

**SOCIO-CULTURAL VARIABLES AND ATTITUDE OF MARRIED ADULTS  
TOWARDS EXTRA MARITAL AFFAIRS IN AKWA IBOM NORTH-EAST  
SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA**

By

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research investigated the relationship between sociocultural variables and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. Two research questions were answered and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 4762 married adults in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. The sample for this study was 476 married adults in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District selected through purposive sampling technique. An instrument developed by the researchers and tagged “Sociocultural Variables and Attitude of Married Adults towards Extra Marital Affairs Questionnaire (SVAMAEMAQ)” was used in collecting data for the study. The instrument was face validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha technique which gave a coefficient of 0.87 for sociocultural variables and a value of 0.82 for attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. Simple linear regression analysis was used to answer the research questions as well as to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that peer pressure and ethnicity have very high positive relationship with attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that since sexuality is a complex and personal aspect of human identity, and attitudes towards extra marital affairs can vary widely based on individual experiences and beliefs, married adults should always ensure that each partner is sexually satisfied, to avoid seeking satisfaction elsewhere.*

**KEYWORDS: Sociocultural, Attitude, Married adults, Extra Marital Affairs**

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**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important aspects of people’s life is relating with others. In some cases, such relationship results in extra marital affairs by married adults. Extra marital affair occurs when a married person engages in sexual activity with another person other than the spouse. Also, the adjective extra marital affair is used to define a romantic relationship or encounter that occurs between a married person and someone who is not the person’s spouse. If a married man sneaks off to meet his secret girlfriend, this activity is known as extra marital affairs. Silas (2017) stated that a couple can

become emotionally distant from each other for different reasons, the most common of which are lack of time, stress and a communication gap with each other which makes them to show different attitude towards extra marital affairs.

Extra marital affairs come to picture when there is someone else besides the spouse. When there is an intense attraction to another person so much so that those involved begin to believe that they are in love with each other. It can lead to feelings of jealousy and guilt, and if the relationship continues over a long period of time, the third person in such a relationship may carry feelings of deceit and may encourage divorce.

Sometimes, extra marital relations are beneficial to people. The fact is that there have been as many advantages such as reduce loneliness, fulfill emotional emptiness, new sexual opportunity, more alive (Leo, 2018). In some cases, married people may engage in extra marital affairs without real emotional attachment but simply for excitement and fun. When cheated on, a person may feel the world has turned upside down, and everything that made sense to a person involved is shattered. Men engage in extra marital affairs to build up their self-image or sexual self-esteem while women turn to extra marital affairs to satisfy their longing for love, appreciation and tenderness. Different people have different attitudes towards extramarital affairs. To some people engaging in extra marital affairs is a gruesome offence and to some others, extra marital affairs is seen as a normal way of life.

Attitude is defined as the way in which a person views and evaluates something or someone to respond positively or negatively toward a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Wagoner (2015) opined that attitude is an individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value and it is precipitated through a responsive expression towards oneself, a person, place, thing, or event which in turn influences the individual's thought and action. Attitude can also be referred to as evaluation in terms of a preference for or against an object. Attitudes are important part of how people perceive their behaviours and unique characteristics. Likewise, attitudes can have a profound effect on a person's behaviour. Attitude consists of three components which include: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. An attitude can be a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities, and ideas. Bulayer and Harry (2018) agreed that attitude can be described as a settled and unchanging way of thinking, feeling, or observing people, places, events, or objects. Akpan (2021) defines an attitude as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. Ereh (2022) posits that attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs is influenced by how they have viewed the situation of getting involved in such affairs.

Spouses show different attitude towards engaging in extra marital affairs because of the influence of so many factors, one of which according to Osakwe (2022) is socio-cultural variables.

Socio-cultural variables are a wide array of societal and cultural influences that impact thoughts, behaviours, attitudes, values, feelings, interactions and ultimately health outcomes. Socio-cultural variables play critical role in individual's development and functioning. Some of these variables include illiteracy rate, population geographic distribution, educational level and the population's ethnic composition. Okeke (2021) explained that sociocultural factors play a vital role in shaping social development and functioning of people especially when it has to do with the close relationship between one person and another, like that of husband and wife. The author further stated that

socio-culturalists argue that understanding a person's behaviour requires knowing about the cultural context in which the behaviour occurs. Examples of socio-cultural factors of a positive nature are a strong sense of family and community support and mentorship, good education and health care, availability of recreational facilities, and exposure to the arts. Grant (2017) submitted that sociocultural factors differ from region to region depending on population factors, government policies, traditions, lifestyles, beliefs and the environment. Dale (2018) listed some aspects of socio-cultural variables including social classes, religious beliefs, wealth distribution, language, business practices, social values, customer preferences, social organization, and attitude towards work.

Harry (2021) opined that there are many socio-cultural variables, but the outstanding ones that influence extra marital affairs engagement are sexuality, values, peer group pressure, religion and ethnicity. Therefore, this study focused on two of those socio-cultural variables outlined by Harry (2021) which could influence attitude towards extramarital affairs. These are: peer pressure and ethnicity.

Peer pressure according to Eze *et al.* (2019) is the direct or indirect influence of peers on people, members of social groups with similar interests, experience, or social status. Members of a peer group are more likely to influence a person's beliefs and behaviour. Peer pressure can be both negative and positive. While it may be noticed that a peer pressure may make married adults to show positive attitude towards extra marital affairs, it can also motivate them to show negative attitude towards extramarital affairs. Major (2018) opines that married adults who are not negatively influenced by peers would always appreciate their spouse in the little effort they make and try to build the relationship to avoid the tendency of having extra marital affairs. However, Robert (2019) stated that peer pressure affects married adults seriously because it makes married adults to alert their friends where it is happening, the benefits embedded in it and the techniques to adopt in easily engaging in this affair. The desire to feel accepted and to fit in is one of the strongest forces paramount to peer group membership. This can lead them to do things that are risky such as indulging in extra marital affairs, just to feel accepted by peers (Oni *et al.*, 2025).

Ethnicity also influences attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share common identity based on characteristics such as nationality, culture, language, religion, traditions, ancestry, history and geography (Phinney, 2022). Ethnicity is often used to describe a sense of belonging and connection to a particular ethnic community. It is important to note that ethnicity is different from race, which refers to physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture, and facial features. While race and ethnicity are related, they are not the same thing. Ethnicity has intersection with other factors like religion, socioeconomic status, and geographic location, which can influence attitudes towards extra marital affairs. Hence, it is necessary to understand specific cultural and social context in which individuals from different ethnic groups live and navigate relationships.

Cokley (2014) suggests that both racial and ethnic socialization potentially have distinct implications for behaviour. While racial identity tends to focus more on the social and political impact that group membership has on a person's psychological functioning, ethnicity focuses more on a shared worldview, language, and behaviours that are associated with a cultural heritage (McMahin and Watts, 2022). Phinney (2022)

posits that although each ethnic group has its own traditions, values, and history, there are components of ethnicity that are similar across ethnic groups. These commonalities include self-identification as a group member, participation in ethnic behaviours and practices, a sense of group belonging, and attitudes towards one's group. Ethnic pride, or being happy with group membership, and feelings of attachment to the group are also key aspects of ethnicity.

In a study specifically examining the role of ethnicity on the amount of sexual risk-taking among African women, Beadnell *et al.* (2013) found that women who had higher levels of ethnicity reported fewer instances of sexual risk-taking, as measured by unprotected sexual acts within the previous months. In addition, women who had higher ethnicity had more favourable outcome beliefs towards monogamy and abstinence. In another study conducted by Corneille and Belgrave (2017) higher ethnicity was found to be associated with drug use disapproval and it served as a buffer from risky sex attitudes.

Ethnicity can influence attitudes towards extramarital affairs in various ways, depending on cultural and societal norms, values, and beliefs. Research has shown that cultural background and societal norms play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards extramarital affairs. Different ethnic groups have unique cultural norms surrounding marriage, family, and relationships. Some cultures may view extramarital affairs as more acceptable or common, while others may strongly condemn them. Different ethnic groups have distinct beliefs and practices that influence their attitudes towards extramarital affairs. Ethnic groups may place a strong emphasis on family and community ties, making extra marital affairs seen as a betrayal of these bonds.

Ethnic cultures may have specific gender roles and expectations influencing attitudes towards extra marital affairs. For instance, some cultures may view men's infidelity as more acceptable than of women. Due to this, men may feel there is nothing wrong for them to have extra marital affairs, even in full awareness of their wives, but for women, extra marital affairs is considered as sacrilege and abomination. Ethnic group's historical and social experiences such as colonization, slavery, or migration, can equally shape a people's attitude towards extra marital affairs.

Some researches have been conducted to investigate sociocultural factors and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. One of such researches is that of Francis (2021) whose study was on the influence of peer pressure on married adults' interest in extra marital affairs in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study was guided by five research questions and five hypotheses. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 9413 married adults in Enugu East Local Government Area. A sample size of 205 married adults was used for the study selected through a simple random sampling technique. A researcher developed instrument titled "Influence of Peer Pressure on Married Adults Interest in Extra Marital Affairs Questionnaire (IPPMAIEMAQ)" was used by the researcher in collecting data for the study. The instrument was duly validated by three experts in Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.81 for the instrument. Simple percentages were used in answering the research questions while independent t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant influence of peer pressure on married adults' interest in extra marital affairs in Enugu East Local Government Area based on maturity in marriage, values,

expectations, time spent with peers and adhering to advice of peers. Francis' research work is related to the present study in that they are both concerned with socio-cultural variables and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs but the two studies differ in the sense that while Francis' study used a descriptive survey design, while the present study employed the correlational design.

Simmons (2023) investigated ethnicity and attitude towards seeking mental health services. The main aim of the study was to evaluate the relationship between ethnicity and attitude towards seeking mental health services and how ethnicity also affects an individual's preference for a counselor of the same ethnicity among black Americans in Harding University. The non-experimental study used a sample of 108 adults, 18years of age or older, obtained through social media platforms. The participants completed a Mental Health Service Survey, which included items to generate demographic information and components of the attitude toward seeking professional psychological scale created by Fischer and Turner. The data collected was analysed using independent samples t-test to identify the effect of ethnicity on attitude toward seeking mental health services, while chi-square test was used to determine the association between ethnicity and preference for same-ethnicity counselors at significant level of 0.05.

The finding indicated that Blacks or African Americans have similar attitude toward seeking mental health services to non-Blacks or non-African Americans. Additionally, the results indicated Blacks or African-Americans preferred a counselor of the same ethnicity significantly more than non-Black or non-African Americans. The difference in counselor ethnicity preference is more likely to account for the difference in mental health service usage among ethnicities than attitudes toward seeking mental health services. Simmon's study differ from the present study by looking at attitude towards seeking mental health services as dependent variable whereas the present study focuses on attitude towards extra marital affairs. However, both studies relate by using ethnicity as the independent variable. The question is, if ethnicity influenced attitude towards seeking mental health services, could it also influence attitude of married adults towards extramarital affairs? Could the problem of extra marital affairs be as a result of the influence of socio-cultural variables?

It becomes imperative, therefore, to understand the specific cultural and social context in which individuals live and navigate relationships. It is in considering the relationship between socio-cultural variables of peer pressure, ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District that the researchers are motivated to conduct a study in this direction.

It is hoped that findings of this study would be beneficial to married adults, counsellors, religious bodies, Social Studies educators and researchers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Extra marital affairs are a significant challenge to marital stability and can have lasting negative consequences on couples, families and children. While societal attitude towards infidelity is evolving, there is a lack of clear understanding regarding how married couples themselves view extra marital affairs. However, there have been growing cases of issues resulting from extra marital affairs among couples as observed by the researchers in Nigeria and specifically in the study area. The negative effect or consequences of this problem has led to broken homes, separation among couples,

heartbreaks, devastations, loneliness, disharmony in homes, depression, feeling of betrayal, feeling of insecurity, domestic violence and the like. Based on this, the researchers intend to find out how socio-cultural variables including peer pressure and ethnicity determine married couple's attitude towards extra marital affairs.

Peer influence account for the increased rate of extra marital affairs among married couples. Many couples have friends, colleagues and co-workers who they see having affairs with others outside their marital home and are easily influenced. Some are talked into the act by peers or friends, while others get influenced into the act.

Ethnicity could also influence married adults' attitude towards extra marital affairs because some ethnic groups permit more than one spouse while others do not. The impression is that those who are married to one partner do not usually feel satisfied and tend to go outside marriage to have affairs for sexual satisfaction and some associated consequences of this include: family breakdown, separation, violence among couples, increased divorce rates, depression, suicide, drug abuse and other psychological problems. This is because extra marital affairs create feelings of betrayal that can result in a very complex, conflicted and expensive divorce proceedings.

In order to find solution to the problem of extra marital affair among married couples, so many researches have been carried out with the view to finding out the causes and possible solutions to the problem, but this seems unachievable as the problem still exists. Could this problem be as a result of the influence of socio-cultural variables? The researchers having considered the association between socio-cultural variables of peer influence, ethnicity and attitude of married couples towards extra marital affairs decided to conduct this study on the relationship between socio-cultural variables and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District to see if socio-cultural variables relate to attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between socio-cultural variables and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. The relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.
2. The relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District?
2. What relationship exist between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses which were raised for the study and tested at .05 level of significance were:

1. There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

2. Significant relationship does not exist between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

### **Research Method**

Correlational research design was adopted for the study since the variables had already occurred and the researchers needed to study them as they are without any manipulation. The population of the study consisted of all 4672 legally married couples in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District (Akwa Ibom State Bureau of Statistics, 2023) out of which 467, representing 10% of the population was purposively sampled. Purposive sampling technique was used to select couples who have been legally married for at least 15 years from two churches in the Senatorial District since it was impossible to bring all married adults together for the purpose of randomization.

The researchers developed a data collection instrument tagged “Socio-cultural Variables and Attitude of Married Adults towards Extra Marital Affairs Questionnaire (SCVAMATEMAQ)” with three sections: A, B and C. Section A with three items aimed at obtaining demographic data; B had ten statements to elicit response on the two independent sub-variables (peer pressure and ethnicity), while Section C contained ten statements on the dependent variable (married adult’s attitude towards extra marital affairs), giving a total of 23 items. The instrument was structured on a 4-point Likert type scale of strongly agree (3 points), agree (3 points), disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point). Respondents were required to tick against the options which best described their opinion.

Validation of the instrument was conducted by two experts who face validated the instrument by reading through and making corrections which were effected by the researchers to ensure that the instrument was valid. The instrument was afterwards administered on 30 married adults in the study area who were part of the population but were not sampled, to determine its internal consistency using Cronbach’s Alpha technique. Reliability indices of 0.87 and 0.82 were obtained for socio-cultural variables and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs respectively, which made the instrument highly reliable for use in data collection.

Data were analysed using simple linear regression analysis. The correlation coefficient (R-value) was used in answering the research questions while p-value of F-statistics was used in testing the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The R-values and their associated nature of relationship was a guideline for interpreting and taking decisions with regard to the research questions. In testing the hypotheses, F-statistic was considered significant when the observed P-values were less than or equal to 0.05 and  $H_0$  was rejected, but when the observed P-value was greater than 0.05, F-statistic was not significant and  $H_0$  was retained.

### **Results**

#### **Research Question One**

What is the relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District?

**Table 1:** Summary of regression coefficient analysis on relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs (n=457)

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R <sup>2</sup>	%	Remarks
	B	Std Error	Beta	r			
<i>(Constant)</i>	2.155	.064					
Sexuality	.576	.016	.934	.934 <sup>a</sup>	.873	87.3	VH

Table 1 gives the summary of the regression test on relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. The result of the analysis shows that for every unit rise in peer pressure, attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs increases by 0.576. The Table also reveals that the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.873, indicating that 87.3% change in attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs is as a result of peer pressure. Table 1 further revealed that the R-value was 0.93. When compared with the extent scale of correlation to determine the strength of the relationship, the coefficient falls within 0.81-1.00. This therefore means that peer pressure has very high positive relationship with attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

**Research Question Two**

What relationship exist between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District?

**Table 2:** Summary of regression coefficient analysis on relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs (n=457)

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R <sup>2</sup>	%	Remarks
	B	Std Error	Beta	r			
<i>(Constant)</i>	1.578	.073					
Sexuality	.824	.021	.944	.944 <sup>a</sup>	.891	89.1	VH

Table 2 gives the summary of the regression test on relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. The result of analysis shows that for every unit rise in ethnicity, attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs increases by 0.824. The Table also reveals that the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.891, indicating 89.1% change in attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs is as a result of ethnicity. The Table further revealed that the R-value was 0.94. When compared with the extent scale of correlation to determine the strength of the relationship, the coefficient falls within 0.81-1.00. This therefore means that ethnicity has very high positive relationship with attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

**Hypothesis One**

There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

**Table 3:** Summary of regression test for significance on the relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs (n=457)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
1	Regression	80.341	1	80.341	1340.190	.000 <sup>a</sup>	S*
	Residual	11.690	455	.060			
	Total	92.030	456				

S=Significant, \*significant@ (p<.05)

Table 3 gives the summary of regression significance test. The result shows that at a significance level of .05, the probability level is .000. Since the probability value is less than the level of significance (p<.05), the result is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

### Hypothesis Two

Significant relationship does not exist between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

**Table 4:** Summary of regression test for significance on the relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs (n=457)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
1	Regression	81.965	1	81.965	1587.995	.000 <sup>a</sup>	S*
	Residual	10.065	455	.052			
	Total	92.030	456				

S=Significant, \*significant@ (p<.05)

Table 4 gives the summary of regression significance test. The result shows that at a significance level of .05, the probability level is .000. Since the probability value is less than the level of significance (p<.05), the result is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that significant relationship does not exist between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of data analysis of research question one shows that for every unit rise in peer pressure, attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs increased by 0.576. The strength of relationship indicated that there is very high positive relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. The corresponding hypothesis confirmed that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. This finding conforms with the finding of Francis (2021) that there is a significant influence of peer pressure on married adults' interest in extra marital affairs in Enugu East Local

Government Area based on maturity in marriage, values, expectations, time spent with peers and adhering to advice of peers.

Result of analysis of research question two indicated that there is a very high positive relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. The related hypothesis test showed that there is a significant relationship between ethnicity and attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. This finding corroborates that of Simmons (2023) who found that Blacks or African-Americans have similar attitude toward seeking mental health services to non-Blacks or non-African Americans. Additionally, Simmons' finding indicated that Blacks or non-Americans preferred a counselor of the same ethnicity significantly more than non-Black or non- African Americans and that ethnicity significantly influence attitudes toward seeking mental health services.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that sociocultural variables significantly relate with attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs. Specifically, peer pressure and ethnicity have significant relationship with attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made to address the issue of attitude of married adults towards extra marital affairs:

1. Since sexuality is a complex and personal aspect of human identity, and attitudes towards extra marital affairs can vary widely based on individual experiences and beliefs, married adults should always ensure that each partner is sexually satisfied, to avoid seeking satisfaction elsewhere.
2. In order to avoid peer influence on attitude towards extra marital affairs, couples should prioritize building healthy and fulfilling relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication and avoid keeping bad companies and friends.
3. Married adults should recognize that different ethnic groups have unique cultural norms, values, and beliefs that shape their attitudes towards extra marital affair, hence, they should be sensitive to these cultural differences and avoid making assumptions or generalizations.

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