Shifting Career Aspirations and Anxiety During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused changes in young people, especially in the mental health and career aspect. The existence of COVID-19 worsens their mental health condition. Various factors make a person experience symptoms of anxiety or depression. In addition to mental health, COVID-19 has affected young people's perception of careers. The question is how far the pandemic has caused personality change in young people and affected career preferences. Therefore, this study has two objectives: understanding the intrapersonal and interpersonal changes in young people groups and what stakeholders should do about these changes. This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. A total of 1.036 young people participated in the survey. This study indicates that although young people feel anxious, worried, and afraid, they still adapt, as evidenced by the emergence of new hobbies and abilities. In addition, young people are also optimistic about their career preferences and believe that they can overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this optimism will not last if the pandemic continues the following year. This research requires all stakeholders to formulate appropriate ways to mitigate young people's mental health problems.

INTRODUCTION

Demography is one of the essential aspects of a country because it is related to the potential of human resources. Thus, changes in demographics will affect the development of a country. Demographic change determines how human activities are conducted and how a society embarks on a political transition, such as a revolution, a state breakdown, or a regime change (Hamanaka, 2017). While European Union, by 2050, will experience a population decline (Nimwegen & Erf, 2010), and Japan will face an aging population by 2030 (Walia, 2019). Indonesia, on the other hand, is experiencing productive demographic growth. Several demographic experts say that Indonesia has been entering a phase that is called the "demographic bonus" (or "demographic dividend") (Ariteja, 2017).

In the demographic bonus period, the labor in an economy is abundant, and the output of an economy is shared with a few people (Warsito, 2019). In the future, the
productive ages will fill Indonesia's population, where one of the groups is young people aged 17-35. Young people in Indonesia will take a strategic role in the leadership process in Indonesia. It is also starting to be seen by young people who fill strategic posts in various fields. Some have contributed significantly to Indonesia through professions, such as entrepreneurs, lecturers, activists, and others.

Various contributions made by young people strive to implement technology to overcome many problems. They see technology as an opportunity to solve many problems. Moreover, young Indonesian people have a good understanding of technology. Technology also provides space for young people to innovate and solve problems in the field. However, young Indonesian people today have a fragile mentality. Referring to Basic Health Research conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2018, the prevalence of people with severe mental disorders (schizophrenia/psychosis) increased from 0.15% to 0.18%, while the prevalence of mental disorders in the population aged 15 and over increased from 6.1% in 2013 to 9.8% in 2018 (BBC, 2019). Mental health is a problem that we must solve shortly.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted the development of young people and severely worsened their mental health problems. The pandemic has forced everyone to work at home. Implementing social restrictions and PPKM reduces young people's interaction with their environment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, young people experienced significant mental health problems. This is reflected in the collaborative research of Into the Light and change.org in 2021. They found an alarming finding that about 98% of participants felt lonely in the past month, and 40% had thoughts of self-harm or suicidal thoughts in the past two weeks (Bahar, 2021). Another survey of the respondents aged 16-24 found that as many as 95.4% of respondents had experienced anxiety symptoms. In addition, 88% have experienced symptoms of depression in dealing with problems during this age (Kaligis, et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, in terms of careers, before the pandemic, the younger generation of Indonesia was more inclined to become entrepreneurs. The 2019 Sea Group survey, which examined the career preferences of the younger generation under 36 years old, revealed that 24.4% of young people want to become entrepreneurs and are followed by civil servants, with 17.1% (Jayani, 2019). As many as 25% of young people are motivated to impact society (Syarizka, 2019). When the pandemic occurred, many workers lost their jobs due to the efficiency carried out by the company. Young people are also among the groups affected by this policy. According to the BPS 2021, the percentage of the open unemployment rate is 17.6%, an increase from the previous year, which was 14.3% (Jatmika, 2021). This phenomenon makes many young people rethink their career paths in the future.

To summarize all the phenomena during the pandemic, one keyword that can describe young people today is change. Young people's mental health phenomenon certainly has implications for many things that can make the demographic bonus unable
to be used properly. The pandemic has forced young people to adapt to various activities that have changed the pattern of their activities, plus the problems accompanying them. The World Economic Forum has a sentence that sums up all the problems plaguing young people:

"Today's young people already bear the scars of a decade-long financial crisis, an outdated education system, and an entrenched climate crisis, as well as violence in many places." (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Thus, the pandemic has significantly impacted the development of young people in Indonesia. There is a change in attitude, nature, and mindset. Nevertheless, how many intrapersonal and interpersonal changes have emerged during the pandemic? How much does a pandemic affect young people's career preferences? Then, how should stakeholders, parents, and educational institutions respond to this change? Therefore, this study aims to discover young people's intrapersonal and interpersonal changes during the COVID-19 pandemic and how relevant institutions can respond.

There is quite a lot of literature on the causes of anxiety during a pandemic. However, Malesza & Kaczmarek (2021) adequately represent the factors that cause anxiety during the pandemic. They have divided it into two factors: the pandemic outbreak and COVID-19-related factors. The first factor includes demographics such as females, older people, married or cohabiting, and having children. Meanwhile, COVID-19-related factors include a higher frequency of recommended protective behaviors and perceived risk of infection, et cetera.

In Indonesia, anxiety among young people is due to the fear of being infected with COVID-19 and the decreasing family income (Martini, Syahrul, & Bunyamin, 2021, p. 43). Meanwhile, if it is associated with the learning process, Aseta & Siswanto (2021) found several factors that influence anxiety, including not being enthusiastic about online learning, an environment that is not conducive, afraid of assignments, lazy to study, difficulty concentrating, difficulty getting signals, and a limited quota (Aseta & Siswanto, 2021).

Some literature discusses this issue in the context of young Indonesian people's career aspirations. For example, lower-middle-class young people seek a job, participate in new consumption forms, and devise slightly more ambitious expectations for themselves (Naafs, 2018). On the other hand, the aspirations of young Muslim people related to work are influenced by gender and religious factors, especially regarding marriage and family life in the future (Naafs, 2013). Meanwhile, Suyatna (2017) stated that social business activity, known as a 'sociopreneur', can be an opportunity for young people to make a career while at the same time contributing to society. The demographic bonus that Indonesia will feel in 2030-2045 can be a catalyst and momentum in the development of sociopreneur.

The response produced by humans to socio-environmental changes is the result of learning that involves three variables that influence each other: attitude, environment, and
individual (Harinie, Sudiro, Rahayu, & Fatchan, 2017). According to Bandura, humans are not equipped with innate behavior, so their behavior results (Susanto, 2015). Deaton (2015) added that every human has a different story due to interactions that affect cognitive acceptance. If anything can be taken from social learning theory, it is this: for better or worse, people observe, imitate, and model their behavior (Deaton, 2015). In short, the underlying premise of SLT is that behavior results from both person and situation and does not result from either factor alone (Hanna, Crittenden, & Crittenden, 2013).

In the context of a pandemic, social learning theory provides insight into how people change their behavior and reason to adapt to the situation. For example, the pandemic has become the main reason young people have anxiety. McElroy et al. (2020) explained that the cause of anxiety during a pandemic is the fear that he or his family will be exposed to COVID-19 and worry about the social and economic impacts caused by the pandemic. Meanwhile, some identify the factor in demographics and conditions: women, individuals with previous psychiatric illness, individuals living in urban areas, and those with an accompanying chronic disease (Özdin & Özdin, 2020).

When it comes to young people, the factors that cause anxiety are the problem of contracting COVID-19, problems in school or college, experiencing more changes in life, worries about being confined at home, and meeting basic needs (Hawes, Szenczy, Klein, Hajcak, & Nelson, 2022). The same changes apply to careers and jobs. The pandemic is the reason many people have lost their jobs. Vulnerable workers, such as informal and freelance workers, risk losing their jobs. In addition, young people and women are also vulnerable to getting lower salaries. In short, the pandemic is changing the job market landscape (Jingyi, Lim, Pazim, & Furuoka, 2021).

The pandemic has influenced young people's personalities. Behavioral dynamics are a response caused by the situation that makes an entity, individual, or institution adapt to these changes. For example, every human being has different causes of anxiety. Age, terms of responsibility, personality, and condition are some factors that can influence anxiety behavior. For example, the cause of anxiety for married people will differ from young people still pursuing higher education. Someone with a healthy physical condition will have different anxiety causes than someone sick. Our careers are also the same. The development of COVID-19 has caused a significant change in the labor market, and young people, women, et cetera, must adapt to the current situation.

**METHOD**

This research method uses a quantitative approach. Quantitative research works on data and numbers to see trends within a group. Authors use the survey method to provide a quantitative or numeric description of a population's trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a population sample (Creswell & David, 2018). The survey method can see how trends and attitudes within a group are in the big picture. For a relatively low
cost in time and money, a researcher can collect self-reported attitudes and behaviors about virtually any social issue (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). In this study, the authors collected as many as 1,036 respondents from various regions in Indonesia. The questionnaire is written in Indonesia. The demographic age of the respondents was as follows: 20-25 years (58%), 16-19 years (33%), 26-30 years (7%), <15 years (1%), and >30 years (1%). Of the respondents, 71% are women, while 29% are men.

RESULT

Regarding the condition of young people's mental health in Indonesia during the pandemic, the authors found something similar to the research results above in this research. As many as 80% of young people felt nervous, anxious, and hopeless. This is worrying because activities at home should allow young people to interact intensely with family members, especially parents. However, the high social power distance between parents and young people in Indonesia creates a condition where young people repress their emotional fear and anxiety.

In addition, young people are also filled with fear during the COVID-19 pandemic. 78% of young people feel that something terrible will happen. Individual anxiety also appeared among young urban people during the pandemic. The majority are afraid of anything related to COVID-19. Plus, 64% of young people sometimes find it difficult to relax and sleep. Imagery fear in young people's minds could impact their engagement in their main activities. This condition will negatively influence young people's learning and working and overall productivity in the long term. Besides fear, 55% of young people felt annoyed or angry several times during the pandemic. In the long term, feelings of anxiety will cause stress and then anger. Feelings of anger will make one's relationships with family, spouse, and closest friends prone to conflict. However, the impact of stress, fear, and anxiety felt by young people depends on a
person's level of adaptability. Ahmed et al. (2021) found that adaptive people tend to control fear and stress to maintain sleep quality and activities. Conversely, less adaptive people will feel more afraid and stressed and do not have an adequate quality of sleep and activity.

\begin{figure}
\caption{Feeling That Something Bad Will Happen During a Crisis}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\caption{Indonesia's Young People's Optimism Level During COVID-19 Pandemic}
\end{figure}
Many young people have gained knowledge about how to develop themselves. The pandemic also has become an opportunity to improve their soft and hard skills. The author finds two new skills that young people learned and developed during the pandemic: household skills and digital knowledge. Household skills include cooking, washing, and all household matters. Meanwhile, the digital knowledge gained includes video editing, photo editing, and digital marketing.

**Figure 4**

*New Skills or Knowledge Acquired by Young People*

![New Skills or Knowledge Acquired During the Pandemic](image)

Despite dynamics in the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, young people's career orientation does not change. Most young people have high confidence that their dream profession still exists. In addition, 87% of young people have similar career expectations before the pandemic. However, since the pandemic, young people have believed that work in public health is noble and sustainable during a pandemic. Pragmatically, choosing a career in digital business will generate income quickly. Nonetheless, young people will likely redefine the future of work in Indonesia. Young people believe that work does not have to come to the office. Instead, they will seek and find jobs that can contribute to society at large. Moreover, this pandemic has made young people witness many deaths, thus changing their perspective on the work they want to do in the future.
DISCUSSION

Reflecting the result of the study, young people in the last few years have suffered from mental health issues. During the COVID-19 period, these issues have worsened. Many studies have shown that young people have had mental health problems throughout the pandemic. A survey from PDSKJI in 2020 found that 68% of young people had mental health problems (Ramadhan, 2020). Globally, research from Gallup of young people aged 15-24 in 21 countries shows that 19% feel depressed and have no interest in anything (UNICEF, 2021).

Indonesia's young people's condition is similar to other countries worldwide. A study examining Greek adolescents aged 12-18 found that overall, depression increased significantly in line with the escalation of the pandemic. At the same time, anxiety decreased, with the strongest predictors being the personality variables of extraversion, neuroticism, and openness (Mourelatos, 2021). In the United States, there is also a similar condition. 33% of young people experience stress compared to other age groups. On the other hand, 61% of respondents experienced average and high levels of mental disorders among young Americans (Długosz, 2021).

Apart from the United States, a similar phenomenon occurred in Turkey and Austria, although the severity differs. 50.9% of native Turks reported a decrease in their mental health status, compared to 31.1% of native Austrians and 23.7% of Austrian migrants (Akkaya-Kalayci et al., 2020). Both anxiety and depression have been identified as negative health outcomes associated with the distressing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among young people (Jones, Bowe, McNamara, Guerin, & Carter, 2021; Choi, Hui, & Wan, 2020).

Furthermore, billions of people are locked up to contain the outbreak due to the world's exaggerated response to 'mass hysteria', fear of uncertainty, and isolation (Banerjee, Rao, Kallivayalil, Abraham, & Javed, 2020). As a result, quarantine profoundly affects the mental health and well-being of individuals and society in general.
Furthermore, imposed mass quarantine applied by nationwide lockdown programs can produce mass hysteria, anxiety, and distress, due to factors like a sense of getting cornered and loss of control (Dubey, et al., 2020).

According to Singh & Singh (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown policy significantly impact people's social relations, especially since social connections and interactions are inseparable from human life. A lack of social relationships can make people feel stressed, lonely, anxious, depressed, have mental health, and many other problems that can hinder their activities. According to the author, whether the pandemic will end this year or next, the pandemic has created a collective memory for the entire generation. When the pandemic ends, new habits and other things will emerge. Eril (2020) puts it into holistic perspectives on the matter:

"There may be active commemorative memory. There will be a sense of common experience in generational memory, possibly transnationally. There will be legacies of the pandemic (financial, ecological, educational, digital). There may be effects on social habit memory: new modes of interaction shaped by Corona (politeness, education, work, play). There will be memories of this time's sensual, rhythmic, and affective specificity."

(Eril, 2020).

Thus, the pandemic worsens young people's mental health conditions, such as anxiety, anger, fear, and depression. COVID-19 makes their future uncertain. The risk of death could come to him and his parents. Moreover, young people cannot meet each other due to social restrictions. This crisis has revealed how mental health is a serious problem that all stakeholders must solve. Moreover, the pandemic makes young people unable to interact and brings young people to a tense period.

Despite the feeling of agony, anger, and fear, young people can maintain their level of optimism, which is astonishing. One of the causes is that the Indonesian people, especially the young people, understand that Indonesia's greatest strength lies in its social capital, represented by the principle of gotong royong. Awareness of social capital will grow with optimism and the belief that Indonesian people can face everything together with the spirit of social values and local wisdom (Mutia, Nur, Ramlan, & Basra, 2020). For example, in 2019, Indonesia was ranked as the third most optimistic country in the world based on collaborative research from The Conference Board®, Global Consumer Confidence™ Survey, and Nielsen (Artanti, 2019). This research can prove why Indonesian people can get through the challenge. Indonesian people have a high spirit for helping each other, whatever the situation. For example, the Indonesian people collectively assisted during the earthquake at Palu–Donggala in 2018 and the Aceh Tsunami in 2004.

Most young people in the author's research show a very high level of optimism, considering that this is accompanied by increased social capital. In addition, crises and difficult times positively influence religious experiences. The author also sees that religious factors are one of the factors that contribute to young people's sense of optimism.
It is reflected in their career aspirations, dreams, and passions. Indonesian culture has a strong collective memory of optimism, represented by the simple phrase 'take the wisdom'. This collective memory has allowed the Indonesian people to get through this pandemic. From the young people's point of view, the optimism they have come from a personal perspective and collective memory is an incentive to contribute to society: that contribution is an essential capital for Indonesia to get through the pandemic. One of the examples was a fundraising platform, Kitabisa.com, which created a campaign to help those who needed help (Muqsith, Pratomo, Kuswanti, & Muzykant, 2021). In addition, more than 15,000 young people across the country have been deployed to educate their local communities on COVID-19 (Gamalliel, Sutanto, & Wardhani, 2021). We intend to be in this together, so if there is an opportunity to help, Indonesian people will certainly take the opportunity.

Regarding optimism, 40% of young people believed the COVID-19 pandemic could end last year. However, the pandemic continues, and there is a possibility that it will undermine the optimism that has been maintained, especially regarding careers and dream jobs. As a result, young people will experience a period of uncertainty affecting their mental health.

Despite that, the COVID-19 period is also a blessing in disguise. Young people can learn new skills at home, and many platforms provide upskilling and reskilling. The pandemic also has become an opportunity to improve young people's soft and hard skills. The author finds two new skills that young people learned and developed during the pandemic: household skills and digital knowledge. Household skills include cooking, washing, and all household matters. Meanwhile, the digital knowledge gained includes video editing, photo editing, and digital marketing. Blokker et al. (2019) researched 704 young Dutch professionals and found that young professionals with high career competencies report higher levels of perceived employability. Therefore, the pandemic became an opportunity for young people to enhance their skills to get higher employability chances (Blokker, Akkermas, Tims, Jansen, & Khapova, 2019).

Regarding career orientation, young people were driven by two career trends before the pandemic in Indonesia. The first is a career in the creative economy, and the second is a digital career. The pandemic forced the creative economy to break. Many music and entertainment events are canceled. Cafes and creative hubs are hard to attract young people, who now have less buying power. Many young people turn their eyes to local potential natural resources. Therefore, many young people are starting to cultivate the hobby of gardening. From gardening, they get additional income. For young people, urban gardening connects humans in the most unnatural environment we created with what we need the most: nature and communities (Lauten-Weiss & Ramesohl, 2021).

From young people's hobbies, awareness to care for the environment is getting high. As a result, young people got their motivation to survive the pandemic. Looking for another source of income is a must, and they must be creative to find a way. Young people
do not lose hope. Sung et al. (2013) found that hope is contextual when examining the agency factor in college student career development. They suggest that younger people with the more excellent agency had higher education and career development levels.

On the other hand, the pandemic is accelerating the adoption and integration of technology across sectors, from economics to lifestyles. There are many emerging content creators during the pandemic. Based on the phenomenon, the author predicted that market expectations would lie mainly in digital business and content creation. The technology's growth also changes skill structure yearly, so we cannot predict a skill for two decades (Wrahatnolo & Munoto, 2018). Seeing the trend and condition, young people try to take advantage of and maximize the time available to learn new abilities.

The pandemic also changes young people's perspective on jobs. Although they have the same career expectation, jobs with sustainable goals, environmental preservation, and human health will be a good career choice compared to other job orientations for young people. Young people will choose careers following sustainable development goals with the increasingly echoed values in sustainable development goals (SDGs). In addition, given young people's poor mental health during the pandemic, working in the mental health domain is viewed as something many people need after the pandemic.

We can learn from the phenomenon that young people are contradictory. This contradiction among Indonesian young people happens because of collective, social, environmental, and environmental memory factors. Individually, the pandemic makes young people anxious, regardless of the factors causing it. However, collectively, the value of gotong royong and the ability to see the positive side of a disaster make young people more optimistic about facing the pandemic. Therefore, optimism will be a keyword for young people to adapt to a social transition until the end of the pandemic.

Young people are vital for Indonesia's future. Their sense of work, the future, and the possibilities for themselves are engines of optimism (Santilli, Marcionetti, Rochat, Rossier, & & Nota, 2017). Their optimism and the desire to collaborate to improve Indonesia can also become the leading social infrastructure in enriching the available workforce. Collaboration creates patterns of vitality by supporting each other's actions and making mutually agreed rules that can help the creative process and facilitate learning (Kuenkel, 2015). Collaboration is a common thing for young people to achieve bigger things. For example, Grab launched the "Grab Mendobrak Batas" program and cooperated with the Koneksi Indonesia Inklusif (Konekin) community and the Ministry of Communication and Information to assist people with disability in harnessing technology with Grabkios (Indah, 2020). Konekin is a community that aims to promote an inclusive ecosystem in Indonesia by disseminating public information, increasing public participation, and collaborating with persons with disabilities.

Although young people are optimistic about careers, their mental health problems need special attention. The mental health condition of young people is poor during the
The outbreak of COVID-19 has severely impeded the operation of the global economy (Chonga, Li, & Yip, 2020). Recently, a wave of work termination has occurred in start-ups company, including Shopee, TaniHub, Binar Academy, Tokocrypto, and LinkAja (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Research has shown an association between unemployment and mental health, although relational causes remain unclear (Bartelink, Ya, & Bremberg, 2020). Regardless, positive mental health is a requirement for optimal psychological development, the development, and maintenance of productive social relationships, practical learning, and good physical health (Clarke, Kuosmanen, & Barry, 2015). Stakeholders such as families and educational institutions are responsible for harnessing young people's potential and optimism. They must consider joint solutions, and every relevant stakeholder has a role in reducing the severity of young people's mental health. There are some roles each stakeholder can play, from parents to educational institutions.

For parents, there are three roles that they can play. First, they can become the initial gate for recovering mental health symptoms. Parents are essential to buffering their children's stresses, helping them manage their feelings, and making sense of their own experiences. For example, children who openly communicate with their parents about COVID-19 experience less depression, anxiety, and stress (Tang, Xiang, Cheung, & Xiang, 2021). Second, parents can periodically monitor the attitude and mood of their children. Given this stressful time, parents may have a higher sensitivity to observing symptoms of depression and anxiety (Courtney, Watson, Battaglia, Mulsant, & Szatmari, 2020). Third, parents can provide support for children's career preferences. Regarding STEM courses and careers, students who perceive greater social support for math and science from parents, teachers, and friends have more positive attitudes toward math and science and a higher sense of competence in these subjects (Rice, et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, an educational institution bridges young people and professional careers. People with a college education do better in the labor market than those without education beyond high school (Baum, 2014). However, a new finding is that many emotional problems – not just depression – are significantly associated with lower academic functioning, even after adjusting for a broad set of confounders (Bruffaerts, et al., 2018). Thus, educational institutions have an essential role in giving much room for young people to develop themselves. Although they are still optimistic about their future, young people must be mentally healthy to maintain their optimism.

Therefore, there are two things that educational institutions must do. First, it is necessary to do a counseling service that provides the most expansive possible space for students or students to discuss problems for themselves. Due to the global trends of the pandemic, higher education needs to prioritize academic, career counseling, and even
medical services and programs that should be accessible to the students in the university and even through online means (Toquero, 2020). Second, the pandemic makes many people experience anxiety. In the case of a student during the COVID-19 period, there are three sources of anxiety: offline interactions on campus, learning motivations, and the shift in the learning mode (Arribathi, et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need to formulate fear management for young people.

Education also needs to adapt its curriculum and learning methods by adjusting the learning styles of young people. Give young people the freedom to choose their curriculum according to their preferences. The learning process should build learners' skills and improve their attitudes and cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills (Arribathi, et al., 2021). The Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MendikbudRistek) Nadiem Makarim, on October 26, 2021, revealed that 80% of Indonesian students do not work according to their college majors (Kasih, 2021). To help college students develop goal-setting skills, counselors should first help clients identify several goals, including short-term, intermediate, or long-term goals related to their educational or career development (Sung, et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

This research has theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research can contribute to the study of young people, especially those related to changes in behavior and attitudes during the pandemic. The practical benefit is that this study can serve as a basis for policymakers to carry out mitigation policies so that young people can continue to study and work in optimal conditions. Many factors cause anxiety, ranging from age to responsibility, where the factors cause it to return to each condition. It results from the interaction between the individual, the environment, and cognitive processes. However, one sure thing is that the pandemic is changing young people's habits in many ways; they are using it as a moment of reflection to do something they have not done and learn new skills. In addition, the pandemic also teaches that although young people experience anxiety, they are also optimistic at the same time, especially about their future. This condition is both a strength and a weakness, where young people's mental health can weaken their sense of optimism. Every stakeholder related to young people is vital to solving mental health problems and maintaining young people's optimism.
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