



How do personality traits contribute to work-life balance? Investigating the role of dark triad and big five personality traits on employees' work-life balance

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Abstract

This study examines the role of dark triad personality – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy – and Big Five personality traits on work-life balance (WLB) among employees in Indonesia. The results underscore the significant impact of personality traits on WLB across its resource and demand dimensions. Utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 185 employees across various jobs and companies in Indonesia through a self-report questionnaire. The findings indicate that openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy consistently emerge as strong predictors of WLB, exhibiting large effect sizes in both dimensions. Agreeableness demonstrates a positive correlation with the resource dimension, while conscientiousness and neuroticism show negative correlations with the demand dimension. The influence of narcissism, gender, and marital status on WLB is not significant. These results imply that personality traits often considered maladaptive may offer advantages in coping with workplace challenges and balancing competing demands. The findings suggest that organizations and individuals could benefit from considering personality traits when formulating strategies to enhance WLB, particularly in managing stress and demands of the contemporary work environment.

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving and interconnected society, the concept of work-life balance (WLB) has become a crucial concern, as many people find it difficult

to strike a harmony between their career and personal responsibilities. A significant obstacle in achieving this balance is the growing expectations of contemporary workplaces, where extended working hours, stringent time constraints, and the constant push for high

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performance have become standard practice. Prior research has demonstrated the impact of WLB on various outcomes, including employee performance (Attar et al., 2021), work commitment, job stress (Aruldoss et al., 2021), and life satisfaction (Cain et al., 2018). This highlights the necessity for further investigation into the predictors of WLB.

In order to comprehend the concept of WLB, it is essential to examine one of the factors that influence WLB, specifically personality (Poulose & Susdarsan, 2014). The examination of personality traits is crucial for a complete understanding of WLB, as these characteristics play a pivotal role in how individuals perceive, prioritize, and manage work and personal obligations (Wong et al., 2021). Individuals with certain personality types tend to cope, manage time and react to stress in distinct ways (Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000), influencing their ability to maintain equilibrium between professional and personal life. Rooted in stable traits like those in the big five personality traits—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—affect core life domains, by guiding behaviors and attitudes in predictable ways (Wright & Jackson, 2023). For instance, conscientious individuals tend to achieve more due to their disciplined nature (Kern & Friedman, 2008), while high neuroticism may lead to emotional instability and stress (Klein & Robinson, 2019). Moreover, personality interacts with external factors like culture, education, and socioeconomic conditions, creating a dynamic framework for understanding life outcomes (Ayoub et al., 2018). By serving as the lens through which individuals navigate their world, personality becomes a critical determinant of their overall trajectory and wellbeing (Fernandes & Otta, 2024). Therefore, a study on the relationship between personality and WLB is important to conduct.

Unfortunately, studies have highlighted inconsistencies in the role of personality traits (i.e., the big five personality traits: Leka & De Alwis, 2016; Welangan et al., 2018) in influencing WLB. The findings indicated that extraversion and openness exert a beneficial influence on WLB when mediated by wellbeing (Welangan et al., 2018), conscientiousness exerts a positive influence, neuroticism harms WLB, whereas openness is not associated with WLB (Zakaria et al., 2018). Other research findings indicate that all five dimensions within the big five personality model are associated with WLB, except for neuroticism, which has been shown to have a negative impact (Soni & Bakhru, 2019). Hence, the disparate findings across these studies highlight the necessity for further investigation into the impact of the big five personality on WLB.

Dark triad personality traits – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy – are also important to consider in understanding WLB because they intersect with the big five personality dimensions' that influence behavior in complex ways. For instance, extraversion, a trait positively correlated with dark traits like narcissism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Garcia & Moraga, 2017), may enhance social engagement and assertiveness, potentially supporting WLB in some contexts, however it lacks consistency as a reliable predictor (Zakaria et al., 2018). On the other hand, agreeableness, which is fundamentally opposed to dark traits such as Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) often promotes harmony and cooperative relationships, which are essential for maintaining balance, yet its low presence in individuals with dark traits could disrupt WLB. Additionally, neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability, often exhibits impulsive behaviors that can lead to poor decision making in stressful situations, negatively affecting WLB (Sauer-Zavala et al., 2017). By exploring these overlaps and contradictions, we can better understand the nuanced impact of dark personality traits on achieving a healthy WLB.

The relationship between the big five and the dark triad personality introduces the possibility that the dark personality may serve as a predictor of WLB. Unfortunately, no study has yet explored the relationship between WLB and dark triad personality. The existing research on dark personality traits primarily focused on their association with mental health and subjective wellbeing, particularly the traits of narcissism and Machiavellianism (Aldbyani & Al-Abyadh, 2022) and job satisfaction (Abbas & Kant, 2017). Therefore, research on the relationship between dark traits and WLB is crucial to ascertain the extent to which negative (i.e., dark triad traits) and positive traits (i.e., the big five) influence work-life balance.

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of the big five personality traits and the dark triad personality traits on WLB by controlling gender and marital status. Gender roles shape societal expectations, with men and women facing differing pressures in work and family domains (Xie, 2023). Marital status adds complexity, as married individuals or those with caregiving responsibilities often face additional demands that can influence how personality traits affect their ability to maintain WLB (Damariyanti et al, 2022). Understanding these interactions provides a more comprehensive view of how personality traits interact with life circumstances to impact WLB outcomes.

Literature Review

WLB is defined as the conditions enabling individuals to harmoniously manage professional and personal responsibilities. This concept encompasses equitable distribution of time and effective management of energy, attention, and engagement (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). WLB encompasses two primary dimensions: resources and demands (Fisher et al., 2009; Haar et al., 2019). The dimension of resources illustrates how work and personal life can support and enrich each other. Work enhancement of personal life signifies how professional experiences, competencies, or resources can positively impact personal life. Personal life enhancement of work denotes the potential for personal life to positively influence work. The demands dimension indicates potential conflicts between work and personal life. Work interference with personal life signifies when work demands interfere with allocation of time and energy to personal life. Personal life interference with work occurs when responsibilities in personal life reduce focus and productivity at work. These dimensions form the foundation for comprehending WLB as a dynamic interaction between resources and demands in work and personal life (Haar et al., 2019).

These two dimensions form the foundation for understanding WLB as a dynamic interaction between resources and demands, influenced by individual differences, such as the Big Five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Openness is characterized by an inclination to accept novel experiences and challenges, conscientiousness by systematic, controlled, and goal-oriented behavior (Kundnani & Mehta, 2014). Extraversion is typified by an open, jovial, and group-loving disposition (Nuraini, 2020). Extraverted individuals typically possess effective communication skills, facilitating interpersonal relationships. Agreeableness is characterized by a receptive, trusting, cooperative nature, and avoidance of conflict (Nuraini, 2020). Neuroticism, marked by anxiety and emotional lability, can impede work tasks, leading to elevated stress (Fillhumaam et al., 2019) and increased conflict in work and non-work settings (Leka & De Alwis, 2016).

Prior research has shown that Big Five personality dimensions are associated with WLB (Soni & Bakhru, 2019). Openness has a significant positive effect on WLB (Köse et al., 2021), enabling individuals to adapt and circumvent pressure (Fillhumaam et al., 2019). The prudence, orderliness, and goal-orientation of highly

conscientious individuals contribute positively to various work types (Sleem & El-Sayed, 2011) and facilitate work-life balance (Akanni & Oduaran, 2017). Agreeableness, with its capacity to accept differences and engage in cooperative behavior (Sabira & Kustanti, 2022), enables individuals to achieve work-life balance (Akanni & Oduaran, 2017). Neuroticism's anxiety and emotional lability may impede task completion, leading to stress and conflict in work and non-work contexts (Fillhumaam et al., 2019; Leka & De Alwis, 2016).

H1: Extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism are predictive of WLB.

The dark triad personality comprises three dimensions of sub-clinical personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Narcissism manifests in behaviors such as self-promotion, seeking admiration, and striving to be perceived as exceptional (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Machiavellianism is a proclivity for manipulative behavior, particularly regarding others (Odiakosa, 2018). This tendency often serves one's interests, even when involving manipulation. Psychopathy is typified by a lack of empathy and self-control, disregard for social norms, impulsivity, and diminished guilt when causing harm to others (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

It is hypothesized that these three traits exert a dual influence on WLB, both beneficial and detrimental. A primary characteristic of individuals with dark personality traits is their capacity to withstand high stress, particularly in narcissism (Lyons et al., 2019). This is because individuals with dark personality traits require recognition (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), power (Jones & Paulhus, 2009), and exhibit emotional shallowness (O'Boyle et al., 2012). These traits are anticipated to prompt individuals to prioritize success or power, potentially neglecting personal aspects of their lives. Such individuals may make opportunistic decisions at work (D'Souza & Lima, 2015), even if it disrupts or endangers their personal lives.

Furthermore, an excessive drive for success and desire to excel may result in overworking or persisting in work activities beyond the conventional workday. For example, individuals with narcissistic personality traits may neglect their personal lives to seek validation from their professional environment. Moreover, a deficiency in empathy may result in individuals with elevated dark traits, particularly psychopathy, failing to prioritize relationships in both personal and professional lives. This can potentially give rise to discord in both domains.

H2: Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism are predictive of WLB.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a cross-sectional research design. This design enables researchers to examine data from a population at a specific point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020).

Participants

A minimum of 134 sample size is required, as determined by the calculation of G-Power 3.1.9.7 software, with an effect size of odds ratio (OR) = 2.36 (Nuzulia & Why, 2020), $\alpha = .05$, and statistical power of .95. In this study, 185 participants were collected using quota sampling. Eighty- three (44.86 %) participants are female, 102 participants (55.13 %) are single, 52 (28.10 %) participants have managerial positions. Data collection was conducted online through social media platforms. The criteria for inclusion were that participants must be employees in Indonesia aged between 20 and 45 years. Setting the age at 20 to 45 years old ensures the study participants are more likely to have relevant experiences with balancing professional and personal domains, providing more meaningful insights into WLB dynamics.

Instrument

The Big Five Personality Inventory (BFPI) (Goldberg, 1992), adapted in Indonesian by Ramdhani (2012), measures the Big Five Personality. The instrument has 28 items: five for extraversion, seven for agreeableness, six for conscientiousness, four for neuroticism, and six for openness. The internal consistency Cronbach's Alpha (α) for each dimension is 0.73 (extraversion), 0.76 (agreeableness), 0.78 (conscientiousness), 0.74 (neuroticism), and 0.79 (openness). Answer options range from 1 (strong disagreement) to 7 (strong agreement). Higher scores indicate higher trait levels.

The dark triad personality is quantified through the Short Dark Triad Personality Scale (SD3) scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2014), modified by Hasanati (2019). The measuring instrument comprises 16 items across three dimensions: narcissism (five items), Machiavellianism (five items), and psychopathy (six items). The internal consistency of the dimensions is 0.778 for Machiavellianism, 0.73 for narcissism, and 0.823 for psychopathy. Participants indicate their agreement

with statements on a six-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the traits.

The concept of WLB is assessed using the 17 items of Work-Life Balance Questionnaire by Fisher et al. (2009), adapted into Indonesian by Gunawan et al. (2019). The questionnaire comprises two dimensions, demands and resources. The demands dimension includes "work interference with personal life" and "personal life interference with work". The resources dimension includes "work enhancement of personal work" and "personal life enhancement of work". The measuring instrument has six answer options from never to very often. Higher scores on the demands dimension indicate lower WLB, while higher scores on the resources dimension indicate higher WLB. The instrument's validity was calculated using CFA, with SLF results exceeding 0.5. Its reliability is indicated by a CR value of 0.976 and VE value of 0.707, suggesting the instrument is reliable.

Procedure

An announcement posted on social media (i.e., LinkedIn, X, and Facebook). Interested participants completed an online consent form, then filled out the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was conducted using JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program) software, which employs multiple linear regression analysis.

Result

Table 1 presents the mean (SD) and zero-order correlation for the variables. The intercorrelation analysis shows significant relationships between the big five personality, dark triad traits, and WLB dimensions (i.e., resource and demand).

Table 2 illustrates the impact of predictor variables on both WLB dimensions. The analysis on Resource dimension demonstrates that extraversion (effect size (r) = 0.30), agreeableness (r = 0.34), openness (r = 0.19), Machiavellianism (r = 0.32), and psychopathy (r = 0.27) significantly influence the WLB resource dimension, with effect sizes ranging from small to moderate. Extraversion showed a negative relationship, indicating that higher levels of extraversion are associated with lower WLB

Table 1 Intercorrelation between big five personality, dark triad personality, and WLB ($n = 185$)

Predictor	Mean (SD)	Intercorrelations								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	37.95 (7.41)	-								
2	43.66 (4.30)	.46***	-							
3	42.96 (8.27)	.68***	.62***	-						
4	31.74 (7.52)	-.73***	-.32***	-.77***	-					
5	50.57 (7.44)	.59***	.42***	-.38***	-.25***	-				
6	33.29 (6.97)	.30***	.28***	.07	.08	.68***	-			
7	27.80 (4.33)	.38***	.05	-.05	-.00	.52***	.56***	-		
8	25.79 (7.39)	-.07	-.35***	-.47***	.40***	.33***	.57***	.62***	-	
9	21.47 (4.89)	-.02	.19**	-.14*	.27***	.47***	.67***	.41***	.55***	-
10	36.33 (10.62)	.03	-.05	-.29***	-.35***	.50***	.75***	.60***	.81***	.69***

Noted: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; 1 = extraversion; 2 = agreeableness; 3 = conscientiousness; 4 = neuroticism; 5 = openness; 6 = Machiavellianism; 7 = narcissism; 8 = psychopathy; 9 = resource; 10 = demand

Table 2 Effect of big five personality and dark triad personality variables on WLB (resource and demand dimension) ($n = 185$)

Predictors	Resource Dimension					Demand Dimension				
	β	SE	95% CI		p	β	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL				LL	UL	
Extraversion	-.41	.06	-.40	-.14	< .001	-.01	.10	-.22	.17	.81
Agreeableness	.35	.08	.23	.57	< .001	.05	.13	-.12	.39	.29
Conscientiousness	-.10	.06	-.18	.05	.29	-.11	.09	-.33	.02	.10
Neuroticism	-.13	.06	-.21	.04	.18	.06	.09	-.10	.28	.35
Openness	.20	.05	.02	.24	.01	.11	.08	.008	.33	.04
Machiavellianism	.36	.05	.14	.37	< .001	.38	.08	.41	.75	< .001
Narcissism	.006	.08	-.16	.17	.93	.01	.13	-.21	.30	.73
Psychopathy	.36	.06	.11	.37	< .001	.48	.10	.49	.88	< .001
Gender	-.004	.47	-.97	.89	.92	.06	.71	-.10	2.72	.07
Marital Status	.02	.48	-.67	1.21	.57	.00	.72	-1.31	1.55	.86

Note: CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Level; UL; Upper Level.

in this dimension. In contrast, agreeableness, openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy displayed positive relationships, suggesting that higher levels of these traits contribute to better WLB. Meanwhile, conscientiousness, neuroticism, narcissism, gender, and marital status did not show significant effects. Overall, the model explains 61 percent of the variance in WLB, highlighting its robust explanatory power.

The analysis on demand dimension reveals that the model explains a substantial 81 percent of the variance in the demand dimension of WLB, highlighting its strong predictive power. Among the predictors, openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy have significant positive relationships with this dimension and exhibit large effect sizes ($r = 0.46$ and $r = 0.47$ respectively), while openness shows a small effect ($r = 0.15$), indicating that higher levels of these traits contribute to worse WLB. Other variables, such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, gender, and marital status, do not show significant contributions.

Discussion

This study's findings highlight personality traits' influence on WLB across resource and demand dimensions. Openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy consistently emerge as significant predictors, with Machiavellianism and psychopathy demonstrating large effect sizes in both dimensions. Agreeableness, openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy positively influence the WLB resource dimension, associating with more favourable outcomes. Extraversion negatively associates with this dimension, suggesting higher extraversion links to lower WLB resource dimension. In the demand dimension, openness, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy exhibit significant positive effects, indicating association with poorer WLB outcomes. Other predictors (conscientiousness, neuroticism, narcissism, gender, and marital status) did not contribute significantly to WLB. These findings underscore personality's nuanced roles in shaping WLB, where traditionally maladaptive

traits may offer advantages in navigating workplace challenges.

Openness affects WLB in a complex manner, due to its nature encouraging creativity, flexibility, and openness to new experiences. Individuals with high openness tend to demonstrate higher adaptability (Lakhani et al., 2007), creativity, and capacity to devise innovative solutions that harmonize professional and personal domains (Clark et al., 2009). They perceive challenges as opportunities for growth (Rostyslav & Vsevolod, 2024), fostering a symbiotic relationship between the two domains. However, this trait can also decrease WLB because open individuals tend to be involved in many activities, both at work and in their personal lives. These activities can cause difficulties in setting boundaries and increase interference between work and personal life.

This research is corroborated by several previous studies. Kaufman and Gregoire (2015) demonstrated that individuals with high openness exhibit superior adaptability in managing work and personal demands, supporting work-life equilibrium. Zhou et al. (2018) found that open individuals tend to be more flexible in managing stress and conflict between work and personal life, finding creative solutions to these problems. However, Greenhaus and Allen (2011) revealed that openness can increase the risk of work-personal life interference, especially if individuals pursue many opportunities distracting them from managing time and energy effectively. Kumar and Ranjan (2017) further support that this exploratory nature can influence individuals to set high goals, often leading to decreased WLB.

Meanwhile, agreeableness has a notable positive impact on WLB only for the resource dimension. This result is consistent with previous research indicating a negative correlation between agreeableness and WLB (Anggraini & Rozana, 2014). This is due to the cooperative, helpful, friendly, and sympathetic characteristics that enable individuals with high agreeableness to garner support and experience minimal conflict with others (Silaen, 2023). This finding is supported by a study that demonstrated agreeableness exhibited the lowest burnout score among the other dimensions of the big five personality (Hardiyanti, 2013). The tendency to perceive everything positively makes agreeableness effective in avoiding burnout in the work environment (Hardiyanti, 2013). Considering these circumstances, it is unsurprising that agreeableness exerts a beneficial impact on WLB.

The extraversion trait negatively impacts the WLB resource dimension; as extraversion increases,

the relationship between personal and professional lives becomes less mutually reinforced. The results diverge from previous research (Köse et al., 2021). This discrepancy is thought to be due to highly extraverted individuals becoming workaholics (Booket et al., 2018). Extraversion, typified by high energy, activity, and proclivity for diverse experiences, often manifests in engaging in numerous work-related activities and taking calculated risks (Ahmadi et al., 2010). The work environment quality in extraversion can influence WLB efficacy. Extraverted individuals in monotonous fields with minimal interaction may experience depression and lack of enjoyment. This occurs because extraverts are warm, active, and happy, seeking excitement. Consequently, a monotonous environment and minimal social interaction can cause extraverts to become bored and depressed (Köse et al., 2021).

This study yielded intriguing findings on the impact of dark triad personality on WLB. Machiavellianism and psychopathy were found to exert a significant positive influence on WLB, both in resource and demand dimensions. While traditionally viewed as maladaptive, these traits may provide unique advantages in balancing work and life by enabling individuals to manage resources strategically and maintain emotional detachment under demanding circumstances (Tucker et al., 2016). This highlights the importance of context in understanding how personality traits influence outcomes like WLB. According to Jonason and Webster (2010), individuals with elevated Machiavellianism exhibit proficient interpersonal skills and superior efficiency in achieving objectives (Blötnner, 2024), including adept management of resources to facilitate work-life balance (Aldbyani & Al-Abyadh, 2022). These individuals employ social networks and manipulative strategies to ensure work enriches personal life and vice versa (Chandler et al., 2020). Rauthmann and Kolar (2013) noted that Machiavellian individuals effectively utilize resources in managing flexibility and social interactions, enhancing the equilibrium between these domains.

However, Machiavellian traits can augment demands in an individual's life. Mayer et al. (2012) revealed that individuals with Machiavellianism are driven to achieve success and have high ambitions, leading to involvement in more activities or roles in work and personal life. This heightened engagement leads to an augmented perception of demands, as these individuals often grapple with delineating clear boundaries between professional and personal domains, amplifying potential discord. Zettler et al. (2011) found that Machiavellian individuals engage in numerous activities and seek control in various aspects

of their lives, potentially increasing demands in work and life. These findings imply that, while Machiavellianism can facilitate effective resource management, its manipulative character may also augment demands in balancing professional and personal domains.

Psychopathy has a notable positive impact on WLB in terms of resource aspect. These findings align with Aldbyani and Al-Abyadh's (2022) study, which demonstrated a positive correlation between psychopathy and subjective wellbeing. Blasco-Belled et al. (2024) also shows a positive correlation between trait psychopathy and well-being, particularly in boldness psychopathy associated with high self-confidence and low neuroticism (Blasco-Belled et al., 2024). In the workplace, this trait is associated with enhanced job performance, adaptability, and career success (Nuzulia & Why, 2020; Nuzulia et al., 2024).

Psychopathy positively influences WLB of both resources and demands dimensions, due to characteristics inherent in this personality type. Psychopathy is linked to high self-confidence, emotional resilience, and composure under pressure (Lilienfeld et al., 2015). These traits may facilitate using work as a resource enhancing personal life, including social status, career achievement, or satisfaction, contributing to personal life enhancement in the workplace (Babiak et al., 2010). These traits also enable individuals to focus on priorities and use personal life to support work success, enhancing personal life in relation to work (Mullins-Sweatt et al., 2010). However, exploitation and impulsivity in individuals with psychopathy can increase the demand dimension in WLB. They may make risky decisions, pursue ambitious goals, or engage in numerous activities without considering WLB impact (Boddy, 2011). Their tendency to disregard boundaries or emotional needs of others can result in work-life conflicts, such as work interference with personal life and vice versa (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The study found no evidence that narcissism, gender, or marital status were associated with work-life balance, in terms of resources or demands.

These personality traits interact in complex ways, influencing WLB with both positive and negative contributions. Dark personality traits, often associated with challenges, can also support WLB under specific conditions. Similarly, traits within the Big Five, typically regarded as beneficial, may create difficulties, straining the balance between professional and personal life. This interplay underscores the multifaceted nature of personality influences, where traits perceived as positive or negative can exert dual impacts, depending on the context.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study have significant implications for human resource management. Understanding personality's influence on WLB can assist in recruitment by identifying employees whose traits align with the company's culture and can maintain work-life balance. The findings can inform tailored employee welfare initiatives and help manage conflict, particularly among employees with dark personality traits. Theoretically, these findings suggest a more integrated view of personality in relation to WLB, challenging the traditional dichotomy of "good" and "bad" traits. While cross-sectional design is practical for examining relationships at a specific point, it is less ideal for elucidating causal processes or long-term relationships. Future researchers should consider alternative designs, such as longitudinal studies, to examine personality's influence on work-life balance. Additionally, future research may explore specific fields of work, like start-ups or state-owned enterprises, as each presents unique opportunities for analysis.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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