



THE ROLE OF MORAL EDUCATION IN MITIGATING RADICALISATION IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to philosophically investigate the role that education can play in mitigating radicalisation of school going children. The violent acts of radicalisation have caused diverse effects in education sector in Kenya. The research is guided by Kant's philosophy of categorical imperative as its theoretical framework. This theory states that we should always treat people as an end rather than means to an end. The research found out that the focus on training of highly skilled labour at the expense of instilling values in learners, makes it possible for radical elements to target them and use them as means for their political end. The research proposes the need of an education for an end that instills a sense of duty to learners. This will help them value themselves and others. There is also need for education to instill the sense of autonomy in learners so that they cannot be easily indoctrinated by the radical ideologies. The study recommends that there is need to embrace moral education in schools as a way of mitigating radicalism in Kenyan secondary schools.

Keywords: autonomy, dignity, categorical imperative

1. Introduction

Radicalization of the school going children has been on the rise in different parts of the country in Kenya. Mukinde (2015) reports that information from government security agencies had at least six schools which were under scrutiny after some of their students dropped to join the terrorist groups in Syria and Somalia. Among these were: Isiolo boys' high school, Marsabit mixed secondary school and Moi girls Secondary school in Marsabit. Others from western were Koseka secondary, Birunda PAG primary and St Patrick Bumula secondary school. Thunguri and Ndethya (2015) have further supported this argument by asserting that secondary schools in Kenya are under siege of neo-criminal activities which are building up. It is worth noting that Violent Extremist

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Organizations (VEOs) like Al-Shabaab terror group cannot sustain themselves without young recruits (Odhiambo et al., 2013).

Several measures have been put in place to counter radicalism in Kenya however; these measures have not borne meaningful results that fully tackle the issue. Munyangwa et al. (2012) noted that although the countries in East Africa have made significant progress to develop coherent counter terrorism approaches in the region, many challenges still remain. Among them is youth radicalisation. Others are lack of state capacity, competing national priorities, political instability among others.

The government of Kenya has always been accused of using excessive force in dealing with the problem. Odhiambo et al. (2013) noted that following such attacks by terrorist, security forces react heavily and this leads to a spate of riots. For example, the killing of two controversial Muslim clergy believed to be behind the jihadist ideology led to serious riots in Mombasa. Such riots have resulted in the burning of churches and the killing of people thought or suspected to be Christians. Political factors have pushed Muslim youths to join extremist groups as a counter-reaction to or in retaliation against what they see as 'collective punishment' driven by a misguided perception around the world that all Muslims are terrorists or potential terrorists (Odhiambo et al., 2013). The politicization of the issue of terror also makes it had to tackle the menace (Okari, 2014). As part of the Kenyan government's efforts to enlist the help of the Muslim community to fight the radicalisation of Kenyan youth, an amnesty has been offered to young Kenyan men who have been lured into joining Al-Shabaab. However, there is widespread mistrust of the security agencies and this hinders progress (Allen, 2015). It is for this reason that this study adopts Kantian's Principal of categorical imperative as one of the approach in mitigating radicalisation in Kenyan secondary school. The basic principal of education according to Kant is that children should be educated as ends themselves and not used as means to an end. Their dignity should be respected.

1.1 Theoretical framework

The study was based on deontology as a moral theory. Deontological ethics or deontology from the Greek word *deon* meaning obligation or duty is the normative ethical position that judges the morality of an action based on the action adherence to a rule or rules (Darwall, 2006). Giesenger (2012) notes that an action done from duty derives its moral worth not from the maxim by which it is determined and therefore does not depend on the realisation of the object of action, but merely on the principle of volition by which the action took place without referred to any object of desire. Paton (1971) on the other hand asserts that obligation is the necessity of free action when viewed in relation to a categorical imperative of reason. This study therefore put emphasis on the categorical imperative of reason. This is a universal principle stating that one should always respect the humanity in others and should always act in accordance with rules that could hold for everyone (Paton, 1971). It is a way we determine what our duties are. What we should do and should not do. The research focused only on two maxims of categorical imperative.

The first formulation states that, act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that become universal law (Paton, 1971). This implies that whatever our actions are they should meet the approval of morals across the entire world. A maxim in this case is a general rule that can be used to determine particular courses of actions in particular circumstances. This universal law formulation indicates that an action is morally permissible only if the maxim on which an action is based could be affirmed as a universal law that everyone obeys without exception. For instance, you can't make it a law to kill others if you are frustrated.

The second formulation, act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in person of another always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means to an end (Paton, 1971). This implies that people should be treated with dignity and not as mere instruments. We treat people as an end whenever our actions towards them reflect inherent value of the recipient.

On the contrary, people are treated as means to an end whenever we treat them as a tool to achieve something else. Actions should be based on duty and not emotions, pleasure and inclination. Pleasure cannot be the main part of your motivation for duty and the action.

It is worth noting that most of the radical groups have leaders who have been harbouring deep desires within their hearts to hold power and dominate others (Rosenbaum, 1975). This makes this theory relevant. These leaders secure blind submission of their compatriots by promoting a particular ideology. They would therefore want to use this by recruiting followers to achieve their ends. Botha (2013) argued that the radical groups were using new recruits who did not have full knowledge of the Koran to carry out terror attacks.

1.2 Methodology

The critical method is applied in this study with the view of formulating a practicable strategy for mitigating radicalism in Kenyan secondary schools. As Njoroge and Bennaars (1986) state, the critical method in philosophical inquiry is based on a questioning attitude. The method was propounded by Socrates, the great philosopher.

As noted by Rosen and Brethren (1982) the critical method is a careful analysis of premise to find issues that have been overlooked and the assumptions that underlie the argument. The method also questions currently held positions, the assumptions made and it challenges the already laid principles (Gray, 2014).

The critical method is characterised by reflective thinking. It is a process of searching for the basis of beliefs. It does not encourage the taking of any idea or phenomenon for granted. As a method of inquiry, the critical method encourages honesty of thought, and seeks to protect people from fanaticism, intolerance and dogmatism (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986).

The term critique is derived from the Greek verb *Krinein*, which means to judge (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). To provide a philosophical critique is not a matter of assessing something in a negative manner; rather, it involves evaluating a problem through careful reflection.

1.3 The concept of moral education

Moral education refers to the processes through which the relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills are transmitted and developed in children (Akanga, 2014). It focuses on the development of the cognitive, social and emotional skills which are necessary for moral thinking, acting and feeling (Akanga, 2014). It therefore concerns with practices and strategies that socialising agents use to equip children with resources to address issues about right and wrong in their everyday life. Therefore, the aim of moral education in schools is to help students become autonomous decision makers and all the time create an attachment to fundamental values like respect and responsibility which are the products of autonomous moral self (Nwogu & Nwafor, 2014). Liu (2014) agrees to this by stating that, moral development is concerned with movement from heteronymous morality to autonomous morality.

Wringe (2006) notes that a sensitive moral agent will have regard for religious commitments and susceptibilities for others. He further argues that the ability to think morally, as well as simply act innocently is particularly important as young people mature into adult citizens. In the current education system, morality has been emphasised mostly on the teaching of religious studies. However, there have been instances where the same religion has been used to indoctrinate the young people luring them into violent extremist organisations. More so, these subjects are optional hence, more emphasis is placed on the scientific subjects and commercially oriented subjects because of the lucrative prospects to the detriment of moral education.

As noted by Akanga (2014), the level of scientific discovery and technological innovation in countries are recognised measures of the success or failure of educational enterprise. This tends to leave a moral vacuum or a sort of moral crisis. The role of education in character development cannot be sacrificed for material development. In Aristotle's moral theory, he asserts that moral virtue means excellence of character as well as of intellect. He has two types of virtues namely, intellectual virtue or virtue of the mind and moral virtue, which are virtues of character (Nyabul, 2009). This implies that education should develop both the intellectual and moral aspect of the learner.

Moral philosophy is a fundamental part of Dewey's theory of education. He holds the view that creative imaginations, reflective thoughts and action experimentation should be central features in education (Dewey, 1932). Education should focus on promoting the moral judgment of a learner. Mitias (1976) believes that, the aim of moral education is to stimulate student's development of moral judgment. He proposes dilemma discussion and the just community as an effective approach to moral education as opposed to traditional character education which only focuses on the training of good habits of honesty and responsibility (Liu, 2014). Dilemma discussions encourage students towards higher stage of moral reasoning through peer discussion and interactive exchange of ideas. He further states that schools should aim at creating a moral atmosphere through the practice of democratic governance and building of community solidarity.

Mitias (1976) notes that moral responsibility without autonomy tends to split a person into two disconnected parts. This means that individuals can subscribe to values

given by society or religious body and yet those values are not within themselves. They become products of manipulative or distorting external forces. For Kohlberg the highest moral stage of an individual should focus on the dignity of human beings and treatment of persons as ends rather than means. Dewey supports this assertion by stating that the moral responsibility should be subjected to a higher principle and that is common good. A learner should grow within the school environment with the aspect of valuing the dignity of others. Their conduct should be focused on the common good of themselves and those surrounding them.

In order to achieve this, moral development in learners cannot be solely left on the teacher and the school environment. This requires collective responsibility between the school and the family. As noted by Lickona (1996) parents are the first moral educators of the child. Some parents may not realise this, or see themselves in this role, but they do in fact provide moral lessons through what their children see and hear them do and say. Thomas Lickona identified nine dimensions of the parent's role. For the sake of this study, four of these aspects are adopted.

First, the parent as a moral educator communicates an understanding of the moral domain, a domain in which respect and responsibility are central concepts. Respect includes recognising the worth of the self, acknowledging the equal worth of others, and taking into consideration the complex web of natural life around us. Responsibility extends the notion of respect, meaning that people should fulfill the obligations they have to help and care for others.

Secondly, parents can foster mutual respect in their children, by doing such things as giving everyone a chance to be heard in a given situation. Settling a conflict involves not just figuring out what the right resolution is, but also showing children how people treat each other fairly in the process of working it out.

Thirdly, moral education is often taught by example, so parents provide children with a model with which they may identify. Whether they realise it or not, parents constantly display by their actions how they think life should be lived, and their children see this.

Fourthly, parents can teach moral education by talking with their children. They can tell their children directly what is right and what is wrong, and say why for instance calling people names is wrong, because it hurts. They can also engage their children in dialogue by asking them questions about the moral features of actions and prodding them to start thinking about moral questions.

Lickona asserts that children who felt obliged to follow through on their moral judgments were distinguished by having parents who felt strongly about ethical conduct and expressed their moral indignation or disappointment when their children were in the wrong.

Teachers are also centrally involved in moral education, once the child begins to go to school. By word and deed, they are also models for moral education, extending the adult influence over the child that was first begun by the parents. Pritchard (1988) speaks of the formation of conscience in terms of its several voices; he describes the teacher's objective as attempting to stimulate the conversation among those voices. This

will encourage children to develop their capacity for critical judgment of their own and other people's performances which may lead them to improve their ability to act well.

The cooperation between the school and the parents can help mitigate radicalisation of the students in a greater way. The greatest achievement of moral education can be realised when the two work together. Botha (2014) states that family helps the child to become aware of ideologies associated with authorities and learns obedience to the state or political authority. He further notes that by forming basic loyalties and identifying with political systems, the child also learns to sort people into social categories: linguistic, racial class to occupational or geographical. Children learn to classify people according to certain characterisation and to behave differently towards them depending on how they are classified. Botha (2014) further states that, the first loyalties and identification are the strongest and most difficult to change. These feelings are seen as the foundation upon which subsequently acquired orientation are built. Therefore, moral education should not only be centered at school environment but also at family level. The children should be brought up as moral beings that value the dignity not only of themselves but of those around them. They should learn to respect the religious, political and the cultural orientation of those around them.

1.4 Kantian Deontology

Deontologists believe that morality is a matter of duty. Whether something is right or wrong doesn't depend on its consequences but on the action itself (Wringe, 2006). Kant believes that human inclinations, emotions and consequences should play no role in moral action; therefore, the motivation behind an action must be based on obligation and well thought out before the action takes place (Cohen, 1996). He further points out that, moral duties should be based on duty sake and not for exterior motives. Do radicalised individuals act out of duty or exterior motives?

Reason and good will are very instrumental in the achievement of moral duty. As claimed by Loosman (2013) reason is the most prominent faculty in Kantian deontology. It forms the necessary basis of the existence of ethics for it is the only possible origin of an agent's good will. The function of reason is to bring about a will that is good in itself. Kant refers to this as good will. A good will is unaffected by possible outcomes of actions, personal preferences or any other individual purposes; what matters is its intrinsic goodness (Loosman, 2013). Goodwill therefore forms the condition for the fulfillment of any other end or existence of virtue or duty. Kant (1952) notes that individuals require the capacity to form moral judgment.

Kant (1952), therefore, believes that morality presents itself to human agents as categorical imperative and all our specific moral duties are derived from it. He holds that the fundamental principle of our moral duties is a categorical imperative. It is an imperative because it is a command which commands us to exercise our wills in a particular way or not to perform some action or other. It is categorical since it applies to us unconditionally and simply because we possess it as a rational will without reference to any antecedent end or goal for ourselves. The categorical imperative is the true moral imperative. We should always strive at highest good. This end which grounds for moral

duties is rational in nature. The highest good consists in a world of universal, maximum virtue, guaranteeing universal and maximum happiness. Kant's account for the highest good is important in that it emphasises that virtue is unconstitutionally good, whereas happiness is conditionally good this implies that happiness is good when and only when it is pursued and enjoyed virtuously. The two are heterogeneous in that no amount of happiness can make up for a deficit of virtue, and no amount of virtue despite its unconditioned goodness can make up for a deficit of happiness (Stumpf, 1977). The highest good requires both. Categorical imperative commands actions that are good in themselves and not actions as means to another good. For instance, the act of killing others as a way of getting reward in the next world is not categorical imperative in nature. Actions which are good in nature as Stumpf (1977) points out, is imperative because of its instant application to all rational beings, and it is imperative again because it gives the principles on which all humans actions ought to be based.

Stumpf (1977) on Kant's morality argues that the qualities of universality and necessity are the marks of a priori judgments, and this further confirms Kant's view that the principles of behaviour are derived by the practical reason a priori. Reason must be guided. Therefore, as Stumpf (1977) puts it, duty implies that we are under some kind of obligation, a moral law. As rational beings, we are aware of this obligation as it comes to us in form of an imperative. Duty helps us to recognise some obligations towards certain actions or moral laws. Rational nature exists as an end in itself. All human beings everywhere want to be considered as persons instead of things or animals for the same reason. Reason orders that they act accordingly. It is therefore valuable for a learner to realise that it is their moral responsibility to act out of duty when dealing with others. Duty entails that our action should be driven by reason and not by emotions and impulses. Children should learn to treat others as an end. They should value the dignity of others. A child's reasoning should therefore be developed, for therein lies the ultimate foundation of ethics altogether. As Wringer (2006) points out, moral self-perfection is developed by children through studying the moral of their maxims in different scenarios through training.

Learners are, therefore, to be taught to recognise the importance of our conduct and our judgments of the conduct of others, being consistent and reasonable considering the point of view concerns and feelings of others and of striving for harmony with others who are prepared to do the same (Wringer, 2006).

1.5 Deontology and moral education

Reath (2006) describes moral education and states that it should aim at developing good moral character and thus creating good people. He prescribes that children, should not be trained for the present but for the improved condition in future. According to Kant, children are to be taught on how to make rational judgment. By learning to think, human begins to act according to fixed principles and not at random. The development of reason and duty as well as a reserved attitude towards distractive emotions and feelings are acquired through of practical education (Loosman, 2013).

According to Kant, individuals require the capacity to form moral judgments, a skill or discipline in which they should be trained through practice and education (Wringe, 2006). Kant says that it is through education that human individuals and human species as a whole can be morally improved (Allison, 1990). Child's moralisation, according to Kant, is the final stage of education process. Moralisation means that the persons who are being educated must develop an attitude so as to choose good purposes only. Good purposes are those which necessarily secure universal approval and may at the same time be the purposes of everyone (Kanz, 1999). It raises a lot of concern when a student who has graduated with a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Nairobi and has a bright future turns into a terrorist and kills fellow students in Garissa University in Kenya. Was this student moralised?

The children should be educated to perform their duties to themselves and others. The duty to oneself, however, resides in the fact that the human being preserves the dignity of mankind in his own person (Kanz, 1999). In all their actions, the children or persons to be educated must have in mind the fact that human beings bear within themselves a certain dignity that makes them nobler than all other forms of life. The notion of duty to others implies that the respect for, and compliance with the rights of mankind must be imparted to the child at a very early age (Kanz, 1999).

1.6 Kantian's autonomy and education

Kant defines autonomy as the property of the will by which it is law to itself independently of any property of the objects of volition (Darwall, 2006). Peters in Wilson (1977) states that it is the willingness of the individuals to govern themselves, based on reason and critical thinking. This implies obedience to what is reasonable as opposed to conformity and servility. Dearden (1968) describes personal autonomy based on reason which according to him includes: testing the truth of things for myself, whether by experience or by critical estimate of the testimony of others and forming intentions and choosing what is good and proper in accordance with scales of values. The values the learner chooses should be the ones that they can themselves appreciate. Liu (2014) holds that moral development is concerned with the movement from heteronymous morality to autonomous morality. On this, he agrees with Dewey who insists that moral responsibility is the product of autonomous moral self (Liu, 2014). Mitias (1976) holds that moral responsibility without autonomy tends to split a person into disconnected parts. In essence, autonomy could be seen as moral idea which is linked or bound up with a specific notion of moral freedom to make a reasonable or rational decision, and choices which will not be prejudicial to the wellbeing of both the individual and society in which they live (Nwogu & Nwafor, 2014).

Reason is paramount in an autonomous individual. However, the question is: Do criminals reason before they commit a crime? Do they make choices? And so are they autonomous? The argument here focuses on the premise of good will. This will enable a learner to wisely choose from the scale of values endorsed by the society. Rational human wills are autonomous. Kant saw this as the key to understanding and justifying the authority moral requirements have over us. A person can be considered free when

bound only by their own will and not by the will of another. Their action then expresses their own will and not the will of someone or something else (Gregor, 1996).

It is worthy to point out that young school going children have been quitting school to join radical groups in our country. Do such kind of actions emanate from heteronymous or autonomous will? Autonomy entails that the authority of the principles binding their will should not emanate from external to their will. It comes from the fact that they willed them. Does our education system produce an autonomous individual in life? Deci & Flaste (1995) point out that in a way, it is all quite ironic. Parents, politicians and school administrators all want students to be creative problem solvers and to learn material at a deep, conceptual level. But in their eagerness to achieve these ends, they pressure teachers to produce. These educational organisers tend to create and foster domineering ownership on the part of the teacher. They want to see them produce results. Hence, the teachers have to take over more and more controlling of the process of helping the learners so that they can show results demanded by their superiors (Deci & Flaste, 1995). As a result, the teachers are pushed to by educational administrators to fulfill the result based requirements by drilling students to pass the standard tests. At the end this learners loose the sense of autonomy in that they depend on the teachers most in making their decision.

As Henry (1990) points out, an autonomous will emerges from a consideration of the idea of a will that is free. He further states that the concept of a rational will is of a will that operates by responding to reasons. Therefore, reason is paramount in making a decision. This is the concept of a will that does not operate through the influence of factors outside of this responsiveness to reasons. For a will to be free, it has to be physically and psychologically unforced in its operation. Gregor (1996) states that choices made because of obsessions or thought disorders are not free. An autonomous person should be an inner-directed person, who has internalised a set of generalised but destined goals and standards. They must be as Feinberg (1975) puts it, having a capacity for self-regulation, otherwise they suffer anomie. Admittedly, human beings cannot internalise a set of generalised destined goals and standards in a vacuum, they must be products of a given social milieu as Nwogu and Nwafor (2014) put it. As a result, they must imbibe the norms and tenets of their society and the process of by which the internalisation of societal values is done involves education. Autonomy has to do with making choices, taking decisions and actions based on one's interests, opinions and judgments. For example, emphasis should always be on the interests of the child in relation to curriculum and choice of subjects; if children exercise this right then they are autonomous in relation to their educational development. Bottonwood (2003) asserts that education should be concerned with getting children to understand and act on good reasons as these apply in various spheres of life. Nwogu and Nwafor (2014) note that education encourages self-reliance in all its ramifications, and preserves what is best in any culture, hence the best way to educate for autonomy lies to a large extent on selecting on traditional works that pose the thoughtfully radical challenge to prevailing modes of thoughts, feelings and judgment.

1.7 Kant's dignity and education

Apart from autonomy, dignity is one of the essential values that a good education system should address. It is considered to be one of the core principles of Kant's moral philosophy. According to Kant, children should be as persons not as things because they are endowed with freedom (Gregor, 1996). Since they are persons, the formula of humanity of the categorical imperative can be applied to them, so act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never as means to an end. Children should, according to this principle be educated as ends in themselves and not used as mere means for the ends.

According to Kant, children must be educated to perform their duties to themselves and to others. The duty to oneself, however, resides in the fact that the human being preserves the dignity of humankind in their own person. Their worth should be recognised and developed as they go through the education system. The system which does not only emphasise scientific and technological advancement, but also instills values such as dignity in the learners. As Njoroge & Bannaars (1986) put forward, the modern education encourages neutrality and objectivity which is inspired by the rules of science, technology and a rationalised economy. Democratic principles that over protect individuals rights leaves students to make choices of which most do not adhere to standard morals stipulated by the society, at the end this creates a moral vacuum. Therefore an education system that is geared towards producing learners who meet the industrial needs of a particular country without instilling values and morals tend to deny them of their dignity and is not being used as an end itself but as means to an end. According to Kant, human beings have a certain dignity within themselves which ennoble them before all creatures, and it is their duty not to deny this dignity of human in their own person (Gerald, 1988).

Children should therefore be educated for dignity. Their sense of self-worth should be awakened and through this, they can develop the capacity for moral autonomy. When practices of all kinds of immoderation such as using students as means of an end to carry out terror attacks is dignity being accorded to them? What role should education in Kenya do to address this gap? When terror groups target them for radicalism are they not being robbed of their respect and credibility of which everyone should have? It is a duty to realise one's dignity and education should help in realising this in learners.

It is noteworthy that several recommendations have been put in place to make sure that the system of education in Kenya instills moral values in the children. This is to mean that they are to be educated for dignity. However, this has not been fully put into consideration. For instance, the report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies of 1976 observed that religious education as taught then under the provision of the Act (1968) had not fully achieved the objectives of inculcating national moral consciousness. It recommended, therefore, the introduction of common course on moral education which would be available to all students irrespective of religious identity. This led to introduction of social education and ethics Mugambi (2003). However, this subject is no-longer in secondary schools. As Mugambi (2003)

notes, moral education has been pushed to backwaters of educational pursuit in secondary schools. This poses danger to the learner especially in recent times when the challenge of radicalism and terrorism is on the rise especially in the secondary schools in Kenya. O'Neil (1989) asserts that once the standards of morals have been established they always become helpful to the learners when they face day to day challenges.

Children should be seen as persons not as things that can be manipulated by others for their own desire. Human beings can only become human through education; hence this becomes very relevant for this study. Education for dignity makes individuals to develop dignity for themselves and for others

2. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to elucidate the concept of moral education as counter measure to mitigate radicalization in school going children. It points out that moralisation is the final stage of education system. Students who quit school and are lured into radical groups that lead violence are viewed according to this paper, to have lacked the sense of autonomy and dignity for themselves and others as well. The education system as well has lacked the capacity to educate them as an end. Overemphasis on the level of scientific discovery and technological innovation in countries as recognised measures of the success or failure of educational enterprise tends to leave a moral vacuum or a sort of moral crisis.

2.1 Recommendations

Based on its findings, this study arrived at the following recommendations:

- i. Kant's categorical imperative be adopted as a philosophical base for education in Kenya.
- ii. There is need for curriculum adjustment so as to embrace moral education; this should adopt Kant's categorical imperative into it as a guide for curriculum in its formulation.
- iii. Religious subjects be integrated and not taught as single entities, much emphasis be placed on acquisition of moral skills rather than cognitive skills. The integrated subject to be renamed religious education.
- iv. Moral education to be made compulsory in secondary schools.

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