

# Impact of Participative Decision Making and Demographic Characteristics on Job Performance of University Academic Staff: Evidence from Universiti Utara Malaysia

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## Abstract

Globalizations and rapid advancement of information and technology have created high uncertainty in educational environment. In response to these changes, higher education institutions continuously set higher goals and objectives to gain more competitive advantages. As a result, academic staffs as an important contributor in the university that is facing an increasing demand for higher job performance. Therefore, it is necessary for university management to implement a practice that can increase academic job performance and keep them motivated. Furthermore, university management should be able to recognize the diversity in their work environment. The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of participative decision making and demographic characteristics toward job performance of academic staff. In this regard, 100 academic staff members of Universiti Utara Malaysia were treated as sample of the research. Furthermore, by using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis as statistical tools, the research found that participative decision making; along with teaching experience and academic rank of academic staff have significant and positive impact on job performance of academic staff of university Utara Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Participative Decision Making, Demographic Characteristics, Job Performance, Organizational Behavior.

## 1. Introduction

Higher education plays an important role in the formation of knowledge, economy and democratic society (Hoque, Alam, Faizah, Siti, Rose & Fong, 2010). It also plays an essential role in supporting the global development strategies with the necessary high-qualified manpower and research (Al-Turki & Duffuaa, 2003). Furthermore, education stimulates the development of students' minds and promotes the growth of crystallized intelligence and also promotes core task performance by providing individuals with more declarative and procedural knowledge (Ng & Feldman, 2009).

The meaning of job performance in the field of organizational behavior has changed over the last 40 years (Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007; Nasurdin & Khuan, 2011). Job performance has a broad concept and has been defined variously among researchers. Job performance in university employees has gained immense attention to make university a successful institution. The success of a university is affected by the coordination of its management and staff involvement. Universities and academic staff needs to work together to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to the education process (Fauziah & Kamaruzaman, 2009).

Conventionally, decision making is considered as the main responsibility of managers or higher level officers (Ejaz, Khalid, & Riaz, 2011). However, it is now necessary to process the decision making by involving both managers and employees as well. Employee participation was taken into many different forms, including employee involvement and participative decision making (Emam gholizadeh, Borgei & Matien, 2009). Significant increases in workload have squeezed the time and energy available to activities such as scholarly research and staff perceived that it is difficult to maintain standards of quality (Bryson, 2004). Therefore, for academic staff to achieve high standards of teaching, produce quality researches, publications and to meet the university goals, the requirements to improve their work and working environment must be satisfied (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2010). In regards to job performance, the demographic characteristics of academic staff are also important to be taken into account since different characteristics of academic staff might result in different level of job satisfaction and job performance as well. Many researchers have studied the impact of demographic characteristics of academic staff on their job performance, and the results are varied on each research (Adeyemi, 2005; Feldman, 2009; Olorunsola & Olayemi, 2011).

The major objective of the current study is to examine the impact of participative and demographic

characteristics on job performance of academic staff of universiti Utara Malaysia.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Job Performance**

Job performance has a broad concept and has been defined variously among researchers. According to Griffin et al. (2007), research has shifted from an early narrow focus on fixed tasks within jobs to encompass a wider span of work roles in line with the changing organizational contexts. It reflects self-disciplined behaviors such as taking the initiative to solve a problem, working harder than necessary and following rules (Nasurdin & Khuan, 2011). Traditionally, work performance was evaluated in terms of the proficiency with which an individual carried out the tasks that were specified in his or her job description (Griffin et al., 2007). However, the past decade has seen a growing concern to view job performance on a broader scope comprising of both task-related and contextual-related elements (Emmerik & Sanders, 2004; Nasurdin & Khuan, 2011). According to Aryee, Chen and Budhwar (2004), task performance describes job-specific behaviors including core job responsibilities that are directly related to the organization's technical core, whereas contextual performance describes interpersonal behaviors that support the social and motivational context in which organizational works are accomplished. Therefore, job performance describes actions and behaviors related to the production of a goods or the provision of a service; these activities usually appear on an employee's formal job descriptions (Rotundo & Sackett, as cited by Nasurdin & Khuan, 2011).

### **2.2. Participative decision making**

Definitions of participative decision making are varied, but related, among researchers. In educational setting, participative decision making refers to the participation of academic staff in critical decisions that directly affect their work, involving issues related to budgets, teacher selection, scheduling, and curriculum (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Sharma and Kaur stated that participation in decision making often involves organizational managers consulting employees and sharing the rationale for decisions (as cited by Elele & Fields, 2010, p. 371). Furthermore, participative decision making represents a deliberate change from traditional management in which minority of upper-level management employees make all of the decisions regarding organizational policies and functioning (Olorunsola & Olayemi, 2011). Therefore, the degree to which the staff believes that they or their work units are able to participate effectively is critical in determining how strongly participative decision making influences performance (Lam, Chen, & Schaubroeck, 2002). According to Parnell (2010), participative decision making is one form of employee participation and refers to the involvement of one group of individuals in decisions typically reserved for another group.

### **2.3 Demographic Characteristics**

As equal opportunities have been placed higher up the agenda (Bryson, 2004), there has been an increase of participation in decision making, and in addition, some demographic factors have been distinguished (Selart, 2005). Although gender status does not distinguish level of lecturer participation and performance, level of education, academic rank and work experience are among the most commonly studied characteristics of entrepreneurs and educators (Sukirno & Siengthai, 2011). Education level refers to the academic credentials or the degree an individual has obtained (Ng & Feldman, 2009). Furthermore, equal employment opportunity provides them chance to compete on the basis of education and skill rather than on gender discrimination (Bashir et al., 2011); it is necessary to provide career advancements for all academic staff with no discrimination (Safaria, Ahmad & Muhammad, 2011)

### **2.4 Participative decision making and job performance**

In order to encourage employees to devote extra effort to their work, managers should focus more on how to help their employees to generate feelings of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact (Huang et al., 2010). Beyond measurement of the job involvement construct, research has also focused on the performance criterion in attempting to clarify the job involvement-performance relationship (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007). In educational field, academic staff of a higher education institution is a key resource and have a major role to play in achieving the objectives of the institution (Capelleras, as cited by Toker, 2011, p.157). Moreover, participative decision making is an important process which can lead to make a better strategic decision. Bryson (2004) found that there was a strong tension between the enjoyment and challenge from the nature of the work and demands of workload. When management provides information to employees with a high active orientation, they may be more likely to read it and/or attend management-sponsored meetings to discuss change initiatives (Brown & Cregan, 2008). Thus, interaction of participation by all levels of the firm is a useful approach to increase the likelihood of strategy implementation success (Ogbeide & Harrington, 2011). Based on above discussion following hypothesis is formulated

*H1*: There is a significant and positive impact of participative decision making on job performance of academic

staff of universiti Utara Malaysia

### 2.5 Demographic characteristics and job performance

Adeyemi (2005) found that teaching experience is a critical variable in students' learning outcomes in schools. Involvement of teachers in decision making shows that they are well empowered and they are seen as resources with knowledge and experience that are tapped (Olorunsola&Olayemi, 2011). According to Ng and Feldman (2009), education level was related to objective measures of task performance. Educational level can enhance cognitive ability, increase job-relevant knowledge, and promote the development of a strong work ethic, all of which can strengthen job performance in turn (Ng & Feldman, 2009). Furthermore, being promoted in academic career motivates lecturers and thus reflects in the effectiveness of course teaching activities and classroom management (Gul, 2010). Based on above discussion following hypothesis is formulated

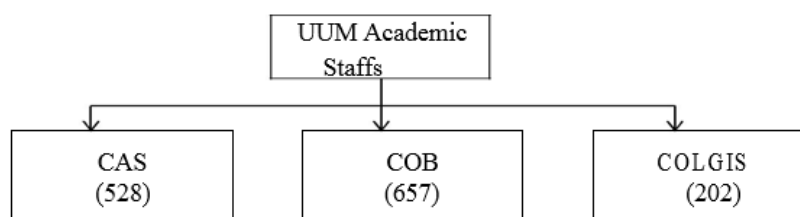
*H2*: There is a significant and positive impact of demographic characteristics (teaching experience, education level, & academic rank) on job performance of academic staff of Universiti Utara Malaysia.

### 3. Research Methodology

For current study the researcher adopts quantitative approach and statistical tools were used for hypothesis testing and for ultimate outcomes. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of participative decision making and demographic characteristics on job performance of academic staff of universiti Utara Malaysia. The independent variables of this research are participative decision making and demographic characteristics, and the dependent variable is job performance. Both primary data and secondary data were used in this research. Primary data refers to the original information gathered for a specific purpose (Sekaran&Bougie, 2009). In this research, primary data were gathered thorough survey method self-administered questionnaire distributed to the academic staff of Universiti Utara Malaysia. Secondary data were gathered from external sources such as journals, articles, books, and also from the internet.

#### Population Frame &Sample Size

The target population in this research is the academic staff of Universiti Utara Malaysia. Academic staff was chosen, because they play a crucial role in achieving both individual and organizational performance. Furthermore, there are three main academic colleges in Universiti Utara Malaysia, namely College of Arts & Science (CAS), College of Business (COB), and College of Law, Government & International Studies (COLGIS). The number of population is as shown in below figure



By using the proportionate simple random sampling, 39 respondents from CAS have been determined as sample proportion, followed by 49 respondents from COB, and 12 respondents were taken from COLGIS, thus, in this research, total 100 respondents were taken as samples. Details are depicted in below table.

Group	Number of Academic Staffs	Number of Sample	Proportion
CAS	528		38
COB	657	100	47
COLGIS	202		15
Total	1387		100

#### Measurement of Variables

##### Job Performance

Job performance was used as the dependent variable in this research. Furthermore, an instrument was adopted from Griffin et al. (2005), postulated three dimensions of individual job performance with 0.91 Cronbach's alpha that are: individual task proficiency, individual task adaptivity and individual task proactivity. The researcher chose to adopt only the individual parts since the unit of analysis is each academic staff member. The respondents were asked to indicate their own level of job performance process for each dimension using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

### Participative Decision Making

In current research, instrument of participative decision making was adopted from the work of Marks and Louis (1997) who defined participative decision making as one form of empowerment practice in school management. Furthermore, they have constructed four domains of participative decision making that also adopted by Sukirno and Siengthai (2011) with 0.88 Cronbach's alpha. Thus, current research adopted said instrument due to high reliability. Instrument contains variables to measure participative decision making including school operations & students, student's management & lecturers, daily work activities and control over classroom. The respondents were asked to indicate their own level of participation in a decision making process for each dimensions using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

### Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics refer to an individual's personal backgrounds which are unique and different among others. In current research demographic characteristics were used as independent variable. However, not all characteristics are suited to be used, especially in educational setting; for example, Sukirno and Siengthai (2011) found that gender is not significantly influence job performance, while Ng and Feldman (2009) found that education level is significantly related to job performance, and academic rank were found to be a good predictor of job performance (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009). Therefore, after reviewing immense literature, appropriate demographic characteristics were used for the current study including teaching experience, education level, and academic rank.

### Data analysis technique and model specification

Descriptive analyses were used for averages and percentages of variables and correlation and regression analysis were used to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. These statistical analyses processed and provided the necessary calculations and processing of the data. Under the descriptive statistics, the distribution of the data, including the frequency and percentages were displayed. Furthermore, from the descriptive statistics, pie charts were also used to display the distribution of the sample for certain categories, especially for the demographic backgrounds of the respondents including age, gender, nationality, etc.

#### Model

$$JOBP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PDM + \beta_2 DC + \mu_i \quad \text{----- (1)}$$

Where,

JOBP= Job performance (Dependent variable)

PDM = Participative Decision Making (Independent Variable)

DC = Demographic Characteristics (Independent Variable)

$\mu_i$  = Stochastic error term

## 4. Results & Discussion

### Descriptive Analysis

In current study the frequency distribution used from SPSS output to analyze the distribution of the data and pie charts to display the percentage of certain items. By conducting the descriptive analysis, it can provide insight regarding the profile of respondents who participated in the research.

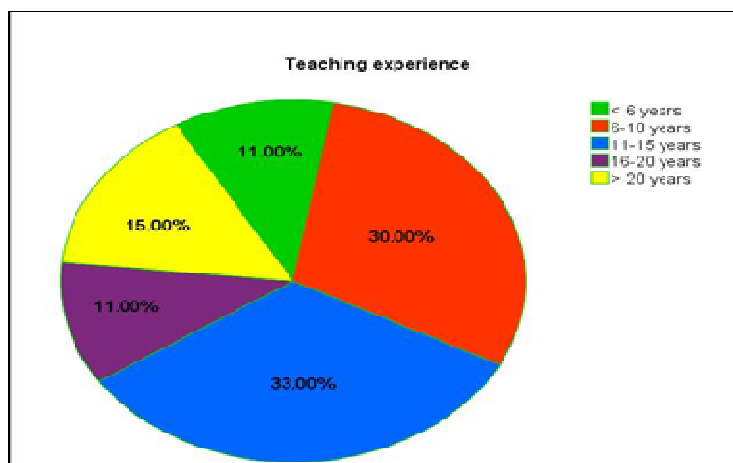
### Teaching Experience

Teaching experience refers to the period of time an academic staff has spent on his or her teaching activities, not necessarily at UUM only, but also at any institution he or she has worked before. Particularly, for the use of this research, there are five categories of teaching experiences in which their respective frequencies of each category are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Teaching Experience**

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
< 6 years	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
6-10 years	30	30.0	30.0	41.0
11-15 years	33	33.0	33.0	74.0
16-20 years	11	11.0	11.0	85.0
> 20 years	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The result shows that the distribution of the respondents in terms of their teaching experience is quite even. With the most come from 33 respondents with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience (33%), following by 30 respondents being within 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. There are also 15 respondents (15%) who have more than 20 years of teaching experience, and the rest are distributed evenly for respondents with 16 to 20 years of teaching experience (11%) and those whose teaching experience is less than 6 years (11%).



The result represents the indication that most of the academic staff at UUM have a medium to high degree of teaching experience that should be maintained as teaching experience is argued to be necessary in improving performances and effectiveness of the University.

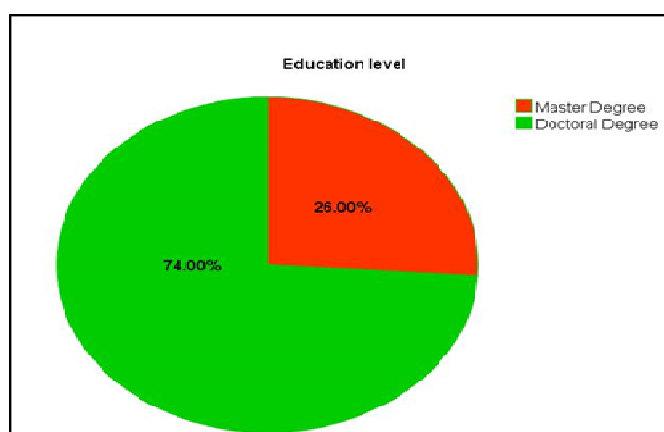
### Education Level

Although initially there were four categories under education level (Bachelor Degree, Master Degree, Doctoral Degree, and Others), the result as displayed in Table 2 showed that there is no respondent from Bachelor Degree and Others. Furthermore, the result shows that the least education level of the respondents is from Master Degree, represented by 26 respondents (26%), while most of the respondents have hold a Doctoral Degree as their education level, represented by 74 respondents (74%).

**Table 2: Education Level**

Education Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Master Degree	26	26.0	26.0	26.0
Doctoral Degree	74	74.0	74.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

From this distribution, it supports the action of Universiti Utara Malaysia that plans to hire more academic staff especially those with a doctoral degree and also sending some of its academic staff for further study in order to gain a higher level of education. It is believed that higher level of education can contribute more on the organizational performance in which by having a high level of education as it is expected to be able to perform better especially in teaching and learning activities such as giving lectures to the students or by conducting more good researches.



As work outcome expectation increased following the level of education of an academic staff, Ng and Feldman (2009) argued that as level of education increased, achievement orientation also increased as well. However, to the extent whether or not the education level of an academic staff has a significant impact on his or her individual job performance will be discussed in the inferential statistics result.

### Academic Rank

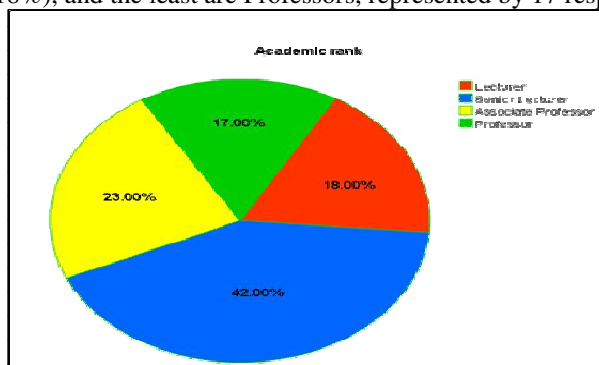
The term “academic rank” describes the rank of an academic staff in Universiti Utara Malaysia. Furthermore,

there are four categories under academic rank being used in this research including Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor. The frequency as shown in Table 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents following their academic rank.

**Table 3: Academic Rank**

Academic Rank	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Lecturer	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
Senior Lecturer	42	42.0	42.0	60.0
Associate Professor	23	23.0	23.0	83.0
Professor	17	17.0	17.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Almost half of the respondents who participate in the research are Senior Lecturers (42%), and the rest three categories were distributed almost evenly, whereas 23 respondents are Associate Professors (23%), 18 respondents are Lecturers (18%), and the least are Professors, represented by 17 respondents (17%).



As shown in above Figure Professor has the least frequency among other categories (17%); because it is difficult to ask participation to Professors as they have a very tight schedule and thus makes it difficult to meet them. However, the frequency of Lecturers (18%) is also surprisingly small as compared to Senior Lecturers (42%). As previously stated, academic rank was one of the factors that have been of interest to be researched. Higher academic rank argued to have gained more autonomy and freedom at work as compared to the lower ranked staff. In addition, Eyupoglu and Saner (2009) stated that lower-ranked academics tend to have to take on a greater work load in joint projects and researches this maybe putting some strain on relationships and creating some frustration for overloaded lower-ranked academics. Furthermore, under inferential statistics result, the influence of academic rank on job performance will be discussed. Figure 4.8 below displayed the percentage of respondents' following their academic rank.

**Regression Analysis**

This section contains the results of the regression analysis to examine the influence of participative decision making and demographic characteristics toward job performance. To examine the simultaneous influence of participative decision making and demographic characteristics toward job performance multiple regression analysis are employed.

**Table 3: Regression analysis**

	$\beta$	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	12.971	3.287	3.947	0.000
Participative Decision Making	0.380	0.059	6.399	0.000
Demographic Characteristics	0.796	0.285	2.794	0.006
R Square = 0.341      Adjusted R Square = 0.327      N = 100				
df = 2      Significance = 0.000      F-Value = 25.089				

The value of R-square is 0.341 ( $R^2 = 0.341$ ) which indicates that 34.1% of variance in job performance is due to participative decision making and demographic characteristics while the rest 65.9% are influenced by other factors that are unable to measure in the research. According above Table 3, the F-value is 25.089 that is significant at 0.05 significance level and t-value is less than  $\alpha$  value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) that shows model is significant at 0.05 significance level. In other words, there is a simultaneous significant influence of participative decision making and demographic characteristics toward job performance among academic staffs. The result of the multiple regression analysis proves the hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which stated that there is a simultaneous significant



influence of participative decision making and demographic characteristics toward job performance.

Coefficients ( $\beta$ ) are 0.380 and 0.796 for participative decision making and demographic characteristics respectively both are significant at 0.05 significance level. The positive beta weight indicates that participative decision making and demographic characteristics of the academic staffs play an important role in enhancing job performance. Furthermore, in order to determine the most significant independent variable that influences job performance,  $t$ -value can be used to determine the relative importance of each independent variable (Cavana et al., 2001). The  $t$ -value shows that participative decision making has a higher value compared to demographic characteristics (6.369 > 2.794). These values indicate that participative decision making has a stronger influence on job performance rather than the demographic characteristics.

Based on the beta coefficient results of multiple regression analysis, the multiple regression equation is formed as follows:

$$JOBP = 12.971 + 0.380PDM + 0.769DC$$

Where: JOBP = Job performance

PDM = Participative decision making

DC = Demographic characteristics

The multiple regression equation showed that the regression coefficients for both participative decision making ( $X_1$ ) and demographic characteristics ( $X_2$ ) are positive. It confirms that the independent variables have direct influence of the dependent variable (job performance) whereby if the value of the independent variables increases or decreases it will proportionally stimulate the increasing or decreasing of job performance.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Education provides enormous benefits to the people. Higher education, specifically, plays an important role in the formation of knowledge, economy and democratic society (Hoque et al, 2010). Furthermore, globalization and rapid advancement of information and technology, and competitors create a dynamic environment full of uncertainty. Universities as higher education institutions faced these challenges as they continuously aimed to achieve worldwide recognition and gain competitive advantages compared to others. Therefore, sets of performance standards have been gradually increased since the university needs to fulfill the requirements to achieve its goals and objectives. This situation becomes a challenge especially for academic staff since they have to increase their job performance while also faces the changes and uncertainty that continuously occurred in the work environment. Therefore, university management should find a way to improve the performance of academic staff without decreasing their motivation and satisfaction toward the university.

This research has identified challenges on the work environment in educational setting. The results of the research showed that participative decision making is the most significant variable in influencing job performance. The results supported previous researchers that also found participative decision making has significant impact on job performance (Lam et al., 2002; Sukirno & Siengthai, 2011; Ogbeide & Harrington, 2011; and Emamgholizadeh et al. 2011). Furthermore, teaching experience and academic rank also have a significant influence on job performance. Therefore, university management should provide more training to less experienced and lower ranked academic staff in order to increase their proficiency. University should also provide the same work quality compared to high experienced or higher ranked academic staff. Moreover, it is suggested for university management to promote participative decision making practices in the diverse work environment by providing opportunities for academic staff to participate, encourage them to state their thoughts and opinion and ask them what are possible decisions to be made in order to get an optimal result. Furthermore, in order to successfully implement participative decision management practices, managers' long term commitment to participation is critical to effective implementation of participative decision making. Thus, educating managers is an essential step in implementing a program that encourages participative decision making (Parnell & Crandall, 2001). This should be done in order to make managers recognize the importance of participative decision making and thus increase the likelihood that they will implement it.

Higher education institutions, universities and colleges are knowledge based organizations especially dependent on the expertise, commitment and innovation of their staffs (Simmons, 2001). It is necessary to take steps in improving the performance of academic staffs towards the achievement of final goals or increasing effectiveness (Beikzad, et al., 2012). In order to increase job performance, participation in decision making is necessary to be implemented. Involvement in decision making shows that the staffs are well empowered and they are seen as resources with knowledge and experience that are tapped (Olorunsula & Olayemi, 2011). Furthermore, participation will promote better decision making since more people give their thoughts and opinions; the better the decision taken, the better will be the organizational performance (Ejaz, Khalid & Riaz, 2011). Moreover, participation enhances staffs to gain much experience, remove boredom, increases workers commitment, efficiency and job satisfaction (Olorunsula & Olayemi, 2011).

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