

# VALUE-BASED ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A LITERATURE REVIEW

## ABSTRACT

This review of literature explores the literature regarding the topic of organisational leadership dedicated towards the leader's commitment to ensuring the common good of the world. Hundred and eighty four articles were identified that are focused on six main types of leadership namely, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, responsible leadership, servant leadership and authentic leadership. These topics are concentrated on difference aspects of organisational leadership on the ethicality, morality, spirituality and sustainability. Effort has been also put on to identify how a leader uses these values to influence their followers and current challenges facing in each leadership topics being discussed. This paper further discusses these contemporary leadership issues under each topic. Overall, it is found that over the years organisational leadership studies that focuses on common good can be identified as complex, emerging and has attracting the attention of many leadership researchers. However, there are still areas under these topics where future studies need to continue. The paper concludes with possible future research in this field.

*Keywords: value-based leadership, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, responsible leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of organisational leadership has been widely accepted as the leader's vision, promoting cohesiveness and inspiring employees confirmed as essential aspects that improve organisational performance. However, the growing environmental, social and geo political challenges around the world are urging to network with diverse stakeholders including governments, local communities, and customers to act more dynamic roles as global citizens [1; 2]. To address this leadership researchers examined organisational leadership under diverse approaches such as charismatic leadership, transactional leadership transformational leadership and contingency based leadership. However, over the years the leadership crisis has emerged especially the unethical practiced in the modern work places

that organisations started to seek alternative ways to address these issues of distrust, lack of morality, and workplace incivility [3]. To address this gap charismatic and transformational leadership emerged [4]. However, leadership practitioners and scholars began to notice the importance of having strong leadership values which are moral and ethical are ensuring organisational survival. This made the value-based leadership (VBL) concept to be popularised further.

To address this need VBL has been introduced to address these emerging issues surrounding leadership [5].

## **2.0 DEFINING VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP**

The concept of VBL began to explore further as the traditional leadership theories such as charismatic and transformational leadership doesn't show the promising dimensions of ethicality and morality in leaders [5; 7; 8]. VBL is popularly identified in the literature as a leadership philosophy that brings ethical and moral foundations [9; 10; 11] that affect to the organisation, to customers, to suppliers and to shareholders, without focusing on any personal gains received (p. 7) [12].

The work of Burns [13] comparing transactional and transformational leadership gave clear understanding about the definitions of the two concepts. Bass & Avolio [4] highlighted the ability of transformational leadership to achieve greater organizational performance through transforming employees to achieve organizational outcomes. Moral values of leaders are often heightened in the literature which used for improving organisational performance. This concept has a long history, for example, Bass [14] explained how the moral values of leaders used when transforming their employees to achieve organisational goals. Further work by scholars [15; 16] on Charismatic leadership also contributed to further evolve VBL. Meanwhile the work of Bass [17] highlighted the danger of transactional leadership on the organization and the development of leadership questionnaire (MLQ) [18] are also a positive influence on the development of VBL. Further the work of Avolio, Waldman & Yammarino [19] in identification of 4 I's of transformational leadership also contributed towards further development of VBL. Further work by Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam [20] also confirmed transformational leadership helps to improve organizational performance through motivating employees.

Many began to accept the change in the organizational environment and the leader's role in adapting to this changes. Leaders who are willing to change with the environmental change are identified as a key value that sustains organizational performance. Notably, Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson [21] began to realize the benefits of flexible leadership rather than static leadership. In a changing organizational context, leadership scholars began to explain the advantages of having charismatic leaders in an organization than non-charismatic leaders [22]. Often, this made confusion in the leadership literature where transformational and charismatic leadership were seen as similar. Addressing this problem, Yukl [23] clarifies by explaining the two concepts are not similar but overlapping. In a period where trust, ethics

and moral of organizational leadership is at a question, Bass and Steidlmerier [10] introduced leader's ethical, moral and authentic leadership behaviors are important to become transformational in an organization. Supporting this, the work of Carless, Wearing and Mann [24] is notable where they developed a Global Transformational Leadership scale pushing the evolution of transformational leadership in the organizational leadership literature. In the process of examining effective leadership in the complex and competitive organizational environment, Osborn, Hunt & Jauch [25] identified the importance of the context or the situation in achieving effective leadership.

The unethical and immoral behaviors of organizational leadership that breakdown big corporations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century made leadership researchers to question a new dimension of leadership that need more attention. This made scholars [11; 26; 27] to introduce authentic leadership and ethical leadership [28; 29; 30]. Because by this time there were several leadership theories in the leadership studies causing confusion among scholars. Accepting the complexity in the leadership literature [31; 32; 33; 34] stated the urgent need to clarify diversely defined leadership to better understand what constitute leadership in an organizational context.

Rapidly changing organisational contexts required leaders to think new ways to sustain their organisations. In this aspect, organisational leaders should embrace VBL as it ensures long term survival of the organisation as well as its easy to practically implement in the corporate culture that ensure sustainable results [12]. Literature confirms that research on VBL includes shared leadership [35], spiritual [36], stewardship [37], servant [38; 39; 40], authentic [6; 26; 27; 41], connective leadership [42], Self-sacrificial leadership [43], ethical [29; 30; 44; 45], and transformational leadership [5]. These VBL leadership theories able to change the way people perceive what constitute good leadership for today's organisations and creating leaders who are more effective. Value based leaders build strong organisations through simply motivating their employees to achieve organisation's goals and values that in return create long term value to its shareholders [46]. However, most above VBL theories lack a strong theoretical background and a framework to confirm as a theory [47]. Most literature relating to transformational, ethical and authentic identified as VBL theories (For example [48]).

This article examined divers' literature relating to the emerging issues of VBL theories that focuses on leadership efforts to ensure the common good of the world. To conduct the literature review data bases such as Google scholar, EBSCOhost, Emerald, Scopus, Web of Science, and ProQuest were used. List of key words used to search each leadership dimension concerning the common good of the world. For example, ethical, morality, authentic, servant, spirituality were keyed to the system to arrive with possible organisational leadership literature. Out of the hundred and eighty four ultimately hundred and twenty eight articles were selected to complete this literature review. Literature search follows with under Six

leadership dimensions namely, 1) Transformational leadership, 2) Ethical leadership, 3) Spiritual leadership, 4) Responsible leadership, 5) Servant leadership, and 6) Authentic leadership.

## **2.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE**

Main research aims of this study is to provide a greater understanding about VBL theories and update on current work under each VBL topic;

This literature review aims to address four research questions under each VBL topic.

- 1) How each VBL theories identified in this study are understood and defined within the leadership literature?
- 2) What are the main characteristics of each VBL theorise?
- 3) How each VBL theories studied empirically?
- 4) What do we know about each VBL theories?
- 5) What are the future research directions for VBL theories?

## **3. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Transformational leadership is the starting point where leadership theories began to focus on the importance of incorporating moral and ethical aspects in to leadership behaviour [10; 13; 14; 17; 18; 19], also transformational leadership has been the foundation for the emergence and development of all the VBL theories developed so far. Examining this further Bass and Steidlmerier [10] confirmed for a leader to become transformational he/she must be moral, ethical and authentic in their leadership behaviours. Transformational leaders are innovative and lead by example to ensure leadership effectiveness.

When leaders lack the ability to transform their ethical, moral and authentic visions to their followers they fail in leadership and these leaders are called pseudo-transformational leaders. To become effective transformational leaders, leaders need to “provide their followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings” (p 188) [10]. Employee training and development is mostly been recommended in the transformational leadership literature to communicate these shared and challenging goals and values to their followers [14].

Burns [13] work relating to differentiating transactional leadership from transformational leadership well notable in the literature as his work recognized the importance of motivating and empowering the followers through inspiring the moral and ethical values of the followers [24], where it was resulted transformational leadership is more effective in leading the organizations than transactional leadership. Later work of Bass [14; 17] aims to further develop the transformational leadership theory, where Bass

[17] explained how an organization could improve their performance through transformational leadership mainly through motivating their followers.

Reviewing literature Brown and Trevino [30] identified transformational and ethical leadership theories are similar since both concepts concern for others (altruism), ethical decision making, integrity and role modelling. The two are different based on ethical leader's emphasis ethical standards, and moral management which are mostly transactional in nature. Further transactional leaders emphasize vision, values and intellectual stimulation [30]. The next section discusses a popular VBL theory of ethical leadership.

#### **4. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

The ethical and moral perspective of leadership has attracted much attention from contemporary researchers and practitioners that are studying organisational leadership [21; 49; 50]. Ethical leadership research central to three main topics namely, ethics within the individual leader, ethical leaders influencing followers and challenges with implementing ethics in organisations. In certain instances ethical leadership has been identified as the outward display of transformational leadership [51]. At the end of transforming leadership the leaders becomes moral where they raised the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of themselves and their followers whereby they transform effect on both [13]. Yukl [52] summarised ethical leader as one who promotes honestly, and mirrors his or her action with their values and beliefs. These modelled so called ethical and credible leadership behaviours become attractive and draws attention of their followers [53].

Brown, Treviño and Harrison [29] defined ethical leadership is concerned with 'the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making' (p.120). Ethical leaders demonstrate virtues such as imagination, compassion, empathy and discernment" [55]. King [56] identified eight common ethical values shared by leaders namely, honesty, loyalty, dedication to purpose, benevolence, social justice, strength of character, humility and patience. Martinez-Saenz [57] explained four paradigms to explain an ethical leader namely, altruistic, egoistic, autonomous, legalist and communitarian. Manz and Sims [58] identified four shared strategic values of a successful leader namely, to act with integrity, to be fair, to have fun and to be socially responsible.

Organisations such as Enron caused to collapse simply because of the unethical behaviour of its managers [59]. Understanding the ethical environment of a business is useful in leading ethically as corporate policy, codes of conduct, financial affairs, environmental concern, human resource, organisational reputation, relationship and the leader's personal moral frame [60]. The main concept of ethical leadership centres around the ethicality of a leader's personal conduct when decision-making by engaging in various relationships with others, such as honesty, integrity, setting ethical standards and communications [50]. Ethical leaders have to deal with conflicts and contractor views with their followers

and direct them in the right path [61]. Because ethical leaders use rewards and disciplines to hold followers accountable for their conducts Brown and Trevino [30] stated ethical leadership has transactional leadership characteristics. In certain instances it's confirmed that employees do not trust there is ethics within business exist [51; 62]. This made early scholars in leadership such as Greenleaf [38] to state the importance of ethical leadership in his work in Servant leadership "Service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership" (p 20).

Ethical leadership has been researched using three classical leadership theories [63], namely servant leadership, authentic leadership [64] and transformation leadership [13]. Review of literature in ethical leadership confirmed ethical leadership is an ambiguous construct that includes various constituents [63]. The work of Brown et al [29] completed a more formal construct development and validation process and introduced a ten-item instrument (Ethical Leadership Scale – ELS) to measure the perceptions of ethical leadership.

There are three approaches for ethical leadership identified by Sandel [65] namely; utilitarianism theory, libertarianism theory and Hant's Ethical theory. Social learning theory [53, 54] also used to explain the antecedents and outcomes of ethical leadership [30]. As a result of social learning theory organisational members understand what ethical and unethical behaviours in their work environment are and learn how other members are rewarded or punished based on their own behaviour [30]. Ethical leadership has studied using the impact of knowledge on the personal ethical development [66]; values within an ethical leader's life [67]; ethical maturity [68]; crisis of trust between leaders and followers [69; 70]; ethical leader's role from a spiritual perspective [71]. Understanding the challenges for ethical leadership Walton [72] identified forty-five traps based on three categories namely primary, defensive and personality. Often there are ethical failures in leaders mostly due to ignorance rather the selfish behaviours [73]. Future research to be focused on developing models to address with issues in implementing ethics in organisation [63].

## **5. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

Spiritual leadership is not a new concept in the leadership literature as it has a long history [74], often identified as another complex leadership domain [75; 76; 77] that has popularised in the recent leadership scholarly work [78]. Spirituality was first introduced to the organisational context by Fairholm [79] but Fry [36] first link spirituality to the leadership literature. Oh and Wang [74] identified one group of researchers study Spiritual leadership different from religion [36; 80; 81; 82; 83] where another group consider spiritual leadership as a part of religion [84; 85; 86; 87].

It has been argued that spiritual leadership is essential for transforming organisations into learning organisations [88]. Reviewing transformational leadership literature Brown and Trevino [30] identified Spiritual leadership has some similarities with the transformational leadership namely; both concepts concern about others altruism, integrity and role modelling. They further differentiated the two leadership

concepts as ethical leader emphasise moral management where spiritual leadership emphasise visioning, hope/faith and work as vocation. Scholars such as Duchon & Plowman [89] ; Fairholm [79] ; Fairholm and Gronau [90]; ;Fry [36]; Fry and Nisiewicz [88] ; Guillory [91]; Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, and Kakabadse [92]; Reave [83]; Sendjaya [93] defined Spiritual leadership. For example; Fry [36] defined spiritual leadership as “the values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to intrinsically motivate self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (p. 694-695). Fry [36] explained four fundamental factors of human namely; i) Body (Physical) ii) Mind (logical and rational thought) iii) heart (emotions and feelings) and iv) Spirit. The International Institute for Spiritual Leadership website states that spiritual leadership ‘involves intrinsically motivating and inspiring workers through hope/faith in a vision of service to key stakeholders and a corporate culture based on the values of altruistic love to produce a highly motivated, committed, and productive workforce’ [94]. Spiritual organisational leaders often strive to change the inner-self of the group members’ values, beliefs and attitudes, and transform organisations into better-performing entities [88]. They inspire employees to motivate to achieve organisational vision and values through offering support, appreciation and mainly through fostering a sense of belonging [36]. By doing so spiritual leaders able to create a positive work environment and help organisational sustainability through ensuring employee health and well-being [36; 95]. Through reviewing literature surrounding Spiritual Leadership Oh and Wang [74] confirmed Spiritual leadership share three key characteristics namely 1) having higher levels of ethical values (such as integrity, honesty, caring and justice; ii) valuing interconnectedness with followers and peers through encouraging, engaging and guiding one another; and iii) motivating people to pursue organisational vision and mission, meaningfulness at work.

Spiritual leadership has been often identified as a researchable topic [96]. Most research [75; 77; 83; 95; 97; 98] differentiate spiritual leadership from other forms of leadership theories such as transformational, servant and authentic leadership. Spiritual leadership has been studied in diverse industries including mostly in the banking/financial services, health care industries, business, government and higher education sector, while industries such as retail service, religious organisations, manufacturing, hospitality, and military also evident [74] . Notably most studies used spiritual leadership as a predictor for outcomes and Fry’s [36] model is widely used in studies [74]. Although there are large scale studies exploring spiritual leadership around the world [76 ; 99] , reviewing literature Oh and Wang [74], noted there is a dearth of literature examining how spiritual leadership is really practiced in the organisations. Spiritual leadership has been researched using qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods where majority is quantitative [74]. Fry, Vitucci and Cedillo [95] Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire consist with 33 items is a well popular instrument to study spiritual leadership.

## **6. RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP**

Responsible leadership is still considered as an evolving leadership theory Frangieh, & Yaacoub, [100] which was first introduced in 1990’s following the work of Newman [101]. Responsible leadership rejected

great man leadership and perceived leadership as those that find responsible solutions to complex, ambiguous and uncertain organisational challenges by incorporating diverse stakeholder interests, needs and demands into managerial decision making. The uncertain, unexpected and complex issues in businesses often require responsible leaders to link transactional and charismatic leadership qualities [102]. Responsible leadership is a multidisciplinary research imbedded in the ethical leadership domain, development psychology, psychoanalysis, stakeholder theory and systems theory [103] which popularly studied under the studies in ethics and corporate social responsibility [104]. Literature confirms that the responsible leadership falls after the emergence of spiritual leadership [105].

Responsible leadership was defined by Pless [103] as 'maintaining strong social and moral relationships between leaders and followers based on a sense of justice, a sense of recognition, a sense of care, and a sense of accountability for a wide range of economic, ecological, social, political and human responsibilities, to achieve long-term success' (p.451). Pless and Maak [106] "assert that responsible and stakeholder leadership is not just inextricably linked but that responsible leadership provides a convincing perspective on how to connect leadership to stakeholder theory" (p 6). These definitions of Maak and Pless [1; 106] confirms that responsible leadership is about the role of the responsible leader is mainly as an influencer that strives to build a value based relationship with their diverse stakeholders. Unlike other VBL theories Responsible leadership mostly rely on stakeholder's perceptions when it comes to the moral decision making [106]. The scholarly works of Schraa-Liu and Trompenaars [107] and Waldman et al. [108] have highlighted integrity, teamwork, respect and professionalism as essential characteristics of a responsible leader. Responsible leadership is therefore centred around leadership skills and abilities that arise from the inner-self of the leader, consisting of self-discipline and self-mastery (1; 103).

Notably, the literature often suggests that organisational sustainability is clearly linked with responsible leadership, because sustainability leadership and responsible leadership both prioritise issues such as corporate governance practices, ethical practices and economic objectives while responding via justice-based relationships towards non-core stakeholders of the organisation [109; 110].

Responsible leadership still hasn't discussed extensively in the leadership literature both at a holistic or micro level to justify he claim that it is a fully developed theory Frangieh, & Yaacoub, [100]. Hence, further support is needed to develop this VBL theory in the future specially focusing on empirical research to explore responsible leadership in different business contexts. Three main challenges that responsible leaders face are conflicting stakeholder needs, personal and cultural values, and organisational pressure and structure [100]. Empirical research examining these challenges are scare so, future studies on responsible leadership could be focused around examining these practical issues and finding solutions. Further research should also be focused on understanding how responsible leadership creates financial outcomes, employee outcomes, firm reputation and external stakeholder outcomes such as the social performance of the firm Frangieh, & Yaacoub [100]. Studies are limited in examining how responsible

leaders maintain relationship with their employees [100] suggesting future researchers to explore these areas. Further, research could also be focused around how human resource training and development could be used to develop responsible leadership behaviours in organisational leadership.

## **7. SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Greenleaf in the 1970s [38]. Since then, different scholars such as Patterson [39]; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston [40] explained the Servant Leadership theory. However, most of the studies published so far lack clarity and coherence around the servant leadership construct restricting its theoretical development [111]. Servant leadership is often loosely defined [111] and they redefined the servant leadership as “an 1) other – oriented approach to leadership 2) manifested through on-on-one prioritising of follower individual needs and interest, 3) and outwards reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and the larger community” (p. 114). Ludema and Cox [112] have contended that servant leaders are those that provide leadership that focuses on the good of those who are being led and those whom the organisation serves’ (p. 875). Servant leaders strive to grow the organisational resources, financials and other resources that are entrusted on them through considering themselves as stewards of their organisation [113] whereby they consider both on the organisational performance and the personal development of their followers.

Over the past, several researchers [111; 114; 115] clearly differentiated servant leadership from other VBL theories. Servant leadership engage followers in multiple dimensions such as relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual encouraging them to become what they want to. So that, servant leadership generally emerges when leaders identify the needs, desires, interests and welfare of followers above their own self-interest [116]. Hence, Servant leadership is more concern on followers psychological needs compared to transformational leadership that mainly focus on organisational goals and then focus on the psychological needs of their followers [117]. Notably, studies [115; 117; 118; 119] confirmed servant leadership as being more explanatory in predicting follower outcomes than in transformational leadership. In a chaotic situation, servant leaders often behave with personal integrity to lead their followers to deal with obstacles while gaining the trust, respect and commitment of followers [116]. This inner conviction or higher call differentiates Servant leadership from authentic leadership. This made Sendjaya [120] to state that servant leaders focus on followers first and organisation second.

Reviewing the literature on Servant leadership [111] categorised research on servant leadership in to three areas namely; i) conceptual development of servant leadership focusing on the works of Greenleaf [38] and Spears [121] ii) developing measures of servant leadership and testing relationship between servant leadership and outcomes via cross-sectional research and iii) model development phase where more sophisticated research designs are being utilised to move beyond simple relationship with outcomes.

Future researchers willing to study servant leadership behaviours could use social based theories such as Social exchange theory, social learning theory and social identity theory to structure their studies [111]. Servant leadership research are prominent in the tourism and hospitality, healthcare, and education, not for profit, youth sector, public sectors urging the potential to examine the concept in other industries. The first scale to measure servant leadership is by Lytle, Hom and Mokwa [122] and there are nearly 16 scales used to measure the construct now making this leadership theory more complex that needs more in-depth exploration. Future researchers could use the three mostly recommended servant leadership behavioural measures namely by Liden et al [123]; Sendjaya et al [124]; van Dierendonck and Nuijten's [125]. Endogenous bias, measurement errors and common method bias are still notable in the servant leadership research urging future researchers in the field to address these limitations [126]. Future work need to use larger sample size as most studies in Servant leadership based on small samples [114].

## **8. AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP**

Authentic leadership behaviours are identified as a part of transformational leadership [10]. However, recent reviews confirmed the two concepts are different but overlapping [127] as authentic leaders are more emphasized on authenticity and self-awareness [30]. Authentic and Transformational leadership theories are similar as these two concepts concern on others (altruism), ethical division making, integrity and role modelling [30]. Brown and Trevino [30] pointed authentic leaders and ethical leaders share a social motivation and a consideration leadership style. Often, authentic leaders are confirmed as more effective than non-authentic leaders [26].

Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa [41] defined authentic leaders as 'those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and of high moral character' (p.4). Authentic leadership relates to the importance of the leader's interpersonal-self as trustworthy and able to develop a leader-follower relationship that is based on trust and integrity [5; 11]. Authentic leaders "incorporate charismatic, transformational, integrity and/or ethical leadership" but these constructs are distinct from each other [128, p 4].

The leader's self-awareness and authentic self-regulation have commonly been identified as the main characteristics of authentic leadership [11]. However, self-awareness about what is right and wrong is not enough to create authentic leadership; while self-regulation among leaders and followers to achieve organisational goals is necessary to establish authentic leadership [128].

Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim [8] contended that any scholars that want to advance the authentic leadership theory via conceptual and empirical work need to first give careful consideration to four critical

issues: '1) defining and measuring the construct; 2) determining the discriminant validity of the construct; 3) identifying relevant construct outcomes; and 4) ascertaining whether authentic leadership can be caught' (p. 477).

## **9. CONCLUSION**

VBL became prominent in leadership research as unethical, unsustainable and immoral actions of leadership continues to report around the world. The impact of these negative leadership is not only micro level creating adverse impacts to followers as well as to the organisation but also creating macro level influences even causing economic collapses in several countries. VBL prioritise and reflects strong values, improves the lives of the employees whilst enhancing the performance of the organisation. Because this VBL concept and its significance to the socio – political and economy of all the countries this review paper aims to expand the current understanding of this concept. In this context expanding the knowledge around VBL is vital for the development in leadership literature. To achieve this aim this review of literature based on examining studies surrounding VBL. This review aims to summarise literature relating to six VBL theories namely, 1) Transformational leadership, 2) Ethical leadership, 3) Spiritual leadership, 4) Responsible leadership, 5) Servant leadership, and 6) Authentic leadership. For this purpose more than hundred research papers reviewed using the key terms to reflecting each leadership theory mentioned above. This review was able to confirm idea that leaders with VBL behaviours support its organisation to enhance its performance whilst enriching the lives of its followers compared to leaders without VBL behaviours. Further, this paper addresses current understandings in each leadership dimension, main characteristics of each leaders, comparison between each theories, and future research directions.

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