

Original research

Investigation of the role of education and social responsibility in reducing perceived crimes among secondary high school students (Case study: the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone)Hossein Kahour Nejad Hajiabbasi¹ Golamreza Jafarinia^{*2}, Habib Pasallarzadeh³**Abstract**

Introduction: The present study aimed to investigate the role of education and social responsibility in reducing perceived crimes among secondary high school students (Case study: the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone).

Research Method: This research is a quantitative and descriptive-exploratory study carried out with the aim of practical application and based on data collection methods. The target population of the study consisted of residents (parents of students) of local and border areas within the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone in 2022. A sample of 500 participants was selected using an accessible sampling method, and they answered questionnaires. Data were collected using the Responsibility for Student Achievement Questionnaire of Guskey (1987), the Corporate Social Responsibility Questionnaire of Carroll (1991), and the Attitudes to Criminal Behaviors Questionnaire of Fazli (2010). Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability coefficient. The data were analyzed using Path Coefficient and Amos22 software.

Findings: The results of the study showed that social responsibility has a positive and significant relationship with education ($p < .01$). Social responsibility had a positive and significant impact on reducing perceived crime rates. Furthermore, the relationship between social responsibility and education in reducing perceived crime rate has been confirmed ($p < .01$).

Conclusion: Based on the findings, it can be concluded that through the use of social responsibility education, efforts can be made to reduce the perception of crime among students in the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone. By incorporating the principles of social responsibility into curricula, students can develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of their actions and the importance of ethical behavior.

Key Words: Education, Perceived crime, Persian Gulf, Social responsibility

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Introduction:

The concept of responsibility has started to become an increasingly important phenomenon in our age. In this regard, educators think that, particularly starting from the preschool period, students have a sense of responsibility (1). Responsibility is defined as the awareness of a person concerning his/her behaviors or any event in his/her realm of authority, or his/her undertaking the consequences of his/her behaviors and the events (2). According to (3), responsibility is defined as taking care of oneself and others, fulfilling one's obligations, participating in society, coping with pain, and building a better world. In this context, one of the functions of responsibility is to establish a genuine relationship between the individual and the community, leading to the integration of the individual into society. A responsible individual possesses the necessary awareness and consciousness to fulfill their responsibilities and strives to act in accordance with their duties in society (4). One of the institutions that can help assume this responsibility and play a role in its implementation is the education system. Education is one of the important factors in an individual's life to take social responsibility. The concept of social pedagogy was considered in the document of educational transformation, where one of its important functions is to fulfill the social responsibility of the individual in the education system (2).

The objective of any educational system is to foster the well-being and advancement of its students. Undeniably, student responsibility is a crucial factor influencing their emotional and social well-being, as well as their overall growth and development. Children and adolescents demonstrate responsible behavior when they act in accordance with ethical principles and acknowledge accountability for the consequences of their actions. Students who cultivate responsibility within the school environment learn to collaboratively problem-solve and navigate challenges within broader contexts. Therefore, a multifaceted examination of social behavior and its associated factors is of paramount importance (5). Educating the public on social responsibility has become more challenging and dynamic in this modern and globalized era due to the complexity of the way mankind lives their life and the way they carry out their social responsibility (6). Lack of social responsibility and awareness among school children contributes to the emergence of social problems that, if left unchecked, could have long-term effects on the entire country (7). Therefore, to raise a generation of responsible students with a high level of integrity and social responsibility, responsible parties, including the government, private institutions, organizations, schools, teachers, and parents, should respond positively to this event (8). The growth and well-being of a society are significantly influenced by social responsibility. Social responsibility is the moral duty and concern of a member of the public towards the mental and sexual well-being of others (9). It is also the moral obligation and sense of duty that people have towards society and other people (10). In particular, this represents the socialization of moral responsibility, independent thinking, and full engagement in social life. According to (11), social responsibility requires high standards, a healthy personality, willingness to learn, commitment to one's career, fairness and honesty, kindness, collective care, hard work, and obedience to rules and regulations.

Most experts believe that education plays a crucial role in promoting social development and change. Education is a tool that enables people to achieve equitable and self-sustaining development (12). Every aspect of men's lives has changed remarkably through education. In other words, education is a process that changes social attitudes and behavior so that an individual can make a positive contribution to society and actively participate in it (13).

Adolescence represents a critical period for the development of social responsibility, as it is during this stage that individuals seek greater autonomy and must make decisions regarding their values and behavioral patterns. A key factor contributing to the maturity of adolescent choices is their level of responsibility in both personal and social domains. Meaningful change in circumstances, perspectives, and outcomes can only be achieved through an understanding of the rationale behind choices and a willingness to accept responsibility for those choices. Without this acceptance, efforts towards change become futile, and feelings of powerlessness and passivity hinder personal growth and reform (14).

However, nowadays, students show a weaker inclination towards social responsibility because they are not sufficiently aware or do not perceive their responsibilities towards their country or nation. A strong sense of self-confidence and a lack of personal responsibility are the first two expressions of these tendencies (13). The second aspect is the devaluation of discipline, social morality, and role responsibility. According to Godfrey & Hatch (15), the balance between personal and social responsibility has changed. In addition, today's school children are exposed to an unhealthy environment due to gangsterism, vandalism, bullying, derogatory language towards senior citizens, littering, damaging public property, and other social and environmental problems. There is a connection between social and environmental problems and this moral decay and immoral attitudes. Knowledge of their current environmental conditions requires that they demonstrate the highest level of social responsibility (16).

The growing awareness of social responsibility in education, especially among school children, has prompted researchers to address and examine this issue. Value creation in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become part of the research areas of interest to researchers and academics. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is used in business to achieve a balance between sustainable social and environmental development and economic growth. According to the CSR concept, a company should not only be responsible for its financial performance. In addition to their economic role, they should also be aware of social values and actively contribute to improving the social environment (17). According to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), companies take responsibility for the impact of their business activities on communities, shareholders, suppliers, employees, customers, and other stakeholders, as well as on the environment (18). The above responsibilities serve as evidence that organizations have a duty to comply with legal requirements and proactively improve the well-being of their workforce, their families, the surrounding community, and society at large.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an obligation that applies to all business organizations and companies in the public and private sectors. CSR recognizes that employers have a duty to follow the desired path of community values and goals. In this regard, Arnold (2010) explained and believed that the first benefits that flow from CSR improve the relationship between companies and communities. Kotler et al. (19) defined CSR as a policy of action taken by the involved parties to reflect their responsibility in advancing social interests. Govindan et al. (20) explained that CSR involves enhancing people's welfare through the use of company resources. Each company is expected to have a positive impact on community welfare through a CSR program.

Organizations have a responsibility not to pollute the environment, engage in discriminatory employment practices, neglect the needs of their employees, and produce harmful products that harm community health and the environment. Organizations should strive to provide financial resources for improving social well-being, which is accepted by the majority of society. These measures include supporting the country's culture and cultural institutions and improving the quality of life (21).

The Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone (PGSEZ) is a major economic institution that plays a critical role in transforming global supply chains and development models. The PGSEZ is located at Kilometer 13 of the Shahid Rajaei Highway in Bandar Abbas, Iran. It was initially set up on January 14, 1998, as a special economic zone for mining and metals. However, it later changed its name to Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone. The PGSEZ is strategically located in the Persian Gulf region, known for its rich natural resources, particularly in the mining and metals industries. As a special economic zone, it offers various incentives and benefits to attract domestic and foreign investment, promote industrial growth, and promote economic development in the region (22). Schools have the potential to greatly influence individuals' socialization and orientation toward social ethics. They can achieve this not only by imparting knowledge and skills, but also by imparting desirable and appropriate social values, norms, and attitudes. Schools can employ professional staff, provide necessary resources, and create diverse programs in areas such as instruction, athletics, culture, and more to promote social responsibility among all students (23). Although several studies have been conducted on social responsibility, these studies have rarely examined the education system, particularly schools. Braderan Haghiri et al. (24) conducted a study titled "The conceptualization of social responsibility of the university in Iran," which concluded that the individual dimension of social responsibility includes attitude, values, mindset, and actions. The organizational dimension, on the other hand, includes student education and training, research, professional services, and social participation. A study by Mialon & McCambridge (25) highlighted the mediating role of social presence in online education in enhancing teacher-student relationship satisfaction and perceived knowledge gain. This finding is relevant to the educational context in the PGSEZ, as it emphasizes the importance of social interactions and relationships in promoting positive educational outcomes. Furthermore, the study by Rutten et al. (26) indicated that the social and physical environments in schools play a mediating role in promoting autonomous motivation in physical education. This insight underscores the significance of supportive educational environments in fostering motivation and engagement among students, which can subsequently contribute to reducing perceived crimes. Moreover, the research by Rodgers et al. (27) emphasized the potential of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance control systems and reduce the likelihood of fraud. This finding is relevant to the educational sector in the PGSEZ, as it underscores the importance of integrating ethical and socially responsible practices into educational management. Additionally, Matsue et al. (28) highlighted the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between structural empowerment and compliance with information security policy. This insight is pertinent to the educational context, as it emphasizes the role of empowerment in promoting responsible and compliant behavior, which is essential in reducing perceived crimes. Furthermore, the study by Guo et al. (29) revealed that family social capital plays a complete mediating role in the relationship between socioeconomic status and children's psychological well-being. Although this study focused on family dynamics, the concept of social capital can be extended to educational institutions within the PGSEZ, highlighting the potential impact of social

relationships and support systems on reducing perceived crimes. Given these factors, this study aims to explore the relationship between social responsibility and education. This research also investigates how social responsibility can contribute to reducing perceived crime among residents of the local areas of the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone, through education.

Research Method:

This research was a quantitative and descriptive-exploratory study carried out with the aim of practical application and based on data collection methods. The target population of the study consisted of residents (parents of students) of local and border areas within the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone in 2022. A sample of 500 participants (parents of students) was selected using an accessible sampling method, and they answered questionnaires. To observe the ethical considerations in this research, an attempt was made to collect the data after obtaining the participants' consent. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their personal information, and results were provided without specifying the names and details of the participants. Ethical considerations were also carefully considered throughout the research process in the quantitative section, demonstrating the researcher's commitment to respecting the participants' involvement and confidentiality. Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the reliability coefficient. The data were analyzed using Path Coefficient and Amos22 software. To calculate the reliability coefficient, 30 questionnaires were selected from the local community of the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone. Path coefficient and the AMOS 22 software were used to analyze data and generalize the results of the sample to the statistical population. Research tools:

(1) Responsibility for Student Achievement Questionnaire (RSA): The scale was developed by Guskey (30). The scale includes two sub-dimensions, namely responsibility for success (R+) and responsibility for failure (R-). The scale includes 30 items, 15 items for each subdimension. For the dimension of responsibility for success, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was .68, and for the dimension of responsibility for failure, it was .80. The scale measures teachers' responsibility for student outcomes. Guskey asserted that positive and negative performance outcomes represent separate dimensions rather than opposite ends of a single continuum and that these dimensions operate independently in their influence on perceptions of effectiveness (30).

(2) Corporate Social Responsibility Questionnaire Carroll (31): The Corporate Social Responsibility Questionnaire was designed by Carroll (31). In this study, Carroll's questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the research topic while maintaining its main components. The number of questions was reduced from 20 to 13, and the research dimensions are as follows:

- Economic Commitment Component: Questions 1-3
- Legal Commitment Component: Questions 4-7
- Ethical Commitment Component: Questions 8-9
- Philanthropic (Voluntary) Commitment Component: Questions 10-13

The questionnaire items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. The scores for each dimension can be measured by the average scores of the questions related to that dimension. The reliability of this questionnaire, based on the Cronbach alpha coefficient, is above 0.70.

The collected responses were entered into SPSS version 26, and descriptive statistics, including central tendency and dispersion indices (mean, median, standard deviation, cumulative percentage of groups), were calculated. Inferential statistical calculations were performed using correlation and path analysis tests in AMOS version 24.

(3) Delinquency Attitude Questionnaire: This 28-item questionnaire, developed by Fazli (32) for adolescents aged 15 to 18, measures attitudes towards delinquent behavior. It utilizes a 4-point Likert scale. A higher total score indicates a more positive attitude towards engaging in delinquent behaviors. In a pilot study administered to 200 adolescents (aged 15-18) attending public schools in Tehran, a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.71 for delinquency attitudes and an internal consistency of 0.86 (33) was reported. Fazli's original study (32) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76 and confirmed the validity of the instrument through factor analysis. To further ensure validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed by experts in psychology, criminology, and sociology, who corroborated its validity. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency was calculated to be 0.73.

Findings:

The results showed that 60% of respondents (parents of students) were male and 40% were female. Among the age groups, 2.21% of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old, 2.42% were between 31 and 40 years old, 6.28% were between 41 and 50 years old, and 8% were over 50 years old. In terms of education, 0.38.4 of respondents had a bachelor's degree, 0.23.8 had a master's degree, 0.14.8 had a post-graduate degree, 0.11.6 had a high school diploma, 0.7 had a doctorate, 0.06 had a post-doctorate, and 0.3.8 had an education below diploma level. Demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Educational Degree	N (Participants)	Percent
Postdoctoral	3	0.06
Doctorate (PH.D.)	35	0.7
Masters	119	0.23.8
Bachelor's degree	192	0.38.4
Post- graduate	74	0.14.8
Diploma	58	0.11.6
High school	19	0.3.8

Table 2. Variable description of social responsibility

Variable	Number	Average	the least	the most	standard deviation
Social responsibility	500	2.86	1	5	0.77
Social Security	500	2.87	1	5	0.66
Reduction of perceived crime	500	2.79	1	5	0.72
Education	500	2.73	1	5	0.69

The descriptive results of the research variables are presented in Table 2. The factor loadings of all survey questions were examined and were found to all exceed 0.4, indicating that further calculations are permitted. The t-value for all paths is greater than 1.96, indicating the significance of all questions and relationships between variables at the 95% confidence level.

Table 3. The reliability of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE)

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Educational	0.766	0.895	0.810
Moral	0.819	0.892	0.734
Economic	0.853	0.902	0.698
Social tolerance	0.802	0.884	0.717
philanthropy	0.896	0.928	0.763
A sense of social security	0.918	0.930	0.505
Job security	0.837	0.892	0.673
Possession	0.827	0.897	0.744
discrimination	0.808	0.887	0.725
Immigrants	0.780	0.873	0.697
Perceived crime -- reduction	0.859	0.895	0.588
Social tolerance	0.802	0.884	0.717
Reporting to the police	0.859	0.915	0.782

Based on the contents of Table 3, which contains the factor loading table and Cronbach's alpha table, composite reliability and average variance extracted, it can be found that all variables and their dimensions have acceptable reliability based on Cronbach's alpha. s alpha and composite reliability. In addition, the factor loading table and the extracted mean of variance (which should be at least 0.50) indicate that the convergent validity of the variable has been achieved. Convergent validity is achieved at the manifest level through factor loadings and at the structural level through average variance extracted (AVE), both of which are acceptable in this case.

Table 4 . Model fit indices

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
Summer	0.074	0.085
NFI	0.625	0.614

According to Table 4, the SRMR value of the model is 0.074, which is within an acceptable range. Furthermore, the NFI value is 0.625.

Table 5. Total Effects of Variables

Variables	Path Coefficient	T-significant	Significance Level
job security <-A sense of social security	0.883	67.702	0.000
being-well <-A sense of social security	0.812	47.485	0.000
social tolerance <-A sense of social security	0.401	8.395	0.000
discrimination <-Sense of social security	0.837	57.156	0.000
going to the police station <-A sense of social security	0.414	8.453	0.000
immigrants <-A sense of social security	0.839	52.308	0.000
crime reduction is rocked <-The sense of social security	0.460	8.525	0.000
Social responsibility <- Education	0.833	50.243	0.000
Economic <-Social responsibility	0.922	89.948	0.000
job security <-Social responsibility	0.715	35.697	0.000
enjoyment <-Social responsibility	0.657	28.661	0.000
social tolerance <-Social responsibility	0.672	31.732	0.000
philanthropy <-Social responsibility	0.921	123.781	0.000
discrimination <- Social responsibility	0.678	32.642	0.000
sense of social safety <-Social responsibility	0.810	48.931	0.000
legal <-Social responsibility	0.872	75.672	0.000
go to the police station <-Social responsibility	0.693	35.003	0.000
Immigrants <-Social responsibility	0.679	32.140	0.000
crime reduction _ Ed Rocked <-Social responsibility	0.771	39.551	0.000
social tolerance <-Reduction of administered crime	0.871	69.824	0.000
going to _the police station <-Reducing the crime _administered	0.900	103.453	0.000

According to Table 5, all indirect effects in the model are statistically significant, indicating their explanatory power.

Discussion and conclusion:

The present study aimed to investigate the role of education and social responsibility in reducing perceived crimes among students living in local areas within the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone. To investigate the relationship between social responsibility and education, researchers determined the path coefficient, which indicated a positive and significant correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, the obtained significance coefficient suggests that if this value exceeds a predetermined threshold, one can confidently conclude that the relationship is statistically significant. Specifically, if the significance coefficient surpasses this threshold, the positive relationship between social responsibility and education will likely be significantly confirmed. The results of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies conducted by (61); (8); 9; (4); (21); (11); and (32), highlighting the importance of social responsibility and education in promoting a safe and harmonious society.

The results of this study are consistent with the existing literature on the role of social responsibility in promoting feelings of safety and reducing perceptions of crime in local communities. The positive relationship between social responsibility and education implies that

individuals who demonstrate a higher sense of social responsibility are more likely to perceive their environment as safe and have lower perceptions of crime. The educational aspect of social responsibility is particularly noteworthy in this context. Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' values, attitudes, and behaviors, including their sense of responsibility towards society. By promoting educational initiatives that emphasize social responsibility, such as awareness campaigns, community engagement programs, and ethics training, it is possible to instill a greater sense of responsibility in students. Consequently, this increased sense of responsibility may positively influence their perceptions of social security and contribute to reducing perceptions of crime. From a traditional perspective, organizations focus on maximizing profits. However, the new perspective considers this view to be limited and short-sighted. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the consequences and outcomes of organizations' decisions in all dimensions (education, economics, society, and environment). The results of Arazmjoo's study (4) indicated that the principles of national security are based on public satisfaction, social justice, welfare provision, and meeting the needs of society. In their view, the threat to individuals of equal benefits, equal risks, and social justice is a factor in the creation of order and security. The ethical commitment of organizations should aim to achieve rights and justice. Based on the results, it appears that the management of the Persian Gulf Free Trade Zone has been able to fulfill its social responsibilities from the perspective of the local community.

The path coefficient of perceived social security on perceived crime reduction indicates a positive and significant relationship between these two variables. Given that the significance coefficient is substantially greater than a predetermined threshold, it can be confidently concluded that perceived social security has a positive and significant association with a perceived reduction in criminal activity. It is important to note that social indicators such as social interaction, general literacy and education level, public trust, general health level, and institutional quality can also have an impact on the occurrence of crime. These factors contribute to the social and human capital of individuals, which in turn affects their productivity and wages. Higher social and human capital lead to increased opportunity costs for engaging in criminal activities. Enrico Ferri, one of the founders of the positivist school, argued that punishments are ineffective in terms of public prevention and proposed a comprehensive program of preventive measures (33). This highlights the need to use non-coercive and socio-economically oriented prevention methods outside of the criminal justice system. However, coercive and punitive measures within the criminal justice system to prevent crime are also highlighted. In fact, criminologists believe in preventative measures to deter crime. Providing a safe social environment, promoting a sense of belonging and integration in society, ensuring economic and social justice, and eliminating discrimination can be effective in preventing crime. Based on the results, it can be suggested that perceptions of social security are effective in reducing perceived crime among residents of local areas.

The path coefficient of perceived social security in relation to social responsibility and perceived crime reduction indicates a positive and significant association between these two variables. The magnitude of this path coefficient suggests that perceived social security has a substantial impact on both social responsibility and the perceived reduction of crime within the community. The evaluation of organizational performance should be based on criteria that

include improving social responsibility with a sustainable development approach 21). The existence of good governance in organizations requires committed leadership, transparent reporting, and adherence to ethical values, all fundamental goals of social responsibility. As an organization matures, it demonstrates its approach to responsible behavior and the policies and social investments it pursues to strengthen local communities. In fact, organizational responsibility requires fulfilling obligations to all stakeholders, including social groups outside the organizational profit chain, and assuming a constructive role in society and the native inhabitants of the areas covered. These obligations include the responsibility to improve the living conditions of residents, to improve the situation of socially disadvantaged groups, or to put pressure on other organizations (including banks and the government) to change regulations and social practices. Economic considerations are relevant to sustainability and the impact that organizations have on the economies in which they operate (4).

The study's focus on the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone provides valuable insights into a specific geographical context. The unique characteristics of this area, such as its economic importance and strong social dynamics, may influence the relationship between social responsibility, social trust, perceptions of safety, and crime reduction. Therefore, the results of this study contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between social responsibility, social security perceptions, and crime in the context of the Persian Gulf Special Economic Zone. Despite the insights provided by the aforementioned research findings, several knowledge gaps still exist in understanding the educational role of social responsibility in reducing perceived crimes in the PGSEZ. First, there is a paucity of research specifically addressing the intersection of social responsibility, education, and crime reduction in the Persian Gulf region. Future research should aim to investigate the unique cultural, social, and economic factors that influence the effectiveness of educational initiatives promoting social responsibility and crime reduction in the PGSEZ. Second, the mediating role of social security in the relationship between educational interventions and crime reduction has not been extensively explored. Future studies should focus on understanding how social security measures, such as community policing, neighborhood watch programs, and public safety campaigns, interact with educational efforts to promote social responsibility and reduce perceived crimes among residents of the PGSEZ. Finally, there is a need for longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of educational interventions focused on social responsibility and crime reduction. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into the sustained effects of educational programs and initiatives on shaping social attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions related to crime and social responsibility in the PGSEZ.

Research Recommendations: Given the limited scholarly attention devoted to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly within the Iranian context, and its crucial role in fostering sustainable development with an emphasis on socio-economic security, further research in this domain is highly recommended. Such investigations can enhance public awareness regarding the significance of CSR and underscore the imperative of organizational accountability. This focus on corporate accountability and commitment to all stakeholders, including non-stakeholders, has gained considerable prominence in developed nations in recent years. Ideally, societal awareness of CSR failures should empower communities to hold organizations accountable and compel them to fulfill their obligations. Promoting public understanding of mechanisms for evaluating organizational social and ethical performance will, prospectively, compel organizations to prioritize and strategically plan for the fulfillment of their societal commitments, alongside their pursuit of profitability.

Research Limitations: This research encountered several methodological challenges, including a scarcity of readily available research resources and the inherent difficulty of assessing CSR, particularly within the Iranian context. Public unfamiliarity with organizational social responsibilities, compounded by the prevailing inflationary economic conditions and their impact on organizational performance, further complicated the effective execution of this study. A lack of motivation among respondents, especially within marginalized communities in the targeted areas, presented an additional obstacle. Moreover, the disproportionate participation of educated individuals raises concerns regarding the representativeness of the findings, potentially reflecting the perspectives and experiences of middle-class segments of society rather than a more comprehensive and inclusive societal view. Increased participation from diverse socio-economic groups could significantly influence the research outcomes.

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