WN framework based on the review and analysis of the literature is presented to assist academic and practitioners seeking to understand WN and its application., and e) the paper will contribute to the continuing debate on WN by providing direction for organizations, HR managers, and academics researching workplace napping, employee well-being, employee engagement, and employee productivity. The current article aims to inform human resource management and policy interventions that support positive WN norms and applications.

2. Methodology

Given the novelty of the WN topic, the highly fragmented literature spanning various disciplines, and the need for more empirical and theoretical insights on conceptualized WN, the current review adopts a scoping review to search multiple databases and collect relevant information from reputable sources in the popular press and research media. Scoping reviews are deemed effective when there is little or heterogeneous data on a theme. This may emerge when evidence on a given topic still generates conflicting views or when there are conflicting views (Munn et al., 2018).

2.1. Identification of relevant articles

The first step consists of data search and collection. The Scopus database was chosen as it is the most widely used to retrieve peer-reviewed journals (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). The keywords were determined by reading general organizational management literature (across databases and not restricted to journal articles), iterating synonyms, and peer suggestions (Anand, Doll, Centobelli, Singh, & Cerchione, 2023) (see Table 1 for the complete search equation). To increase the likelihood of covering more comprehensive literature on WN, Ott and Michailova's (2018) suggestions were adopted. For instance, keyword searches in Scopus were extended to other major scientific repositories, including ProQuest, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. Publications, such as conference papers, journal articles, book chapters, and online news articles, were included – as adopted in review studies such as (Anand et al., 2023; Wilson, 2015).

2.2. Articles screening and selection process

After selecting relevant publications, a reverse search was performed to find any papers cited in the obtained publications that were not found via the keyword search. The following inclusion criteria were then applied to the results of this initial search. First, (a) the work needed to explicitly address WN/sleep/rest in the article. Second, (b) these settings should be aimed at individual, group, relational or organizational levels. Articles that did not directly meet the goal of conceptualizing and debating WN were eliminated from the narration. After careful investigation, the final dataset identified 96 publications for inclusion.

² A power nap is a brief period of sleep during the daytime to revitalize people – when they are feeling burned out (<https://amerisleep.com/>).

Table 1
Keyword search in scopus.

Keyword Protocol Applied in Databases
("Workplace Nap*" OR "Workplace Napp*" OR "Workplace Sleep*" OR "office nap*" OR "office sleep*" OR "workplace sleep* pods" OR "sleep*-at-work" OR "sleep promotion at work" OR "workplace dozing" OR "workplace asleep" OR "Office Dozing" OR "Office Asleep" OR "Asleep at the workplace")

2.3. Articles analysis process

Third, the data was then thematically coded inductively by four researchers, where the principal emerging codes were (1) definitions/characteristics of WN, (2) WN theory, and (3) WN context (e.g., country, size of firms, type of firms, etc.). Utilizing the scoping systematic review method (see Fig. 1), the present investigation examined the literature on WN to ascertain its causes, effects, and ramifications for future researchers. This literature review examines the interrelationships, contradictions, and deficiencies present in the entirety of the existing body of work. Therefore, based on the collected data, this study provides suggestions for further investigation and supports in forming logical judgments (Dehkharghani et al., 2023; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). Following the recommendations of Anand et al. (2023), a qualitative synthesis was conducted. Anand et al. (2023) state that qualitative synthesis examines the literature by collecting and organizing numerous pieces of information into a comprehensible format. Our methodology comprised the creation of an Excel spreadsheet and the categorization of qualitative literature data. Following the coding process, we accumulated the identified patterns (often developed with coded literature and the author's interpretation) in the literature to form a meaningful understanding of the findings. These patterns also assisted us in identifying research gaps and potential future directions. Additionally, the data obtained from scoping review study was further developed using a systematic approach to record, analyze, and synthesize all the relevant research on a particular topic (Tranfield et al., 2003; Green et al., 2006; Geofroy & Evans, 2017) into a readable format (Green et al., 2006; Ferrari, 2015).

3. Findings and discussion

Although the term WN sometimes overlaps and/or is used interchangeably, the practice of *napping* differs from the related acts of *rest* and *sleep* (see Appendix 1 for details). Rest is the broadest category, and resting people can be asleep, napping, or relaxing (i.e., refraining from strenuous physical or cognitive activity) (Buysse, 2014). Rest usually involves reduced activity and does not include the same level of disengagement as when an individual is asleep (Sleep.org, 2021).

Sleep is a naturally recurring state of mind and body, characterized by altered consciousness, relatively inhibited sensory activity, reduced muscle activity, inhibition of nearly all voluntary muscles during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep (Ferri et al., 2008), and reduced interactions with surroundings. Sleep can be categorized by level of sleep, going from Stage 1 (light sleep) to Stage 3 (deepest sleep) (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).

Naps, however, are a type of sleep, sometimes called 'short sleep' (Lovato & Lack, 2010). Beyond differences in the stage of sleep achieved (i.e., deep sleep involves reaching deeper stages of sleep than naps), there are differences in the amount of time naps require (Lovato & Lack, 2010). While the length of naps varies, they typically last for 30–40 min. A "power nap"³ is a brief nap of fewer than 30 min. Some researchers say power naps can be shorter than 20 min (Santhi, 2022).

Of particular interest to applying napping at work is that the duration of naps has been shown to influence alertness and cognition (Lovato &

Lack, 2010). Naps of all durations (from 5 min to a maximum of 2 h) have been demonstrated to boost awareness in some ways (Brooks & Lack, 2005). However, the benefits manifest after the nap are distinguished by different lengths (Brooks & Lack, 2006). However, most researchers in medical science agree that naps should not exceed 30 min because the body begins a prolonged rest at that time, and awakening from a deep sleep (achieved after approximately 90 min) might result in fatigue (Lawler, 2021). In situations where sleep is possible but the amount of sleep is limited, napping is the most effective non-pharmacological technique for sustaining alertness (Debellemiere et al., 2018; Cousins et al., 2019; Bollu & Kaur, 2019).

3.1. Employee well-being outcomes

Employee well-being, which includes the overall sense of contentment and assurance experienced by individuals in the workplace (Saunders et al., 2022), has lately been referred to as the "ultimate criterion" for organizational research (Tay et al., 2023). Employee well-being is a broad construct has been recently conceptualized by Tay et al. (2023) as employees that are engaged in "optimal functioning" which goes beyond earlier conceptualizations that primarily focused on employee engagement, life, and job satisfaction as indicators of well-being (e.g., Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, Witte, & Alarco, 2008). In terms of supporting "optimal functioning," WN may serve a unique role (Evans, 2014).

Numerous studies provide evidence for the health benefits of napping, including improving accuracy, cognitive performance, concentration, creativity, mood, memory, perception, reaction time, subjective and objective alertness, and psychomotor performance vigilance while decreasing drowsiness and exhaustion (see Gillberg et al., 1996; Lau et al., 2010; Lovato & Lack, 2010; Mattei, 2021; McDevitt et al., 2018; Sandybayev, 2019; Ben Simon and Walker, 2018). Results of Ru et al. (2022) showed that a short midday nap improved sustained attention. Moreover, taking one or two naps a week improves immune functions and reduces stress and the risk of stroke, heart attack, and heart failure (Faraut et al., 2015; Hausler et al., 2019). Furthermore, additional benefits of WN may more directly affect employee outcomes.

3.2. Work outcomes

For employees experiencing sleep deficits, taking short naps during the workday effectively increases productivity (Fisher et al., 2019; Dune, 2019) Research demonstrates that in addition to the benefits of napping mentioned above, power naps can rejuvenate employees, enhance work performance, reduce work mistakes, and reduce accidents in the workplace (Robinson, 2021; Shwab, 2020; Bonnet, 1990, 1991; Yazdi et al., 2014) Napping is a convenient way to augment sleep deficits and is prevalent among shift workers and those with short sleep schedules (Lovato & Lack, 2010). For night-shift employees, napping reduces fatigue at Work (Ruggiero & Redeker, 2014) and boosts productivity (van Oostveen & Vermeulen, 2014; Brooks, 2021) However, WN's benefits are frequently underappreciated by employees and HR managers (Pilcher & Morris, 2020).

Though napping at work may seem irresponsible to some, WN is related to lower absenteeism, on-the-job errors, and healthcare costs (Mattei, 2021; McDevitt et al., 2018). Additionally, a recent report shows that among American employees, those who nap at work are 18% more likely than non-nappers to report receiving a promotion in the past year (Jackson, 2021), suggesting that WN may help individuals increase

³ James B. Maas coined the term power nap in 1998 to promote the implementation of naps during the workday. There's no medical definition for a power nap, but in general, the term refers to short naps ranging from about 10 to 30 min (see <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/power-naps/>).

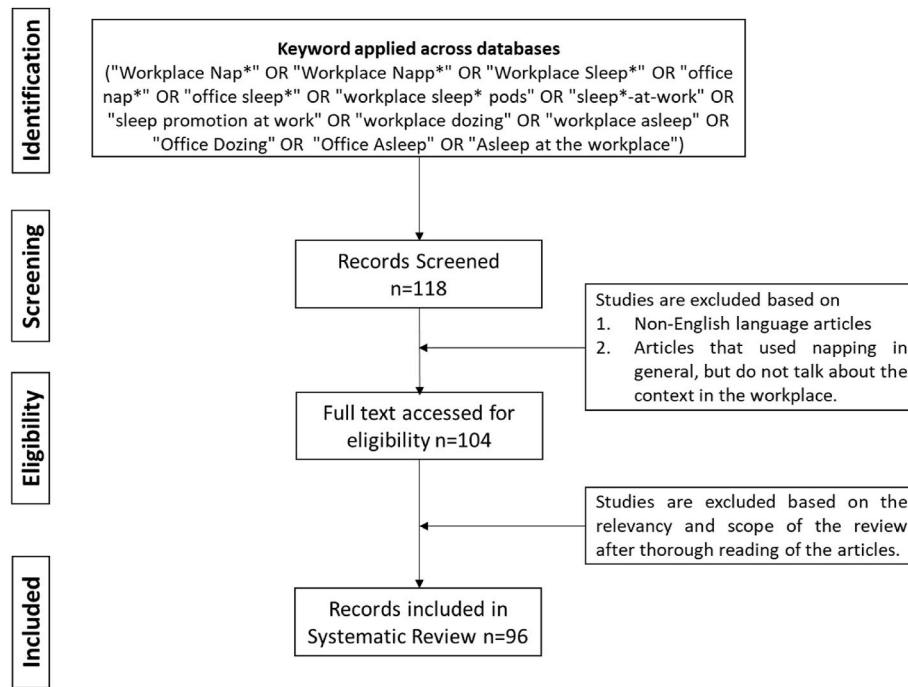


Fig. 1. Summary of the methodology adopted in this study.

work productivity and performance. Jackson (2021) also reports that 55% of nappers work in managerial roles, compared to 41% of non-nappers. This data suggests that napping may predict higher job status or that those with more status have more access to WN. Overall, the higher level of productivity and/or creativity among nappers explains why sleeping on the job is starting to be accepted and encouraged as part of the job experience — rather than a cause for dismissal (Little, 2022).

Hence, employer policies that actively encourage WN may increase employee well-being, productivity, and organizational performance. As HR managers often want to ensure that organizations have mechanisms to decrease risk factors and improve employee health, well-being, and performance, supporting WN may add to these efforts. Understanding the length of nap required for increased effectiveness is a good place to start for those considering supporting WN. It is worth noting that according to Dutheil et al. (2021), gender and age were found to have no significant influence on cognitive performance, and factors such as nap duration and the time interval between the nap and cognitive assessment did not show any significant effects either. However, most of the studies included in their meta-analyses were conducted in laboratory settings, making it challenging to apply the results to real-world work conditions directly.

3.3. Demographic differences in WN

In addition to culture, demographic differences within cultures may also play a role in WN. For example, Hale et al. (2020) report that inadequate sleep is more common among low-income and underrepresented groups. For example, people with lower socioeconomic status are more likely than others to suffer from stress, making it difficult for them to fall asleep (Grandner et al., 2010a). The lack of sleep contributes to a greater incidence of health traumas such as cardiovascular disease and dementia. Curtis et al. (2017) found that disparities in sleep amount and/or quality account for more than half of the differences in health outcomes between White and Black people. Furthermore, a comprehensive study by Chen et al. (2015), incorporating both lab testing and self-reports from over 2000 US participants, discovered that when matched for age and gender, Black respondents were five times more

likely to sleep for shorter periods than White respondents. In addition, Hispanic and Chinese-American respondents were about twice as likely as White respondents to obtain fewer hours of sleep (Chen et al., 2015).

According to Hale et al. (2020), a lack of control over one's life, financial difficulties, and racial discrimination can all affect an individual's ability to get adequate rest and sleep. For example, people who identify as Black and/or African-American typically report higher levels of job-related stress than their White counterparts. Thus, differences in sleep exist based on color, employment level, socioeconomic status, etc. Additionally, the napping context may also differ across generations. For instance, 80% of Gen Z'ers report taking naps, as compared to 70% of Millennials (Richard, 2021). Finally, there may also be differences between employees identifying as "nappers." For example, those who identify as nappers often use "power naps" to boost cognitive functions like memory and alertness, increasing work performance (Jackson, 2021).

3.4. Cultural differences in WN

In addition to the nature of the job, the industry, and features conducive to WN available in the work environment, support for WN varies by culture and geographic location. While in South Africa, WN may still be perceived as taboo (Businessstech, 2019), afternoon naps are popular in Spain, most of Latin America, Italy, and Greece (Mantua & Spencer, 2017). The "siesta," or the sixth hour of daylight ("hora sexta"), is a well-known afternoon nap break, allowing people to work later and spend more time with family in the evening (Mantua & Spencer, 2017). In the Mediterranean, a 3-h break during the work day for lunch, followed by a restorative nap, is typical. In addition, "fear sleep," also known as "todoet poeles" is a common practice in Indonesian culture for coming out of work-related stress and falling asleep quickly to avoid extreme stress (Ebert, 2019). In Japan, taking a nap at work is known as "inemuri," meaning "sleeping while present." It is considered a sign of expended effort if Japanese workers nap on public transportation or at workstations (Kakamu et al., 2021). Daydreaming or sleeping at work is perceived as a sign of devotion to work that blurs lines with burnout and exhaustion. Similarly, in Việt Nam, it's ngủ-trưa. Vietnam was predominantly an agrarian society for an extended period of time.

Following a strenuous morning of agricultural labor, farmers seek break from the intense heat and indulge in a big supper, to prepare for the forthcoming afternoon of doing the same tough tasks (Nolan, 2022).

In China, many firms recommend taking a brief nap after lunch to improve concentration in the afternoon. According to Chinese tradition, sleep is integral to the body's natural Yin (a passive force) and Yang (an active force). Yin and Yang work together to make individuals tired, and disrupting the natural cycle of these forces is undesirable. According to this view, Shanghai has "nap bars" near executive centers where employees can take power naps to soft music (Vyas, 2016).

3.5. Cultural shifts in embracing WN

In *Myths of Modern American Sleep*, Wolf-Meyer (2014) notes that "sleep is socially constructed and culturally conditioned" (p. 210). Current sleeping norms suggest a consolidated sleeping time during the night, rooted in practices of early agrarian societies. In this context, people get up early with the rising sun, go to work, conduct productive activities, spend time with their families in the evening, and then sleep during the night. Such norms significantly influence what is considered "normal" and "abnormal" sleeping habits across modern societies. Myths lacking scientific evidence also influenced early belief systems, resulting in other historically recorded, albeit less influential narratives, such as the after-lunch nap (Robbins et al., 2019). As early agrarian societies constructed their sleeping habits within the context of their environment, today's societies do the same, acknowledging that the current climate has advanced and pervasive technology across different work institutions and situations (Wolf-Meyer, 2014; Hocking, 2017). The importance of considering environmental and individual characteristics in napping is highlighted. Dutheil et al. (2021) indicate that an early afternoon nap aligns with the natural dip in alertness dictated by our circadian rhythm. However, it suggests that individuals may benefit more from napping according to their circadian rhythm rather than strictly adhering to clock time.

About a decade ago, companies began to create organizational cultures that focused on employee well-being by providing healthy food alternatives, workplace engagement programs, extra days off, etc. (Pescud et al., 2015; Millea et al., 2008). While sleep was left out of the equation in early well-being programs, recently, there has been a gradual shift in organizational mindsets in this direction. For example, there is ample evidence to indicate that sleep (Sonntag et al., 2008; Steed, Swider, Keem, & Liu, 2021) is an effective method for restoring energy and attaining recovery outside of work hours (Chan et al., 2022). Accordingly, there are nap rooms at Nike, Ben and Jerry's, Proctor & Gamble, Facebook, etc. (Alger et al., 2019; Brody, 2022). These firms have installed sleeping pods and/or provided space for people to take naps — embedding WN as a practice within the organizational culture. Firms investing in sleep are hoping for returns in terms of employee health and productivity. For instance, Ben & Jerry's headquarters in Burlington, Vermont, has had a nap room for about ten years. The firm believes this is part of its greater corporate culture and philosophy that a happy employee is productive (Martinez-Carter, 2014).

To encourage its employees' well-being and establish a culture that firmly promotes self-care, Wakefit, an Indian start-up, is the first company to implement a "right to nap" policy allowing employees to nap or sleep for up to 30 min (Sharma, 2022). The organization notes that an afternoon nap is essential for energizing the mind, refocusing attention on assigned tasks, boosting worker efficiency, and increasing commitment to the workplace. Thus, such initiatives may help normalize WN, allowing other employers to gradually recognize WN's significance and support it within the workplace.

3.6. Industry-wide napping patterns

Industry-wide napping patterns can be delineated relative to the nature of the job, the industry, and features conducive to WN available

in the work environment. For example, work schedules that are often established at the institutional level do not typically address the issue of fatigue during working hours (Härmä et al., 1998; Kecklund and Axelsson, 2016). However, for positions where sleep deprivation can have catastrophic consequences (i.e., pilots, truck drivers, medical personnel, nuclear reactor facility workers, and railroad workers), requirements for sleep may be found (Caldwell et al., 2019). Drawing on the global context, Baxter & Kroll-Smith's (2005) compared the decline of traditional napping practices, such as the siesta in Spain and xiuxi in China, with the emerging acceptance of workplace napping in the West. They attributed this shift to modernization pressures, economic demands, and changing sociotemporal orders, reflecting a broader transformation in work cultures and practices across the globe intending to shift to a 24/7 economy. However, the approach to regulating workplace napping varies, encompassing both formalized, controlled policies and informal, trust-based practices Baxter and Kroll-Smith's, 2005; Neighmond, 2019). For instance, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) permits controlled naps for pilots, contrasting with the policies at British Airways and other European carriers. This discrepancy underscores the significance of strategic industry considerations and the influence of scientific evidence on rest opportunities, yet revealing diverse regulatory approaches even within the same industry and country. A case in point is the policy alteration by CSX Corporation concerning rail workers, illustrating a stark deviation from other major freight railroads in the U.S. and various sectors that acknowledge controlled napping as a vital fatigue countermeasure. Although the articles do not give a comprehensive analysis on different country-level policies, but only present a few examples, they mainly emphasise the permissive US regulation which allows (mainly controlled) short sleep during working hours for workers based on scientific research in order to blur the boundaries between work and private life. However, some industries do report higher levels of napping than others. For instance, an Amerisleep survey of more than 1000 people in the United States found that a few industries were likelier than others to nap at Work (See Berger, 2018). For instance, 70% of those who worked in technology admitted to napping throughout the workday. Government and public administration employees came in second with a little over 68%. Workers with wholesale and retail workers are somewhat more likely at roughly 43%. Finally, only about 35% of individuals in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry reported napping during their workday.

Some industries are also more likely to be supportive of WN. For example, in the technology sector, 25% of polled say their managers allow them to take naps, and nearly 19% of arts and entertainment workers said the same. However, while some industries support WN, others have prohibited napping altogether. For instance, over 66% of construction workers, 62% of IT workers, 57% of government and public administrators, and over 57% of financial and insurance professionals state that napping is not allowed, yet they do it nevertheless (nearly 57% across all industries) (Gillum, 2018; Loveland, 2018).

Finally, features available in the work environment conducive to napping also affect WN. For example, access to a private office, couch, and/or desk may explain why higher-status employees are likelier to nap than low-status employees (Gillum, 2018; Loveland, 2018). Access to nap pods, etc., also likely increases the likelihood and occurrence of WN (Schwartz, 2010). However, employees who interface with customers (e.g., retail outlets, cosmetic counters, etc.) must be prepared to find a place outside their work area to nap. Thus, organizations should consider the demands of employee work and the design of their workspaces to devise strategies, identify opportunities, and create spaces for WN. If a dedicated location cannot be provided for WN, employees could choose where they nap as long as it does not interfere with company operations (e.g., car, break room, etc.).

3.7. WN duration

Although some research suggests that for both sleep-deprived and well-rested people both brief and long naps (30 min and above) provide equivalent advantages to alertness (Brooks & Lack, 2006; Lovato & Lack, 2010), it is generally accepted that brief naps are as, if not more beneficial, than long naps⁴ at restoring alertness and performance following regular, and mildly limited, nocturnal sleep (Takahashi et al., 1998; Tietzel & Lack, 2001). Research on daytime sleep duration suggested using short naps of 10 min as a tool to increase alertness and reduce fatigue (Fry, 2022). Research also demonstrates that power naps (20 min or less) can improve focus, cognitive ability and prevent the effects of sleep deprivation (Lawler, 2021). According to Faraut et al. (2015), a 30-min nap relieved stress and boosted the immune response in a sample of healthy young adult men. Additionally, nap length may have differential effects. For example, Takahashi et al. (1998) compared 15-min naps (nap duration $M = 7.3$ min) to 45-min naps (nap duration $M = 30.1$ min). They found that 15-min naps improved alertness after 30 min, and 45-min naps improved attention after 3 h (also Takahashi et al., 2004).

However, naps longer than 30 min may provide diminishing returns (Tietzel & Lack, 2002). Shorter naps prevent the body from experiencing prolonged sleep inertia (i.e., the tired and disoriented state immediately after waking, marked by a desire to return to sleep) (Lawler, 2021), allowing nappers to wake refreshed. According to the recommendations of the World Sleep Society, a daytime nap should not exceed 45 min⁵ as longer naps may result in reaching deeper sleep stages, making it harder for nappers to wake up (Sleep.org, 2021 (Sleep.org, 2021)).

Regarding the duration of nap benefits, the meta-analysis of Duthie et al. (2021) suggests that the positive effects of napping may last up to 2.5 h, but conflicting results are reported during the sleep inertia period. Their study aligns with these findings, showing that the most pronounced positive effects occurred within 30–120 min after awakening. Sleep inertia, which refers to the grogginess, confusion, and lowered arousal experienced upon awakening, is influenced by the amount of slow-wave sleep during the nap. Longer naps containing more slow-wave activity tend to result in greater sleep inertia. Therefore, shorter naps (20–30 min) are recommended to minimize sleep inertia, preferably avoiding napping during the circadian trough.

3.8. Normalizing WN

Regardless of whether organizations currently support WN, normalizing napping at work is becoming more essential as the workforce engages in fast-paced, around-the-clock employment due to technological improvements, globalization, and increased competitiveness (Mishra, 2009; Purtill, 2021). Sleep is often overlooked as employees feel pressure to keep up with the fast pace and high stakes of the current work environment (Fisher et al., 2019). In addition, globalization may result in employees working late at night or early in the morning to connect with teammates worldwide.

Organizations frequently invest substantial resources in employee development (e.g., job training, well-being coaching, meditation, etc.). Organizations also devote significant time, effort, and resources to identifying competitive advantages to improve employee performance and innovative thinking. While these investments are commendable, neglecting to support WN is perhaps ignoring a strategic advantage that is more convenient and considerably less costly than large-scale training (Fisher et al., 2019).

⁴ For different types of naps, see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/201806/9-different-types-naps-and-their-advantages> and <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/napping>.

⁵ <https://worldsleepday.org/tips-for-adults>.

3.9. Theorizing WN

Integrating WN research is difficult due to the absence of a theoretical model. As there is no standalone conceptual perspective on the influence of WN, it warrants employing related theories that may support in developing WN theory to advance the academic debate. Accordingly, the current paper conceptualizes WN as an *energy recovery process* by employees and as an *energy management strategy* to be facilitated by organizations (see Chan et al., 2022).

The energy recovery process can be related to the incubation effect—in which individuals temporarily disengage from a task, while continuing to work on it subconsciously (Ellwood, Pallier, Snyder, & Gallate, 2009). Individuals often emerge from the incubation period with a fresh perspective and improved creativity post break. Thus, incubation often affords reprieve from functional fixedness (i.e., the inclination to rely on familiar ways to solve issues), the capacity to disregard irrelevant information, and the capacity to subconsciously digest information. Thus, by incorporating periods of rest and relaxation, individuals can potentially enhance their ability to produce novel and imaginative answers to the challenges they encounter (see Ellwood, Pallier, Snyder, & Gallate, 2009).

Employees apply a range of strategies at work to restore depleted energy, maintain energy expenditure, and activate energy reserves to continue working and preserve or improve their health. Energy management strategies are actions that employees consciously indulge in to maintain an elevated level of energy all through their workday. For instance, employees need to control or preserve their energy during their work hours, and to do so; employees use energy management approaches such as taking a break to gain time away from their jobs to focus on other things as a form of recovery (Parker et al., 2017).

Employees may engage in activities such as listening to music, playing games, conversing, resting, napping, etc. Using energy management practices, employees can use their energy as a personal resource to enhance their well-being and productivity (Chan et al., 2022). Energy management strategy is a reaction for employees to recover their depleted energy towards a work commitment. Researchers contend that employees can mitigate their energy losses by applying the conservation of resources and effort-recovery models to restore their energy (Chan et al., 2022). By doing so, employees manage their energy levels and thus improve their capabilities.

Using the lens of recovery processes and management strategies, the current paper positions WN within the following theoretical frameworks identified in the 96 articles reviewed: a) the effort-recovery model, b) the conservation of resources theory, and c) psychological detachment theory (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2014; Smit, 2015). First, the effort-recovery theory implies that an individual's psychological and physiological components active throughout the workday would return to and stabilize at an optimal level (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2015). If situations are favorable, employees can recuperate by choosing time off from work. However, employees may be unable to disengage from work, resulting in an inadequate recovery process. Consequently, employees may still be exhausted from the preceding workday when they arrive the following day. Hence, they would need to exert more effort to function adequately (Geurts & Sonnetag, 2006) — leading to health issues like fatigue, exertion, difficulty sleeping, etc. Thus, in this regard, the current paper proposes that WN could help employees recover from work demands, thereby increasing employees' resources for optimal job performance (Fritz & Sonnetag, 2006).

Second, the theory of conservation of resources argues that individuals try to conserve, defend, and build their psychological, social, and physical goods (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Individuals regard an actual or possible loss of valuable resources as threatening (Hobfoll, 1998). Therefore, individuals must obtain new resources and/or replenish depleted or lost resources to avoid stress reactions from persisting over time (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007). One way to accomplish this is by engaging in rejuvenating activities (e.g., WN) to achieve psychological

relief from Work (Siltaloppi et al., 2009). Therefore, if employees nap at work, their mental resources are replenished and they will consequently have the energy required for work tasks (Sonnentag, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2017).

Third, while high levels of job involvement are positively associated with job performance and few counterproductive behaviors (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2008), times of psychological detachment from work (i.e., avoiding work-related thoughts and sentiments via WN and other forms of rest and recovery) are necessary for employee health and well-being. Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of detachment from work, including increased positive mood, task completion, self-motivation, organizational citizenship behaviors (Binnewies et al., 2010), and decreases in negative affect and fatigue (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). Psychological detachment can be a passive form of rest for a short, uninterrupted period (e.g., 20–30 min). Therefore, WN could be theorized as an organizational energy management strategy that allows employees to psychologically detach from work, conserve and replenish their energy resources, and help recover from work efforts.

Based on the theorizing of WN above, we define it as "the active form of recovery process via sleep whereby an employee detaches from work to conserve physical and psychological resources." The psychological detachment can be for an uninterrupted period of 10 to 45 min. By conserving physical and psychological resources, napping goes beyond energy management strategies to help improve cognitive processes, memory, and stimulates creativity. Furthermore, short naps during the daytime help stabilize mood (See Walker, 2017).

4. Directions for future research

The conceptual synthesis combined the interdisciplinary literature on WN and helped identify gaps requiring additional research (see Fig. 2). The current review highlights the need for and benefits of contextual debates about, pre-requisites for, and the discussion of normalizing WN in the workplace. Nevertheless, some notable gaps exist within the WN literature. Thus, based on the current review, several research questions are posed to direct and encourage both quantitative and qualitative scholarly research on WN. These questions are presented below with a simplified framework to explore in the future (see Fig. 2).

4.1. Conceptual progress

None of the 96 documents reviewed accurately define WN, and many papers are atheoretical. Whether explicitly or implicitly, the underlying theme across the articles is whether WN should be normalized. If yes, how long, in what industries, and what kind of institutional or cultural context? Workplace napping, while being accepted as a standard

practice in a few organizations across the globe, may remain a catchphrase; this is a dead-end that WN scholars must overcome to conceptualize or theorize WN. Thus, by utilizing the proposed approach of energy management strategies, theories of the effort recovery model, conservation of resources, and psychological detachment, researchers may begin new debates and help theorize WN to a specific institutional context (e.g., napping behaviors and benefits in the West, Middle East, and Asia, etc.). Notably, in the future, researchers might be interested in investigating how personality traits, such as neuroticism (or emotional stability), influence the relationship between workplace napping and well-being. This could include examining how these traits moderate the effectiveness of naps in contributing to resource gain or mitigating resource loss, as suggested by COR theory. Based on our review, it would be worth examining the impact of perceived organizational support for napping on employees' engagement in napping practices and its subsequent effect on their well-being and productivity. This could involve considering how organizational culture and policies facilitate or hinder the practice of napping and its perceived benefits. Similarly, conducting comparative studies across different industries to understand how sector-specific challenges and work schedules influence the adoption and regulation of workplace napping policies and undertaking cross-cultural research to explore how cultural attitudes towards napping and work-life balance affect the implementation and effectiveness of workplace napping practices could be meaningful directions for future research.

4.2. Organizational considerations

Although the benefits of WN have been discussed in the current paper, future scholars should investigate additional benefits of WN (e.g., are employees who nap at work less reactive and more tolerant of workplace frustrations?). Furthermore, researchers should examine whether employees take advantage of opportunities for WN within supportive organizations and, if so, to what extent. Additionally, within organizations supportive of napping, do employees abuse the privilege? If so, how should employers address cases of sleepers on the job? Additionally, while sleep pods in the workplace may be a novel idea, evaluating in what industry and context they are most effective is essential. Conversely, if sleep pods are large enough to house more than one employee at a time, would typically non-sanctioned work behaviors, like workplace romance, increase?

Additionally, the extent to which WN programs affect organizational performance should be examined. To what degree does supporting WN improve employee performance and overall organizational performance? For instance, if people in the tech industry go beyond schedule and do not engage in WN, what individual and organizational-level performance gains would WN provide? Additionally, questions about WN and virtual work interaction should be explored. For example, employers may benefit less from allowing employees to nap if their physical presence is not strictly essential. If employees can work from home, does allowing time and support for naps during the workday provide the same benefits as those on-site? Table 2 presents a summary of research questions yet to be explored.

5. Study implications

5.1. Managerial implications

Workplace napping may increase employee and organizational performance (e.g., reduce attrition, boost productivity, etc.). Thus, managers need to have a WN policy and culture that reduces the harmful effects of sleep deprivation among some employees (e.g., those who work at night or extend beyond duty hours) and promotes recovery at work. HR managers must become part of the social support system and attempt to improve individual well-being and staff productivity, using a holistic view of organizational performance. Well-being has emerged as

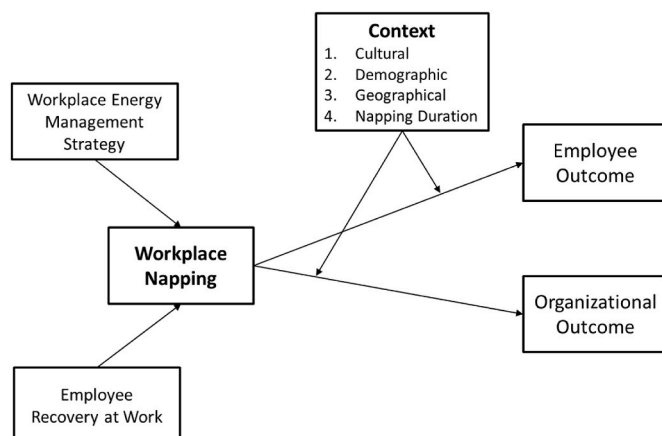


Fig. 2. Conceptual model of WN.

Table 2

Key research question to explore in the future.

WN	Research Questions to Explore in the Future
Individual aspects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do employees perceive organizational cultures that practice and support WN? 2. How do employees and HR managers perceive the need, time, and accommodation of WN as a part of the organizational routine and culture? 3. How does workplace morale change due to changes in napping at work regarding motivation, conflict, and perceived justice? For example, how do co-workers (who do not wish to take naps) perceive those who take naps at the workplace? Does it create conflict or reduce workplace motivation for the observers? Does providing time for power naps in the workplace increase employees' ethical decision-making and/or innovation?
Organizational aspects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does implementing workplace napping as part of organizational culture and work contracts reduce attrition rates and increase employee well-being? 2. How should productivity be measured to assess the effectiveness and impact of workplace napping accurately by organizations? 3. How does an organization's spatial structure impact its napping habits once normalized? Should organizations invest in creating napping zones and/or providing sleeping pods for employees? What types of napping spaces work best, and what is the most added value depending on the organization's size and budget? 4. Does normalizing WN at distinct hierarchical levels have different effects? Is it necessary to differentiate the initiatives for introducing new sleeping norms on each level, or are the same initiatives and roll-outs equally effective across levels? 5. How should HR managers devise plans and programs for promoting WN as an activity to promote well-being or mindfulness (e.g., How do HR managers classify which individuals are likely to take advantage of WN or what percentage of employees effectively use WN programs)?
Contextual aspects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does napping differ across different demographic groups? Does WN vary across gender, age, race, or national origin? How do organizations equalize napping across various demographic groups? 2. How does workplace napping differ among geographies (e.g., emerging vs. developed economy; Western vs. Asian vs. Middle Eastern culture; public vs. private corporations, etc.)?

a dominating HR practice in the rapidly unpredictable and changing business environment of the new millennium. HR managers must promote healthier workplaces, and one approach to do so is to promote reducing workplace stress, fatigue, and burnout by creating organizational cultures that support napping. Traditional strategies for better controlling fatigue due to shift work, such as allowing for nap breaks, have been suggested by Caruso and Hitchcock (2010) as promising countermeasures.

There are multiple ways to support WN within organizations. First, HR or employee experience officers should survey, interview, and otherwise collect data to gauge the need for and interest in an organization-wide WN program from top management to front-line employees. If interest in WN is high, the following steps for developing a WN program should be considered. The following steps should include the formation of a task force to determine the goals for and metrics relevant to a WN program, the feasibility of a WN program, constraints to a successful program (e.g., job, cultural, financial, etc.), and opportunities for implementation (e.g., identifying an adequate area for napping). Once an appropriate plan is developed for implementing a WN program, sleep pods or napping areas should be piloted to help ensure that employees have a quiet space to nap for 20–30 min. The pilot program's results should then be examined for areas of improvement before officially rolling out the program. After rolling out the program, the WN program should be monitored for opportunities for improvement.

Additionally, firms should address occupational and health concerns related to employee sleep deficits, implement and test WN programs, and evaluate WN program effectiveness on employee and organizational outcomes. To help employees understand the need to prioritize sleep, HR may adopt WN well-being initiatives — which may involve video messages, materials, workshops, and training on power naps from health experts. Such well-being activities will demonstrate the organization's dedication to supporting its employees' health and well-being. To get the most out of a napping program, managers and other employees must be advised not to ridicule or punish those who engage in WN.

While fewer studies have examined the impact of sleep deprivation and sleepiness on organizational performance, these are critical issues for employees, managers, and HR to consider. For example, research suggests that changes in behavior caused by sleep deprivation should be accounted for by employee selection (Pilcher & Morris, 2020). When individuals do not appear to self-select out of positions based on their capacity to cope with sleep disruptions (induced by the work environment or work schedules), the potential benefits of firms taking these steps become more evident (Van Dongen, 2006).

Human resource managers must also be aware that a lack of sleep frequently directly impacts work performance from an organizational standpoint (Fisher et al., 2019). Inadequate sleep makes people more emotionally unstable and/or temperamental (Guadagni et al., 2018), and it has been linked to violence and forgetfulness (Walker, 2017), which may impact workplace safety. Again, selection measures that HR managers could employ screen applicants for aggressive behavior in work circumstances that typically involve sleep loss (Barber & Budnick, 2015; Budnick and Barber, 2015). The implications of these findings suggest that screening for individual reactivity to sleep deprivation and tiredness in the talent acquisition process could help HR avoid future personnel issues. Furthermore, research also reveals that those who do not get enough sleep are more likely to engage in immoral activity (e.g., lack of ethical decision-making, not reporting unethical activities, etc.) (Barber & Budnick, 2016, pp. 125–146), resulting in a negative impact on organizational collaboration and individual success (Fisher et al., 2019).

Thus, HR managers should also encourage work schedule strategies that allow employees to pick between earlier and later work hours to match their employees' awake cycles better or better to match employees' family and other nonwork-related obligations. Additionally, organizations might provide their employees with adjustment hours to assist them in transitioning to new time zones when traveling. Finally, although considerable work remains to be done at the organizational level, recent research offers many viable workplace interventions that HR departments might investigate as potential remedies to help employees better control their on-the-job attentiveness levels.

5.2. Practical implications

Understanding the benefits and the myths surrounding WN, organizational and human resource scholars can better gauge the gap and make a concerted effort to bridge it if necessary. For instance, when managers promote WN as a part of work routines, it transitions from an unofficial manifestation of private behavior to an official act. Thus, this may also reduce the stigma of how WN is perceived (e.g., WN is considered a minor act of resistance in some cultures) (Baxter & Kroll-Smith, 2005). The current study recommends that managers establish initiatives to incorporate WN into the organizational culture. Doing so will positively affect managers and employees (e.g., increasing managerial commitment to employee well-being and promoting quality of work life). An additional recommendation is that HR implement sleep programs in the workplace, given the health and work benefits for employees and the impacts on organizational productivity. The effect is considerable whether lack of sleep is caused by shift work, by working long hours, or is the result of stress at work.

All in all, incorporating our review's findings into practical

applications, HR managers and organizations are advised to strategically implement workplace napping initiatives to promote employee well-being and enhance organizational performance. This involves establishing dedicated napping zones, fostering a culture that recognizes the benefits of restorative breaks, and customizing napping policies to align with diverse operational schedules. By integrating evidence-based practices into HR strategies, organizations can effectively address cognitive fatigue, bolster work engagement, and cultivate a healthier, more productive workforce. Additionally, it is recommended that organizations assess the outcomes of these initiatives through metrics such as employee satisfaction, productivity rates, and health indicators, ensuring a holistic approach to employee well-being and organizational success.

6. Limitations and conclusion

The current analysis incorporates multiple pieces from news websites that may not be as extensively evaluated as peer-reviewed journal articles. Thus, the current study used an approach that recognized the importance of source quality and attempted to balance peer-reviewed, popular news items and anecdotal evidence. However, the current review acknowledges that it is vital to use meta-analysis to include information from additional relevant outlets in the future. Given the limitations, the present study is one of the few to conceptually discuss

WN and offer a debate to move the literature forward.

In the workplace, napping should be treated as another way to boost productivity while enhancing psychological well-being. Flexible work schedules are essential for modern companies, and employees should be free to nap when necessary. As many people now work from home, the dilemma around workplace napping is beginning to shift, as virtual employees have direct access to space to nap. Research has documented the positive effects of napping on both physical and psychological well-being and work performance. Thus, normalizing workplace napping will benefit firms in terms of employee and organizational productivity.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Amitabh Anand: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Rita Tóth:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Jessica L. Doll:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Sanjay Kumar Singh:** Writing – original draft.

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Appendix 1

Summary of Terms: Rest, Sleep, and Nap

Term	Characteristics	Time frame
Rest	The broader concept of sleep may be active or passive, usually involves stopping an activity. While sleep is certainly a restful state, most resting doesn't involve the same level of disengagement with surroundings as sleep (sleep.org).	Context-dependent
Sleep	Sleep is a naturally recurring state of mind and body, characterized by altered consciousness, relatively inhibited sensory activity, reduced muscle activity, and inhibition of nearly all voluntary muscles during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep (Ferri et al., 2008) and reduced interactions with surroundings.	90 min plus is deemed as deep sleep.
Nap	A passive form of rest, it is commonly referred to as short sleep (Lovato & Lack, 2010).	usually lasts for 30-40-min (maximum 2 h). 10–20 min of nap is named power nap.

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