

Workplace Friendship and its Influence on Organizational Commitment among Staff Nurses

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Abstract

Background: A workplace friendly environment within an organization, in which the entire workforce enthusiastically works together richly, positively affects employees' commitment. **Aim:** The current study aimed to assess workplace friendship and its influence on organizational commitment among staff nurses. **Design:** The study utilized a descriptive correlational design. **Setting:** Pediatric Hospital, which affiliated to Ain Shams University Hospitals. **Subjects:** A random sample of 136 staff nurses out of 281 suitable to participate in this study. **Tools:** Two tools, are utilized namely, the Workplace Friendship (WFS) Scale and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. **Results:** Staff nurses reported moderate perception level of workplace friendship in their job (3.66 ± 0.63) and moderate level of organizational commitment (3.67 ± 0.59). The friend prevalence dimension had a greater mean than friends' opportunity dimension (3.70 ± 0.62 and 3.63 ± 0.50), respectively. The emotional dimension had the highest mean (3.83 ± 0.40), followed by normative commitment (3.69 ± 0.78) and continuance commitment (3.50 ± 0.60). **Conclusion:** These findings underscore a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total staff nurses' perception of workplace friendship and organizational commitment. **Recommendations:** Cultivating a supportive workplace atmosphere that promotes social interaction and acknowledges the value of workplace friendships in enhancing organizational commitment among staff nurses.

KEYWORDS: Organizational commitment, Staff nurses, Workplace friendship

Introduction:

In organizations, many employees spend more hours with their coworkers than they do with their families. As such, it is important to build good relationships. Humans pass through more than half of their lives in the work environment. This period is so long that it inevitably leads to friendship between individuals in the workplace, which is considered a complex issue, and understanding its impact is crucial since it is a fundamental value of human nature and a part of organizational culture. Therefore, many organizations encourage friendship in the workplace because it is advantageous to workers (Durrah, 2022; Bilgin & Kiral, 2019).

Workplace friendship is a spontaneous and informal interpersonal relationship established by employees who know each other's role expectations. Furthermore, team

members will support each other's role by offering relevant resources through friendship connections (Hsu et al., 2019). In essence, workplace friendship is defined as an interpersonal relationship formed based on voluntary principles of common commitment, trust, liking, and shared values or interests (Guohao et al., 2021).

Workplace friendships have stronger affective features than other work relationships and have significant impacts on employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Gerbasi et al., 2023 ; Fasbender et al., 2023). Additionally, workplace friendships help to provide support and resources and make employees feel comfortable about completing assigned tasks, managing associated work stress, improving cooperation and harmony, and increasing effective communication with colleagues in the organization (Durrah, 2022).

There are two dimensions of workplace friendship. Friendship opportunities have been designed to investigate the degree to which employees communicate and form informal relationships with their coworkers. This perception includes behaviors such as finding opportunities to know friends in the workplace, working collaboratively with friends, and communicating easily with friends everywhere (Cao & Zhang, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2000). For this dimension, it is important to determine whether workplace friendship is supported by the workplace. The friendship prevalence dimension aims to determine the presence of friendships in the workplace. This perception includes behaviors such as talking about personal issues with friends in the workplace, sharing secrets, discussing work-related issues, and whether friendships only remain in the work environment (Yavuzkurti & Kiral, 2020).

Workplace friendships are probably one of the most important aspects of any work environment. It may develop commitment behaviors to combat turnover intention in nursing (Callado et al., 2023). Therefore, employees' organizational commitment is a crucial component of any organization, particularly in healthcare institutions due to their unique characteristics. Employees are frequently very dedicated to their organizations if they have good links to these organizations. The benefits of high employee organizational commitment is reflected in the employees themselves, as well as in the organization and the whole community served (Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2021).

Organizational commitment is "an attitude bound by time and space and sustained through interactive processes that arises from the individual's acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to contribute to that organization's affairs, and strong desire to maintain a good relationship with the organization" (Abu Jassar & Alsaed, 2021). Finally, organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization, characterized by strong faith and acceptance of the organization's beliefs, goals and values,

willingness to deploy extra effort for the organization and a strong effort to be a member of it (Al-Haroon & Al-Qahtan, 2020).

Organizational commitment is considered as an important in which, increases employees' employees' support for the organization, encourages employees to work hard for the organization regardless of the outcomes of their efforts and is positively correlated with employees' job satisfaction. Organizational commitment emerges from employees and organizations having the same goals, with employees' desire to continue their work relationships with the organization (Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2021).

Organizational commitment can be examined from three distinct angles: affective commitment, which enables individuals to work with dedication, align with their employer's goals and objectives, and actively contribute to the organization's success (Khan et al., 2021). Continuance commitment refers to the employee's view that they will experience negative consequences if they do not stay in their job (Coetzee et al., 2019). Normative commitment refers to a feeling of obligation to stay within an organization (Riwu et al., 2022). When employees perceive that remaining with the organization aligns with moral and legal principles, they are more inclined to remain with the organization (Muhammad et al., 2020).

Significance of the Study:

The success of an organization hinges on employees' commitment to its values, principles, beliefs, and goals.

These principles delineate the fundamental framework within which the organization operates. Furthermore, workplace friendships, as a significant aspect of organizational life, can foster a sense of belonging among employees and enhance cooperation, creativity, and innovation at work. This, in turn, correlates with increased staff commitment (Don-Baridam & Diri, 2023). Previous scholarly works have revealed that organizations with employees

who engage in workplace friendships have increased organizational commitment to their responsibilities compared to those with employees who have fewer friends (Lynch, 2022).

Moreover, this study adds to the existing body of research by providing the following contributions. Several previous studies on workplace friendships have associated them with employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance. (Abd EL Latief et al., 2019). According to a previous study, the current study focused on assessing the influence of friendships at work on commitment behaviors to combat turnover intention in nursing.

Study Aim:

This study aimed to assess workplace friendship and its influence on organizational commitment among staff nurses through:

1. Assessing workplace friendship perception among staff nurses.
2. Assessing organizational commitment level among staff nurses.
3. Finding out the influence of workplace friendship on organizational commitment among staff nurses.

Research question:

Is there an influence of workplace friendship on organizational commitment among staff nurses?

Subjects and methods

Research design:

The study employed a descriptive correlational design to fulfill its objectives.

Setting:

The research was conducted at pediatric hospital affiliated with Ain Shams University Hospitals. The hospital bed capacity are 261 beds and offers a

comprehensive range of acute clinical treatments to children. Furthermore, it provided opportunities for teaching and clinical training for medical pediatrics, nursing students and nurse interns, as well as a venue for a range of scientific projects.

It contains two buildings, the first one consisting of five floors which includes (Medical intensive care unit 2, neonate intensive care unit 2, oncology intensive care unit, neonatal intensive care unit, dialysis unit, cardiac cath lab unit, hematology unit, diabetes unit, immunity unit, neurological unit, medical unit, and chest unit). While the second building consisting of three floors, which includes (Old incubator 1, surgical care unit, intermediate care unit, major operating room, medical intensive care unit 1 and minor operating room).

Subjects:

The subjects for this study were included the nursing staff operating within the mentioned study context.

Sample size:

One hundred sixty-three out of two hundred eighty-one staff nurses composed the entire population for the sample size calculation, based on Thompson, (2012).

n = sample size

N = population size

d = the error rate is 0-05

z = standard score corresponding to a significance level of 0.95 is 1.96.

p = The availability of property and neutrality equals 0.50.

$N \times P (1 - p)$

$n = \frac{[N-1(d^2/z^2)] + p(1-p)}{}$

Inclusion criteria:

Staff nurses who are employed on a full-time basis and have at least six months of experience working in their current unit.

Sample technique:

The sample was selected by a simple random sampling technique, to ensure a fair and un bias representation of staff nurses for inclusion in the study.

Tools of data collection

Two measures were used for data collection.

1. Workplace Friendship Scale (WFS):

This tool consisted of two parts as follows:

Part I: personal and Job characteristics: age, gender, marital status, years of experience, current work department, educational qualifications, and years of experience in the department.

Part (II): This part was developed by (Nielsen et al., 2000) and assesses workplace friendship as perceived by staff nurses. This scale consists of 12 items that are categorized under two main dimensions: Friendship opportunity (FOD) items ex (I am able to work with my coworkers to solve problems) and Friendship prevalence (FPD) items ex (I have formed strong friendships at work).

Scoring system:

The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, spanning from "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neutral" = 3, "agree" = 4, to "strongly agree" = 5. The scale includes one negative reverse coded statement and was reverse coded in the analysis. The researchers obtained the average score for each component and the overall scale. A high score reflects a high perception level of workplace friendships among staff nurses (Nielsen et al., 2000).

2. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire:

This questionnaire consists of twenty-four items and was developed by (Alam, 2011). It aimed to assess organizational commitment among staff nurses. This questionnaire is categorized into three main dimensions: affective commitment items ex (I consider the problems of the hospital as my own problems), continuance commitment items ex (The reason I want to stay in this hospital is both because I want to and because it is a necessity) and normative commitment items ex (One of the main reasons for me to continue to work in this hospital is loyalty and moreover moral obligations).

Scoring system:

Responses to each item measured using a 5-point Likert scale, cover ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." These are scored from 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for the responses "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree" respectively. The scores are reversed for negative items and a higher score indicates a higher level of commitment (Alam, 2011).

Tools validity:

The two instruments were adjusted, translated into Arabic, and subsequently translated back into English. Five experts from the Nursing Administration Department were provided with the instruments to assess, evaluate, and provide feedback on content validity, question types, and item clarity. Their suggestions were carefully considered to ensure accuracy and to safeguard the integrity of the study.

Tools reliability:

The reliability of the instruments used in this study was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test, which assesses the internal consistency of the study tools. The internal consistency reliability for the staff nurses' workplace friendship tool was 0.921. The internal consistency reliability for the organizational commitment scale was 0.90.

Pilot study:

A pilot study was carried out after obtaining the study tools and before starting the actual data collection. This stage was conducted at the middle of December 2023. The objective of the pilot study, which encompassed 10% of the staff nurses ($n = 16$) from the context above, was to examine the clarity, practicability, and evaluate the feasibility of the items, while also pinpointing any potential obstacles that could arise during the data collection process, and estimate the time consumed for fulfilling the study sheets which ranged between 20-30 minutes.

Ethical consideration:

After obtaining the necessary approval from the Scientific Research and Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Ain Shams University. After obtaining the necessary approval from the Scientific Research Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Ain Shams University, necessary arrangements were made with the officials of the pediatric hospital, which is affiliated with Ain Shams University Hospitals to collect data and solicit their assistance.

Subsequently, the study's objectives were explained to all participating staff nurses, and written informed consent was obtained for participation in the study. Moreover, the staff nurses were given assurance that all information obtained would be treated with confidentiality and solely utilized for research objectives. Furthermore, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

Filed work:

The fieldwork of the study lasted two months, from the beginning of January 2024 to the end of February 2024. The researchers met the head nurse of each unit to explain the aim of the study, determine a suitable time for data collection and gained the acceptance and cooperation of staff nurses to participate in the study.

Then, the researchers met study subjects and explained the purpose of the study, the components of the tools and gave instructions about methods of filling instrument. Forms were distributed to the respondents individually at their workplace during break time and was available during filling for any needed clarification. Filled instrument were revised by the researcher to ensure their completeness.

Data collection was done during morning shifts according to a pre-determined schedule, at two days per week and every day collected around 10-12 instruments, were collected from 9 Am to 2 PM.

Statistical design:

The data underwent collection, coding, analysis, and tabulation post-revision using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 24) and IBM SPSS AMOS (version 24). The primary study variables were described using means and standard deviations. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the correlation between the key study variables. Regression analyses were carried out to measure the direct impact of workplace friendship on nurses' organizational commitment. Cronbach's alpha was computed to validate the reliability of the scale items.

Results:

Table (1) Shows that 42.9% of the studied staff nurses were aged between 30 and 40 years, with a mean age of 35.42 ± 5.68 years, and were female 81.6%. Moreover, 76.7% had a nursing diploma. Regarding marital status, 69.4% of the participants were married. For their work experience, 42.9% of the participants had between 10 and 20 years of current position experience, with a mean \pm SD of 15.32 ± 3.14 .

Table (2) Reveals that the friend prevalence and opportunity dimensions, with $(3.70 \pm 0.62$ and $3.63 \pm 0.50)$ respectively. The total mean score for workplace friendship was 3.66 ± 0.63 out of 5. Overall, the participants had a moderate perception level of workplace friendship in their job.

Table (3) Illustrates that the affective dimension had the highest mean (3.83 ± 0.40) followed by normative commitment (3.69 ± 0.78) and continuance commitment (3.50 ± 0.60). The total mean score of organizational commitment was (3.67 ± 0.59) out of 5. Generally, the participants had a moderate level of organizational commitment.

Table (4) Demonstrates statistically significant positive correlations between workplace friendship dimensions and

organizational commitment dimensions ($p < 0.001$).

Table (5) Indicates a strong statistically significant correlation between staff nurses' overall perception of workplace friendship and their overall organizational commitment ($p < 0.001$).

Table (6) Reveals that workplace friendship enhances nurses' commitment ($\beta = 0.406$, $P < 0.001$). A total of 08.0% of the variance in nurses' commitment.

Table (1): Frequency and percentage distribution of the personal characteristics of the studied staff nurses (n = 163).

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
< 30	65	39.9
30-40	70	42.9
>40	28	17.2
Mean± SD 35.42±5.68		
Gender		
Male	30	18.4
Female	133	81.6
Nursing Qualification		
Nursing Diploma	125	76.7
Technical Institute of nursing	20	12.3
Bachelor of Nursing	18	11.0
Marital status		
Single	50	30.6
Married	113	69.4
Experience years in current position		
<10		
10-20	63	38.7
>20	70	42.9
	30	18.4
Mean± SD 15.32 ±3.14		

Table (2): Mean and standard deviation of workplace friendship as perceived by staff nurses (n = 163).

Workplace friendship Dimensions	Number of items	Max	minimum	Mean	+SD
Friends opportunity	6	5	1	3.63	± 0.50
Friends prevalence	6	5	1	3.70	± 0.62
Total	12	5	1	3.66	±0 .63

Table (3): Mean and standard deviation of organizational commitment among staff nurses (n = 163).

Organizational commitment Dimensions	Number of items	Max	Minimum	Mean	+SD
Affective commitment	8	5	1	3.83	± 0.40
Continuance commitment	8	5	1	3.50	± 0.60
Normative commitment	8	5	1	3.69	± 0.78
Total	24	5	1	3.67	±0.59

Table (4): Correlation matrix among workplace friendship dimensions and organizational commitment dimensions.

Workplace friendship dimensions	Organizational Commitment dimensions					
	Emotional commitment		Continuance commitment		Normative commitment	
	R	p value	R	p value	R	p value
Friends opportunity	0.58	0.000**	0.45	0.000**	0.623*	0.000**
Friends prevalence	0.38	0.000**	0.361	0.000*	0.386*	0.000**

Table (5): Correlations between total workplace friendship and total organizational commitment among staff nurses.

R	P value
0.842**	0.001**

Table (6): Linear regression analysis predicting the organizational commitment of the studied staff nurses.

Independent variable	B	S (B)	β	T	R ²	Adjust R ²	F
Constant		2.810		0.276		9.84***	
Workplace friendship	0.375	0.072	0.406	6.76***	0.083	0.080	32.13***

SE, standard error; β , standardized regression coefficient. *** $P < 0.001$.

Discussion

Workplace friendships foster a supportive atmosphere where nurses feel valued, appreciated, and connected to their peers. This friendship not only boosts job satisfaction but also bolsters commitment to both the nursing profession and the organization. Moreover, these workplace friendships facilitate better communication, collaboration, and teamwork among nursing teams, ultimately improving patient care quality. Nurturing workplace friendships has emerged as a vital element in cultivating a positive work environment and fostering the dedication and well-being of staff nurses (Yang & Shiu, 2023). This study aimed to assess workplace friendship and its influence on organizational commitment among staff nurses.

Regarding workplace friendship dimensions, the present study demonstrated that the friend prevalence dimension had a greater mean score than did the friend opportunity dimension. The higher mean score in the friend prevalence dimension compared to the friend opportunity dimension suggests that staff nurses perceive a greater presence of friendships in their workplace compared to the opportunities available to foster those friendships. From the perspective of the investigators, this outcome might be explained by a range of factors, including the nature of the nursing profession, which often fosters close bonds among colleagues due to the challenging and emotionally demanding nature of the work. Nurses may rely heavily on their friendships within the workplace for emotional support, camaraderie, and coping mechanisms, thereby elevating the perceived prevalence of friendships.

The result reported by (Yavuzkurti & Kirali, 2020) who noted a comparable trend in their investigation of workplace friendships among study subjects. They discovered that participants tended to assign a higher mean score to the prevalence of workplace friendships compared to the available opportunities for fostering those relationships. In contrast, (Gates et al., 2019) reported a different outcome, indicating that

the opportunities dimension of workplace friendships received a higher mean score than friendship prevalence.

Regarding total workplace friendship, in the current investigation, staff nurses reported a moderate perception level of workplace friendship in their job. This outcome highlights the significance of interpersonal relationships among nurses as they navigate the complexities of their demanding roles. A moderate score suggests a balance between professional boundaries and social interactions, indicating the presence of supportive relationships among nursing colleagues.

Consistent with the present study, (Xiao et al., 2020) conducted a study exploring the impact of workplace friendships on interpersonal citizenship behavior. The result revealed that workplace friendships contribute to an increase in employees' relational energy, indicating agreement with the importance of workplace friendships in fostering positive workplace dynamics. Like the current results, (Fasbender et al., 2023) reported a moderate level of workplace friendships among participants. This finding slightly contrasts with our study's indication of a slightly greater level of workplace friendships among nurses. However, it is important to note that the specific context of healthcare settings, such as nursing, may contribute to variations in the perception of workplace friendships.

Similarly, (Yavuzkurti & Kirali, 2020) who examined how workplace friendships relate to the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. Their study involving 269 volunteer teachers revealed high levels of friendship opportunity and internal job satisfaction perceptions among teachers. Also, showing consensus on the beneficial influence of workplace friendships on job satisfaction. While the context differs, the overarching support for the positive influence of workplace friendships on job-related outcomes aligns with our findings among nurses.

According to researchers, the differences in study outcomes concerning workplace friendships result from a blend of contextual, methodological, and individual elements. Variations in sample characteristics, encompassing demographics and job positions, play a role in shaping individuals' perspectives on friendships within the workplace. Furthermore, differences in measurement techniques and cultural norms surrounding interpersonal connections contribute to discrepancies in reported levels of workplace friendships. Organizational aspects, such as leadership styles, communication strategies, and socialization practices, also play a vital role in shaping the dynamics of workplace relationships. Finally, changes in societal norms, economic climates, and organizational policies over time also influence the trajectory of workplace relationships.

Concerning the second variable, it was found that the affective dimension had the highest mean score, followed by normative commitment and continuance commitment. Therefore, a higher mean score for the affective dimension suggests that employees feel strong emotional bonding and identification with their organization, indicating a sense of belonging and loyalty. This emotional commitment may stem from positive experiences, supportive work environments, and alignment with the organization's values and goals. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies within the healthcare sector, highlighting the significance of the emotional dimension of commitment in shaping nurses' attitudes and behaviors. For example, a study by (Riwu et al., 2022) found that employees' affective commitment was strongly associated with their performance and job satisfaction to remain with the organization.

This underscores the importance of fostering emotional attachment among employees as a key strategy for enhancing performance and promoting a positive work environment conducive to quality patient care. In addition, they have the desire to survive and be involved in all existing activities for the progress of the organization. Similarly, a

study conducted by (Ahmed et al., 2020) in a community healthcare setting also revealed a similar pattern of commitment dimensions among nurses. The affective dimension had the highest mean score, indicating a strong emotional attachment to the organization. This was followed by continuance commitment, which reflecting perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and normative commitment, which denotes a sense of moral obligation and responsibility to remain loyal to the organization.

These findings suggest that nurses in community healthcare settings exhibit patterns of commitment like those observed in other healthcare contexts, emphasizing the importance of emotional connection and organizational identification in promoting retention and job satisfaction among nurses. However, potential variations in the relative importance of commitment dimensions among nurses in different healthcare contexts have been suggested. For instance, a study (Al-Haroon & Al-Qahtan, 2020) found that the continuous commitment subscale received more positive responses than did the normative and affective commitment subscales. This indicates that nurses may feel a sense of obligation or duty to remain in their current job due to perceived social norms or obligations rather than solely based on emotional attachment to the organization.

Regarding the total organizational commitment, the results demonstrate that there is a moderate level of staff nurses' job commitment. This could be attributed to nurses often facing heavy workloads, high patient-to-nurse ratios, and demanding schedules, which can impact their ability to fully commit to their roles. Moderate commitment levels may reflect the balancing act nurses must perform between meeting job demands and maintaining personal well-being. A similar study conducted by (Al-Haroon & Al-Qahtan, 2020) in healthcare also revealed that nurses had a moderate overall organizational commitment level. This moderate level of commitment suggests that nurses' dedication to their workplace roles falls within a moderate range. A study conducted by (Essa et al., 2021) also revealed

a moderate level of workplace commitment among employees. This similar finding supports the notion of a moderate level of workplace commitment among nurses, reinforcing the consistency observed across different studies in the healthcare sector. On the other hand, one study (Elserogy et al., 2022) revealed a high level of workplace commitment among employees.

According to another finding of the present study, there were statistically significant positive correlations between workplace friendship dimensions and organizational commitment dimensions. Our perspective on this matter is that as workplace friendships strengthen, employees are more likely to experience greater commitment to their organization. This relationship can be attributed to several factors. First, workplace friendships foster a sense of belonging and social support, which can enhance employees' emotional attachment to their organization. Additionally, strong social ties among colleagues may lead to increased trust, cooperation, and collaboration, thereby reinforcing employees' sense of commitment.

In a study by (Alemu, 2019), the effect of workplace friendship on organizational employees' commitment in the case of the Tana Flora PLC. The findings revealed workplace friendship plays an important role in enhancing organizational employees' commitment. Employees who reported stronger friendships with their colleagues demonstrated higher levels of affective and normative commitment to their organizations. In line with the present study, (Don-Baridam & Diri, 2023) found that supervisor behavioral integrity positively impacts employee proactive behavior.

In a study by (Guohao et al., 2021), it was observed that Workplace friendships act as a moderating factor in the indirect relationship between supervisor behavioral integrity and employee proactive behavior, mediated by affective commitment. Although friendships generally enhance the workplace environment positively, their direct impact on commitment could vary depending on factors like the quality of relationships, individual

preferences, and the prevailing organizational culture. On the other hand, a study by (Akila & Priyadarshini, 2018) revealed little impact of different types of friendships on organizational commitment.

Conclusion:

This study highlights the highly statistical significant positive correlation between workplace friendships as perceived by staff nurses and organizational commitment. Despite perceiving moderate levels of workplace friendships, nurses exhibited a notable connection between the quality of social bonds and their commitment to the organization.

Recommendations:

- Implement leadership development programs that emphasize emotional connections and shared values to strengthen commitment.
- Ensure transparent communication about organizational goals and initiatives to align staff perceptions with organizational values, promoting continuance commitment.
- Encourage informal interactions among nursing staff through team-building activities and social events.
- Implement mentorship programs that pair experienced nurses with newer colleagues to foster relationship-building.
- Foster a culture where leadership acknowledges and celebrates teamwork and mutual support among nursing units.

Future studies:

- investigate how workplace friendships impact stress levels and overall well-being, considering whether supportive relationships mitigate the effects of workplace stressors.
- Examine how workplace friendships influence professional development opportunities, such as mentoring, knowledge sharing, and career advancement.
- Study the link between workplace friendships and broader organizational performance metrics, including productivity, innovation, and financial performance.

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