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Impact of Parenting Style on the Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents

Marikutty, P. J* & Joseph, M. I**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Union Christian College, Aluva, Kerala

** Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala

Abstract

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Parental upbringing plays a pivotal role in the psycho social development of adolescents. Parenting is of central importance in empowering adolescents to face the developmental crises, academic pressures, family conflicts, abuses, and negative peer influence. In view of this, the present study made an attempt to find out the level of psychological well-being of adolescents and its relationship with parenting style. The sample consisted of 2060 adolescents (male – 956, female – 1104) randomly drawn from 9th standard to 2nd year under graduate students including professional students. Parenting Authority Questionnaire and Psychological Well being Questionnaire were used to measure parenting style and psychological well-being respectively. The results revealed significant correlations between various dimensions of psychological well being and different types of parenting style. Significant difference in various dimensions of parenting style and psychological well-being were found for groups of adolescents categorized on the basis of stage of adolescents, gender, location of residence, level of achievement, and participation in extracurricular activities. The beneficial impacts of authoritative and permissive parenting styles are highlighted.

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Adolescence, roughly defined as the second decade of life, is a time of transition and experimentation. It is a time when children undergo multiple physical, social and psychological changes. Although adolescence is not a period of pathology, it is a time of heightened vulnerability, and vulnerability increases during times of transition (Blyth et al., 1983; Bologini et al., 1996). Today's adolescents face incredible challenges related to economy, education, crime, changing family structure and social scenario (Bronfenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Macu, & Ceci, 1996).

A good family environment, where there is affectionate relationship and effective communication is found to serve as a buffer in facing the problems that adolescents experience. Children's abilities, values, beliefs, self-esteem and character develop mainly within a family context (Jaffe, 1997). It is within the family that most adolescents establish their individuality (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Martin, 1990; Yildirim, 1997). Secure attachment is a crucial outcome of good parenting, creating a life-long protective shield for the developing child against adversities. There is evidence that more than anything else, adolescent adjustment reflects the quality of family relationships during childhood and adolescence (Canetti et al., 1997; Coombs & Landsverk, 1988; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Adolescents who grow up in chronically distressed families are likely to develop serious social and emotional problems (O'Hanessian, Lerner, Lerner, & Von Eye, 1994). Thus parenting has a significant role in shaping an adolescent's personality and in fostering his well-being.

Parenting may be defined as purposive activities aimed at ensuring the survival and development of children. It derives from the Latin verb 'parere' meaning to bring forth, develop, or educate. Parenting style refers to the combination of rearing strategies and personal qualities of individual parent. Parents interact with children in ways that can be characterized, first in terms of the degree of parental control they exert, and second in terms of the emotional support they provide (Becker, 1964; Thomas et al., 1974). Baumrind (1968) describes four types

of parenting styles namely Permissive, Authoritative, Authoritarian and Neglectful that coincide roughly with the four combinations of control and support.

Many parents display, at different times, some combination of the parenting styles partly depending on their mood and specific circumstances. It is also possible that children's behaviour evokes distinctive parenting styles rather than vice versa (Lamborn et al., 1991; Lewis, 1981).

Thus a large number of studies have indicated the importance of parenting on the adjustment and well-being of adolescents. However, most of these studies have been done in western culture and relatively few studies have been carried out in our culture along these lines. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to unveil the influence of parenting on the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Objectives

1. To find out the differences, if any, among the different groups of adolescents, categorized on the basis of relevant socio-demographic variables (stage of adolescence, gender, location of residence, participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement, etc.), in psychological well-being, and perceived parenting styles.
2. To examine the relationship between the different parenting styles and psychological well-being among adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant differences among the different groups of adolescents, categorized on the basis of relevant socio demographic variables, in the degree of , psychological well-being, and parenting style.
2. There will be significant relationships between the parenting styles and the various dimensions of psychological well-being of adolescents.

Method

Participants

The participants for the present study consisted of 2,060 adolescents (males=956; females=1104) belonging to the age range of 14 to 19 years (middle and late adolescents). They were drawn randomly from 31 educational institutions in Ernakulam revenue district of the state of Kerala, giving due representation to urban- rural areas, private / aided / government institutions, and to both the sexes. The subjects were drawn from IX, X, XI, XII classes as well as first year and second year degree courses including professional courses.

Instruments

1. Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire: The psychological well-being of the subjects was measured using the 'Psychological Well-being Questionnaire' developed by Bhogle and Jaiprakash (1995). It consists of 12 subscales. It consists of 28 items to which responses are collected in a 'yes' or 'no' format. The alpha coefficient for full scale and split half coefficient are found to be .84 and .91 respectively. The test-retest reliability is .72. In order to establish the validity, the Subjective Well-being Questionnaire (Nagpal & Sell, 1985) and General Well-being Questionnaire (Verma & Verma, 1989) were used as external criteria. Coefficient of correlation with subjective well-being questionnaire is found to be .62 and with general well-being questionnaire is .48.
2. Parental Authority Questionnaire: The 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' (PAQ) developed by Buri (1991) was used to measure the parenting styles as perceived by the adolescents. This questionnaire comprised of 30 items, tapping parental authoritarianism, permissiveness and authoritarianism on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1=Not at all true' to '5=Very much true'. Scores on each of these styles can range from 10 to 50, a high score indicating a greater level of that particular parental pattern. Each item seeks two responses, one with respect to the father and the other with respect

to the mother, thus yielding two sets of scores each for the three parenting styles. Test-retest reliabilities of the questionnaire are found to be between .77 to .92. The questionnaire has been used in different studies among adolescents as a valid tool for measuring parenting styles (McLellan, 1999).

3. Personal Data Sheet: Personal data sheet was used to collect information on relevant socio demographic variables of the participants.

Results and Discussion

Difference between middle and late adolescents

The mean and the standard deviation of the scores obtained by the middle and the late adolescents and the corresponding 't' values in the different subscales of psychological well-being and parenting style are given in Table 1 and 2 respectively. From Table 1 it can be seen that in most of the well-being dimensions there are no significant differences between the two groups. The middle adolescents have significantly higher mean scores (better well-being) only in total psychological well-being and in the components of daily activities, and tension. Compared to the late adolescents, the middle adolescents have better well-being. They are more able to carry out routine daily activities, and experience less tension than their senior counterparts. Compared to the middle adolescents, the late adolescents are more concerned about establishing an identity, building up a career and getting independence from their parents, which may result in significantly greater stress and poorer well-being in the late adolescents compared to the middle adolescents.

Table 1

Means and SDs of psychological well-being obtained by the middle and the late adolescents and the corresponding 't' values

Psychological well-being dimensions	Middle adolescents (N=1577)		Late adolescents (N=483)		't'
	Mean	S. D	Mean	S.D	
Meaninglessness	1.53	0.70	1.47	0.74	1.68
Self esteem	1.32	0.73	1.28	0.75	1.14
Positive affect	1.81	0.46	1.81	0.46	0.24
Daily activities	1.50	0.67	1.39	0.73	2.99**
Somatic complaints	1.07	0.81	1.03	0.84	0.84
Life satisfaction	1.38	0.74	1.31	0.79	1.68
Suicidal ideas	1.52	0.69	1.53	0.72	0.16
Personal control	1.25	0.71	1.18	0.70	1.72
Social support	1.56	0.64	1.57	0.66	0.33
Tension	1.13	0.78	1.00	0.83	3.00**
Wellness	1.44	0.70	1.38	0.69	1.64
General efficiency	1.37	0.71	1.38	0.70	0.40
Total well-being	19.67	4.99	19.04	5.35	2.40*

*p< .05, **p< .01

The permissive parenting style of father and mother are significantly higher in the case of late adolescents compared to the middle adolescents (Table 2). As children grow older, the parents may become more permissive and exercise less control over them. Adolescents of this phase also demand far less control and more autonomy. Thornton and his colleagues (1995) have noted "as young people begin to experience adult roles and have more independence, there are increases in respect, understanding, affection, confidence and enjoyment between them and their parents" (p.560).

The middle adolescents have obtained significantly higher scores in authoritarian parenting style of father and mother than the late adolescents. It may be that parents exercise more control and exertion of authority upon young adolescents than on late adolescents. As children enter the phase of late adolescence, parents may loosen their control and exercise of authority and give them more freedom. This is the practice of parents in all cultures. There is also the possibility that the younger adolescents perceive their parents' parenting style as authoritarian owing to the particular phase of their life while the late adolescents are more mature in this regard. Lamborn et al. (1977) have reported that by late adolescence, the transition to independence and release of control should be nearly complete, although strong emotional ties may still persist. Based on their study of Scottish youth, Shucksmith et al. (1995) concluded that parenting styles are somewhat age related in that, parents of older adolescents tend to be more permissive and parents of younger adolescents tend to be more controlling.

Table 2

Means and SDs of the parenting styles obtained by the middle and the late adolescents and the corresponding 't' values

Parenting styles	Middle adolescents (N=1577)		Late adolescents (N=483)		't'
	Mean	S. D	Mean	S.D	
Permissive father	32.33	5.67	32.94	5.84	2.06*
Permissive mother	32.64	5.55	33.35	5.45	2.45*
Authoritarian father	33.82	6.23	32.47	6.35	4.16**
Authoritarian mother	34.67	6.06	33.25	6.17	4.49**
Authoritative father	37.38	6.65	37.33	7.13	0.15
Authoritative mother	38.14	6.35	38.14	6.54	0.01

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

In authoritative parenting style there are no significant differences between the middle and the late adolescents. Since authoritative parents display more consistent style, they may be perceived more or less in similar ways by their adolescent children irrespective of the phase of adolescence.

Gender Difference

Comparisons of the mean scores obtained by the male and the female adolescents in psychological well-being revealed significant differences in five dimensions. The male adolescents have significantly higher scores (better well-being) in the self-esteem ($t = 4.34$; $p < .01$), daily activities ($t = 3.53$; $p < .01$), and somatic complaints ($t = 3.18$; $p < .01$) dimensions, while the females have significantly higher scores in the dimensions of positive affect ($t = 3.73$; $p < .01$) and social support ($t = 1.93$; $p < .05$). The differences between the two genders were not significant in all the other dimensions as well as in total well-being

Many of the earlier studies also have reported that female adolescents have lower self-esteem than male adolescents (Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Bolognini et al., 1996; Chubb et al., 1997; Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975), and a few studies have reported minimal gender differences (e.g., Jaquish & Savin-Williams, 1981).

Teenage boys usually express more confidence in their abilities than teenage girls do, and feel that they are good at a lot of different activities. Girls, on the other hand, often report feeling unsure of themselves, their bodies, and their abilities (Bolognini et al., 1996; Freiberg, 1991; Orenstein, 1994). Male adolescents do daily activities better than female adolescents. It may be noted that in the Indian scenario, female adolescents are expected to include some of

the household chores in their daily activities which may reduce their efficiency in handling other activities.

Female adolescents are culturally sanctioned to express their distress by means of somatic complaints rather than male adolescents who use more of externalizing problems. This may explain the less degree of somatic complaints in males. Boys and girls express their adjustment problems somewhat differently; for example, McDermott (1996) found that troubled boys usually externalize their turmoil through rebellion and disobedient behaviour. Girls are more likely to internalize their distress by withdrawing socially, making somatic complaints, and feeling tensed, depressed or moody.

In positive affect, and social support components of well-being, the female adolescents scored significantly higher than the males. Females tend to look out for social support while males tend to consider receiving support as a shame which may reduce the level of perceived support in the case of males. Earlier studies have shown that girls are more positive about their close relationships, report more intimacy than boys do, and report getting more intensive social support, especially from their peers (Frey & Rothlisberger, 1996; Jones & Costin, 1995; O'koon, 1997).

Comparison of the mean scores obtained by the two gender groups in perceived parenting style revealed that there are significant differences between the two groups only in the case of authoritative parenting style. The female adolescents are found to have significantly higher mean scores in the parenting style of both father ($t = 4.96$; $p < .01$) and the mother ($t = 6.56$; $p < .01$) than the male adolescents. That is the female students perceive their parents both father and mother as more controlling and supportive. This may be in par with the Indian culture. Larson and Richards (1994) have reported that teenagers, especially girls who remain close to their mothers, usually are better adjusted and less depressed. However, there are no significant differences between the males and the females in their perception of the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles of their parents. In other words, both the groups perceive their parents parenting style as equally permissive and authoritarian.

Difference between urban and rural adolescents

Comparisons of the mean scores obtained by the urban and the rural adolescents in psychological well-being revealed that the urban adolescents have significantly higher mean scores in meaninglessness ($t=2.40$; $p<.05$), somatic complaints ($t=2.16$; $p<.05$), suicidal ideas ($t=2.11$; $p<.05$), and general efficiency ($t=2.89$; $p<.01$). They also scored higher or the same as rural adolescents in the other dimensions and total well-being. Thus, compared to the rural adolescents, the urban adolescents have less meaninglessness, somatic complaints, suicidal ideas and more general efficiency. In other words, the present results indicate that the urban adolescents have better psychological well-being than their rural counterparts. However, Joseph (2007), and Sujisha (2006) have found no significant differences between urban and rural adolescents in emotional, social and educational adjustment.

In the case of parenting style, significant differences are obtained only in the case of the authoritative parenting styles of both father ($t=4.13$; $p<.01$) and mother ($t=2.75$; $p<.01$). In both these cases the urban adolescents score significantly higher than that of the rural adolescents. In urban settings parents might be better educated, more concerned about parenting, and more aware of keeping a balance between control and autonomy in rearing or disciplining their adolescents. This could be a reason for the urban adolescents' perception of their parents as more authoritative. Sujisha (2006) found that parenting is better in urban areas than rural areas. However, in a study of 340 adolescents, Joseph (2007) did not find any significant difference in the perception of home environment of rural and urban adolescents.

Participation in extracurricular activities

Comparisons of the mean scores in well-being obtained by the adolescents who participate and those who do not participate in extracurricular activities showed that the participants have better self-esteem ($t = 6.09$; $p < .01$), life satisfaction ($t = 2.14$; $p < .01$), general efficiency ($t = 3.93$; $p < .01$), less meaninglessness feeling ($t = 4.11$; $p < .01$), less tension ($t = 1.99$; $p < .01$), able to do daily activities more effectively ($t = 3.10$; $p < .01$) and better over all well-being ($t = 3.33$; $p < .01$). Thus, the present results do point out that engaging in extracurricular activities is of psychological benefit to the adolescents.

In the case of parenting style, no significant difference is obtained in any of these perceived parenting styles between adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities and those who do not participate.

The present results indicate that active participation in sports and related activities facilitate the development of self-esteem among adolescents. Boyd and Yin (1996) reported that sports help adolescents in building character and self-esteem. The social rewards for athletic success usually outweigh those for academic achievement, at least for boys (Chandler, 1990; Hultsman, 1992; Kirshnit et al., 1989).

Academic achievement

The mean and the standard deviation scores obtained by the high achieving and the low achieving adolescents in psychological well-being and the corresponding 't' values are presented in Table 11. From this table, it can be seen that there are significant differences between the two groups only in the meaninglessness and wellness components of psychological well-being. In other words, the variable academic achievement does not have much impact on the well-being of the adolescents. This is quite in agreement with the findings reported by Joseph (2004).

Table 3

Means and SDs of the psychological well-being obtained by the high achievers and the low achievers and the corresponding 't' values

Psychological well-being dimensions	60% and Above (N=1670)		Below 60% (N=390)		't'
	Mean	S. D	Mean	S.D	
Meaninglessness	1.54	0.70	1.41	0.76	3.24**
Self-esteem	1.31	0.73	1.29	0.75	0.64
Positive affect	1.81	0.46	1.81	0.47	0.19
Daily activities	1.47	0.68	1.48	0.70	0.35
Somatic complaints	1.07	0.82	1.01	0.82	1.35
Life satisfaction	1.37	0.75	1.31	0.74	1.57
Suicidal ideas	1.53	0.68	1.46	0.74	1.72
Personal control	1.22	0.71	1.28	0.68	1.41
Social support	1.56	0.65	1.57	0.63	0.54
Tension	1.11	0.80	1.07	0.80	0.89
Wellness	1.41	0.71	1.49	0.66	2.16*
General efficiency	1.38	0.71	1.32	0.70	1.51
Total well-being	19.59	5.02	19.26	5.36	1.12

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

In the meaninglessness component of psychological well-being, the high achievers are found to have significantly higher score than the low achievers. That is, the high achievers have less meaninglessness compared to the low achievers. The high achieving group has a goal in



their life and they work towards it, and successful accomplishment of the task may help them to feel life very meaningful. While the low achieving group may have feelings of helplessness as far as academic achievement is concerned, and as academic records are extremely valued by the society, the low achieving group may experience more meaninglessness than their high achieving counterparts.

In the wellness component of psychological well-being, the low achievers have scored significantly higher than the high achievers. That is, the low achieving group has better wellness than the high achieving group. The component wellness focuses on the physical health and well-being of adolescents. Compared to the low achievers, the high achievers may be taking more effort and pains which may be affecting their physical health. Rather than engaging in hard work, the low achieving students may be concentrating on physical health, fitness and other physical aspects.

With respect to parenting style, the obtained results showed that there are no significant differences between the high and the low achieving adolescents in any of the perceived parenting styles. This indicates that academic achievement in no way affects their perception of parenting. This has been supported by previous findings obtained in the study of home environment (Joseph, 2007).

Relationship between Parenting Style and Psychological Well-Being

The quality of family relationships is crucial in determining the competence and confidence with which young people face the transition into adulthood. Type of parenting is also considered as a crucial factor influencing the personality and adjustment of adolescents. Table 4 shows the correlations between the three parenting styles and the different dimensions of psychological well-being of adolescents. It is clear from the table that total psychological well-being is significantly positively correlated with authoritative and permissive parenting styles, indicating that both authoritative and permissive parenting styles promote adolescent well-being. Earlier studies have shown that authoritative parents usually have children who are well adjusted, have positive self-concepts, and are socially and academically competent (Amato, 1989; Baumrind, 1991; Hetherington &Clingempeel, 1992; Klein et al., 1996; Parish &McCluskey, 1992; Shucksmith, Hendry, &Glendinning, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1994). Permissive parenting has not been identified as positively related with adjustment in adolescents. However, as the adolescents' extreme need for autonomy, independence and establishment of power may get satisfied in a permissive parenting style, it could be a reason for better well-being among adolescents of permissive parents.

Table 4

Correlation between psychological well-being and parenting style (N=2,060)

Psychological well-being dimensions	Permissive father	Permissive mother	Authoritarian father	Authoritarian mother	Authoritative father	Authoritative mother
Meaninglessness	0.10**	0.08**	0.004	0.01	0.176**	0.143**
Self-esteem	0.11**	0.07**	-0.02	-0.05*	0.12**	0.09**
Positive affect	0.08**	0.08**	0.09**	0.10**	0.18**	0.19**
Daily activities	0.12**	0.11**	0.06*	0.04	0.14**	0.11**
Somatic complaints	0.04	0.03	-0.09**	-0.10**	0.06**	0.04
Life satisfaction	0.12**	0.07**	0.03	0.05*	0.15**	0.12**
Suicidal ideas	0.09**	0.07**	-0.02	-0.02	0.15**	0.15**
Personal control	0.05*	0.05*	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
Social support	0.15**	0.13**	-0.01	-0.01	0.22**	0.20**
Tension	0.06**	0.04*	-0.09**	-0.08**	0.08**	0.06**
Wellness	0.03	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.06**	0.04
General efficiency	0.09**	0.07**	0.002	-0.20	0.11**	0.09**
Total well-being	0.17**	0.14**	-0.01	-0.01	0.23**	0.19**

**p < .01

The meaninglessness, social support, suicidal ideas and general efficiency components of psychological well-being are correlated significantly and positively with the authoritative parenting style. Though both permissive and authoritative parenting styles influence these aspects of well-being, adolescents experience less meaninglessness, suicidal ideas, and more social support and general efficiency under the authoritative parenting style than under the permissive parenting style.

The component of self-esteem has correlated significantly positively with authoritative and permissive parenting styles of both parents and negatively with authoritarian parenting style of mother. Thus, authoritative parents by providing a warm, firm and involved parenting; permissive parents by being lenient, avoiding confrontation, and allowing self-regulation, promote self-esteem. The correlation between authoritarian parenting style of mother and self-esteem of adolescents is in agreement with previous research findings. Klein et al. (1996) have reported that absence of parental warmth associated with punitive parenting foretells social skill deficit and low self-esteem.

The positive affect component of psychological well-being has correlated significantly positively with all kinds of parenting styles. Adolescents who report close and secure relationships with their parents also express high self-esteem and greater emotional well-being (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1984). Positive adjustment is also seen in adolescents whose parents punish harshly but who are accepting, consistent and involved (Simons et al., 1994).

The daily activities component of psychological well-being has correlated significantly positively with authoritative and permissive parenting styles of both parents and authoritarian parenting style of father. All these parenting styles enhance the involvement and successful completion of daily activities. The somatic complaints component has correlated significantly and positively with the authoritative parenting style of father and negatively with the authoritarian parenting style of both the parents. That is, authoritative parenting style of father reduces somatic complaints while authoritarian parenting style increases somatic complaints in adolescence. When children feel powerless and helpless under authoritarian parenting, they



may express their uneasiness through somatic complaints. It may also be an escape from a harsh punitive authoritarian parenting.

The psychological well-being component of life satisfaction has correlated significantly and positively with the authoritative and permissive parenting styles of both parents and the authoritarian parenting style of mother. Both in authoritative and permissive parenting, the adolescents receive autonomy and warmth which would contribute to life satisfaction. The authoritarian mother may enhance life satisfaction in those who would like to be dictated.

The personal control component of psychological well being has correlated significantly positively with the permissive parenting style of both the parents. This may be because permissive parenting styles provide adolescents with more autonomy and room for self-regulation. The correlations in the case of the other two parenting styles are not significant.

The tension component of psychological well-being has correlated significantly positively with the authoritative and permissive parenting styles of both the parents and negatively with the authoritarian parenting styles of both the parents. These indicate that adolescents are less tensed under the authoritative and permissive parenting styles and more tensed under the authoritarian parenting style.

The wellness component is found to have significant positive correlation only with the authoritative parenting style of father. It may be noted that in the Indian culture, if the father is able to maintain a good authoritative parenting, it may enhance the wellness of the entire family.

The general efficiency component of psychological well-being has correlated significantly positively with the permissive and authoritative parenting styles of both the parents. The authoritative and permissive parenting styles provide adequate space for decision making, and autonomy which may facilitate the general efficiency of adolescents.

Over all, the results in this section clearly show that both authoritative and permissive parenting styles have significant positive correlations with most of the components of well-being and total psychological well-being of the adolescents. Thus, authoritative and permissive parenting styles provide a better environment which facilitates the enhancement of psychological well-being among adolescents.

Earlier researches show that adolescents function best in environments that take into account their developmental needs, including their desire for greater participation in decision making, their need for emotional support and understanding, and their self consciousness (Eccles, Buchanan, Flanagan, Fulkigri, Midgley, & Yee, 1991; Eccles et al., 1993). Many earlier studies also have reported that authoritative and permissive parenting styles are having beneficial impacts on children, especially in the development of their self-esteem, personality, adjustment, and well-being (Amato, 1989; Baumrind, 1991; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Klein et al., 1996; Parish & McCluskey, 1992; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mount, & Dornbusch, 1994).

Conclusions

The results obtained in the present study highlight the significance of parenting style in the psychological well-being of adolescents. The results also point towards the role of gender, place of residence and extracurricular activities in promoting the well-being of adolescents.

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