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Goal Setting Formation and Quality of Life: A Comparative Study Between Single Individuals and People in a Committed Relationship

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Abstract: This study examines the connection between quality of life (QoL) and life objectives, emphasizing how these variables vary between single people and those in committed romantic relationships. Drawing on a multidimensional framework of goal-setting—comprising meaningful, personal, and data-based goals—and the WHOQOL-BREF model of QoL, the research aims to understand how relational status may influence individuals' aspirations and subjective well-being across physical, psychological, environmental, and social domains. A total of 157 adults (aged 18–59) from India participated in the study through online and offline data collection methods. T-tests and Pearson's correlation analyses were employed to examine group differences and inter-variable associations. Results revealed that individuals in committed relationships reported significantly higher environmental and social QoL compared to their single counterparts, suggesting that romantic partnerships may offer emotional and practical support that enhances well-being in these domains. However, no significant differences were found in goal-setting orientations between the groups. Correlation analyses showed that personal and data-based goals were more strongly linked to QoL outcomes than meaningful goals alone, with variations observed based on relationship status. While partnered individuals showed stronger goal–QoL associations across all domains, single individuals exhibited more selective patterns, particularly in psychological and social well-being. These results demonstrate the complex influence of relationship environment on goal engagement and life

happiness. The study adds to the body of knowledge on relational psychology, goal theory, and well-being. It also urges additional research that takes a longer-term and culturally varied approach.

Keywords: *Quality of life, Life objectives, relational psychology, goal setting*

1. Introduction

Life goals, encompassing personal aspirations, meaningful contributions, and data-driven objectives, are fundamental to human motivation and well-being. Well-defined goals provide purpose and direction, with intrinsically motivated, meaningful goals showing stronger links to life satisfaction and resilience than external pursuits like wealth. Measurable, specific, and outcome-oriented (SMART) goals, rooted in empirical frameworks, enhance self-regulation and a sense of control. These multifaceted life goals significantly influence an individual's overall Quality of Life (QoL), a broad concept defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a person's perception of their life's position within their cultural context, values, and aspirations across four primary domains: social, physical, psychological, and environmental well-being. Aligning goals with authentic values promotes life satisfaction, while discrepancies can lead to distress. Meaningful goals, in particular, serve as psychological buffers and enhance mental health.

Each QoL domain is influenced by specific goals: social QoL is tied to strong relationships and community involvement; physical QoL involves health-related goals and an active lifestyle; psychological QoL encompasses emotional well-being and purpose-driven living; and environmental QoL relates to safety, resources, and autonomy-supporting surroundings. When life goals align with these QoL aspects, individuals experience greater fulfilment.

Relational status also impacts goal setting and QoL. Committed relationships often provide support for goal pursuit, leading to higher social and emotional QoL. Single individuals may prioritize more autonomous and career-oriented goals, potentially excelling in psychological autonomy and environmental satisfaction. This study aims to compare the life goals of single versus partnered individuals and their correlation with perceived QoL, elucidating the complex role of relational settings in well-being.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the kinds of life goals that people in committed partnerships and single people typically set, such as relational, career, health, personal, and meaning-based goals.

- To examine how single people and those in committed relationships view their quality of life in four areas: social, physical, psychological, and environmental.
- To investigate how goal orientation and goal achievement affect subjective well-being, as well as the relationship between goal setting and quality of life within each group.
- To determine if the influence of pursuing goals on life satisfaction varies for singles and paired people, or if relationship status moderates the association between goal setting and quality of life.
- To provide empirical support for the notion that goal-related behaviors and well-being outcomes in various relational statuses are influenced by interpersonal dynamics and individual autonomy.

1.2 Hypothesis of the Study

H₀₁: There will be a significant difference in quality of life (QoL) based on relationship status (single vs. in a committed relationship).

H₀₂: There will be a significant difference in goal-setting factors (GSF) based on relationship status (single vs. in a committed relationship).

H₀₃: There will be a significant relationship between quality of life (QoL) and goal-setting factors (GSF) among individuals in a committed relationship.

H₀₄: There will be a significant relationship between quality of life (QoL) and goal-setting factors (GSF) among individuals who are single.

H₀₅: There will be a significant overall relationship between quality of life (QoL) and goal-setting factors (GSF) across all participants, regardless of relationship status.

2. Review Of Literature

Antony and Jain's (2019) study assessed goal-setting proficiency among 87 adolescents (ages 10–18) in low-income Mumbai slum areas using the Goal Setting Formative Questionnaire. Results showed that females scored significantly higher than males on the overall goal-setting scale ($t = 3.25$, $p = .02$), particularly on the Data-Based subscale, indicating that girls were more adept at using past experiences and feedback to inform goals. This gender difference suggests that contextual factors in disadvantaged settings may shape goal formulation differently for boys and girls, with implications for educational and motivational interventions.

Menelaos Apostolou and colleagues' (2021) cross-cultural study, published in *Personality and Individual Differences*, analyzed quality of life dimensions—physical health, mental health, and social support—between single and partnered individuals across multiple countries. Findings suggest that partnered individuals often report higher social support and better health outcomes, while singles excel in autonomy and personal growth. Cultural factors, such as collectivism versus individualism, moderate these effects, with singlehood less stigmatized in individualistic societies. This study emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive approaches to understanding how relationship status shapes QoL globally. Published in 2013 in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Diener, Tay, and Oishi investigated how social comparison and life goals influence subjective well-being in single and partnered individuals. Social comparison lowered well-being for singles perceiving societal bias toward partnerships, while partnered individuals compared themselves to other couples. Life goals aligned with personal values enhanced well-being across statuses. This study underscores the role of self-perception and goal-setting in shaping happiness, with implications for addressing societal biases.

In his 2017 book *The All-or-Nothing Marriage*, Eli Finkel examines how marriage's role in shaping life goals and well-being has evolved. Contemporary marriages demand greater emotional fulfillment, making high-quality marriages a significant driver of well-being but pressuring couples to meet high expectations. Singles prioritize diverse goals like career or friendships, and achieving comparable well-being. This work highlights the shifting cultural significance of marriage and the importance of aligning goals with values. Published in 2013 in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, Gere and Schimmack examined how conflicting romantic partners' goals impact relationship quality and well-being. Incompatible goals (e.g., career vs. family) reduced relationship satisfaction, lowering well-being. Singles, free from such conflicts, experienced greater autonomy in goal pursuit. This study highlights the importance of goal alignment in relationships and singles' reliance on personal aspirations for well-being.

In a 2020 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Joel and Eastwick used longitudinal data to explore factors predicting relationship satisfaction and their influence on life goals. High relationship satisfaction enhanced goal alignment (e.g., career, family), while dissatisfaction disrupted personal goals, lowering well-being. This study underscores the interplay between romantic relationships and individual aspirations. In a 2021 study in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Park and colleagues explored singlehood profiles based on life goals and their impact on life satisfaction. Cluster analysis

identified profiles (e.g., career-focused, self-development-oriented), with intrinsic goal prioritization linked to higher satisfaction. This study highlights singlehood's diversity and the value of tailored goal support.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

Adult Indian residents aged 18 to 59 participated in the study. For the study, both males and females were taken into consideration. A total of 157 replies were received, with 89 females and 68 males. The data was gathered using probability sampling techniques such as cluster sampling and simple random sampling.

3.2 Procedure

Both offline and internet techniques were used to get the data. An online approach using social media and a Google Form yielded 157 answers in total. After obtaining informed consent, demographic information was obtained. Participants received a brief explanation of the study. The WHO-Quality of Life Questionnaire-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) and the Goals Setting Formative Questionnaire were validated and given to the participants. Participants were advised to ask questions if they had any difficulties while completing the form. Those who met the age requirements were shown this questionnaire.

3.3 Tools

Goals Setting Formative Questionnaire

Gaumer Erickson and Noonan (2018) created the Goal Setting Formative Questionnaire, a standardized self-report instrument intended to evaluate a person's ability to set meaningful goals, concentrate on personal development, and base goals on information and prior experiences. The questionnaire is divided into three subscales: Meaningful Goals (6 items), Personal Improvement (6 items), and Data-Based Goals (7 items). It consists of 19 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Having been developed after a thorough study of the literature and theoretical underpinnings, the instrument exhibits strong psychometric qualities with an overall Cronbach's alpha of .919 and subscale alphas ranging from .802 to .815. Items are written at a sixth-grade reading level, ensuring accessibility, and the questionnaire's validity is supported by its alignment with established goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) and practical application in educational and developmental settings. The results facilitate reflection on goal-setting abilities and support data-driven interventions aimed at enhancing personal and academic growth.

WHOQOL- BREF

The World Health Organization created the widely used WHOQOL-BREF, a standardized tool, to evaluate people's perceived quality of life in a variety of social and cultural circumstances. The 26 items on this condensed version of the WHOQOL-100 cover the four key domains of environment, social relationships, psychological health, and physical health. A 5-point Likert scale is used to grade each item, which assesses the degree, capability, frequency, or assessment of quality-of-life factors. With reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients generally ranging from .70 to .85 across domains, showing good internal consistency, the WHOQOL-BREF exhibits significant psychometric qualities.

Validity has been established through cross-cultural studies and correlations with related health and psychological measures (WHOQOL Group, 1998). This tool is particularly valued for its cross-cultural applicability, allowing for comparisons of quality of life across different population groups, and is commonly used in clinical, research, and public health settings to evaluate well-being about health conditions, life circumstances, and social determinants.

3.4 Data Analysis

To test the hypotheses, statistical analysis was done using SPSS 26.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. Using SPSS, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation technique was used to determine the association between individuals' relationship status and the development of their life goals and their quality of life. A method for comparing the means of two groups, the t-test, was used. It was used to compare the quality of life and the development of life goals of two adult groups: those who are single and those who are in a committed relationship. To determine the general association between life goal formulation and quality of life for all individuals, independent of relationship status, multiple regression analysis was also performed.

4. Results**Table 1:** *Descriptive Statistics of the variables*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Physical QOL	157	6	20	15.06	2.768
Psychological QOL	157	5	20	13.83	3.036
Environmental QOL	157	5	20	15.71	2.767
Social QOL	157	4	20	14.40	3.604
Meaningful Goals	157	6	30	24.02	4.470

Personal Goals	157	6	30	22.54	4.608
Databased Goals	157	7	4160	52.66	328.875
Valid N (listwise)	157				

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the four QoL domains and three goal-setting factors. Environmental ($M = 15.71$) and Physical QoL ($M = 15.06$) had the highest means, indicating greater satisfaction in these areas compared to Social and Psychological QoL. Among goal-setting factors, Meaningful Goals ($M = 24.02$) and Personal Goals ($M = 22.54$) scored highest, reflecting alignment with personal values and self-improvement. However, Data-Based Goals showed an unusually high mean ($M = 52.66$, $SD = 328.88$; $\max = 4160$), suggesting a potential data error needing review. Overall, participants reported positive QoL and goal-setting trends, with caution warranted regarding database-related scores.

Table 2: *T-test of Quality of Life based on relationship status*

Sr. No.	Group	n	t-value	df
1	Physical QOL	157	-1.908	155
2	Psychological QOL	157	0.520	155
3	Environmental QOL	157	-2.252	155
4	Social QOL	157	3.683	155

Table 2's Independent Samples t-test reveals group differences in QoL domains. While Physical QoL shows a near-significant difference ($p = .058$), no significant difference is found in Psychological QoL ($p = .604$). However, Environmental QoL differs significantly ($p = .026$), and Social QoL shows a highly significant difference ($p < .001$), with one group reporting notably better social well-being. These results highlight key differences in environmental and social QoL, despite similar psychological well-being.

Table 3: *T-test of life goal formation based on relationship status-*

S.No.	Group	n	t-value	df
1	Meaningful Goals	157	0.412	155
2	Personal Goals	157	0.862	155
3	Data-based Goals	157	0.803	155

Table 3 shows no significant group differences in goal-related domains—Meaningful, Personal, or Databased Goals—with all p -values well above .05. This suggests that group classification did not impact goal orientation or clarity, indicating similar levels of goal engagement across both groups.

Table 4's correlation matrix reveals significant positive relationships between goal types and QoL domains. Meaningful goals strongly correlate with database-derived ($r = .643$) and personal goals ($r = .575$), as well as psychological ($r = .514$) and physical QoL ($r = .492$). Personal goals also correlate significantly with psychological ($r = .497$) and physical QoL ($r = .422$), and strongly with database-derived goals ($r = .746$), though less so with environmental QoL ($r = .261$). Database-derived goals show strong links to all QoL areas, especially psychological QoL ($r = .592$). Among QoL domains, psychological and physical QoL are most strongly connected ($r = .689$). All correlations are significant, highlighting that meaningful goals are closely tied to overall well-being.

Table 4: *Pearson's correlation between life goals and quality of life of people in a relationship*

		Meaningful Goals	Personal Goals	Data-based Goals	Physical QOL	Psychology QOL	Environmental QOL	Social QOL
Meaningful Goals	Pearson Correlation	1	.575**	.643**	.492**	.514**	.514**	.306**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.008
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Personal Goals	Pearson Correlation	.575**	1	.746**	.422**	.497**	.261*	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.024	.004
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Databased goals	Pearson Correlation	.643**	.746**	1	.419**	.592**	.300**	.393**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.009	.000
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Physical QOL	Pearson Correlation	.492**	.422**	.419**	1	.689**	.631**	.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Psychological QOL	Pearson Correlation	.514**	.497**	.592**	.689**	1	.644**	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Environmental QOL	Pearson Correlation	.514**	.261*	.300**	.631**	.644**	1	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.024	.009	.000	.000		.000
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Social QOL	Pearson Correlation	.306**	.333**	.393**	.363**	.455**	.402**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.004	.000	.001	.000	.000	
	N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows significant correlations between goal types and QoL domains, though the strength varies. Meaningful goals are strongly linked to personal ($r = .493$) and database-derived goals ($r = .591$), but not to any QoL dimensions. Personal goals correlate with social ($r = .397$), psychological ($r = .263$), and environmental ($r = .297$) QoL, indicating their broader impact on well-being. Database-derived goals also show significant links to social ($r = .286$) and environmental QoL ($r = .326$). Among QoL domains, psychological and physical QoL ($r = .619$) and psychological and social QoL ($r = .539$) are strongly correlated, with environmental QoL showing consistent links to all other domains. Overall, personal and database-derived goals are more directly related to QoL, while meaningful goals align more with other goal types.

Table 5: *Pearson's correlation between life goals and quality of life of single people*

Correlations								
		Meaningful Goals	Personal Goals	Databased Goals	Physical QOL	Psychological QOL	Environmental QOL	Social QOL
Meaningful goals	Pearson Correlation	1	.493**	.591**	.076	-.063	.207	.140
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.499	.573	.063	.211
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Personal goals	Pearson Correlation	.493**	1	.720**	.199	.263*	.297**	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.072	.017	.007	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Databased goals	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.720**	1	.104	.142	.326**	.286**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.353	.204	.003	.009
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Physical QOL	Pearson Correlation	.076	.199	.104	1	.619**	.484**	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.499	.072	.353		.000	.000	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Psychological QOL	Pearson Correlation	-.063	.263*	.142	.619**	1	.482**	.539**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.573	.017	.204	.000		.000	.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Environmental QOL	Pearson Correlation	.207	.297**	.326**	.484**	.482**	1	.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	.007	.003	.000	.000		.000
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Social QOL	Pearson Correlation	.140	.397**	.286**	.382**	.539**	.473**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.211	.000	.009	.000	.000	.000	
	N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

Table 6 shows significant positive correlations between goal types and QoL domains among 157 participants. Meaningful goals are strongly linked to personal ($r = .533$) and database-derived goals ($r = .616$), and moderately correlated with all QoL domains, especially environmental ($r = .346$) and physical ($r = .279$). Personal goals are particularly related to psychological ($r = .378$) and social QoL ($r = .372$), while database-derived goals correlate significantly with all QoL domains, suggesting the value of structured goals in promoting well-being. Strong interrelations among QoL domains, especially between physical and psychological QoL ($r = .640$), support the interconnected nature of life satisfaction. Overall, meaningful, personal, and data-driven goals are associated with enhanced well-being across multiple life areas.

Table 6: *Pearson's correlation between life goals and quality of life of people across all participants*

Correlations								
		Meaningful Goals	Personal Goals	Database-derived Goals	Physical QoL	Psychological QoL	Environment QoL	Social QoL
Meaningful Goals	Pearson Correlation	1	.533**	.616**	.279**	.217**	.346**	.213**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.006	.000	.007
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
Personal Goals	Pearson Correlation	.533**	1	.733**	.297**	.378**	.262**	.372**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001	.000
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
Database-derived Goals	Pearson Correlation	.616**	.733**	1	.253**	.364**	.296**	.337**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000		.001	.000	.000	.000
	N	157	157	158	157	157	157	157
Physical QoL	Pearson Correlation	.279**	.297**	.253**	1	.640**	.573**	.307**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000	.001		.000	.000	.000
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
Psychological	Pearson	.217**	.378**	.364**	.640**	1	.547**	.490**

gical QoL	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.006	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
Environ ment QoL	Pearson Correlation	.346**	.262**	.296**	.573**	.547**	1	.363**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
Social QoL	Pearson Correlation	.213**	.372**	.337**	.307**	.490**	.363**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.007	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	157	157	157	157	157	157	157
**. Correlation Is Significant At The 0.01 Level (2-Tailed).								

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how relationship status impacts quality of life (QoL) and goal setting. Results showed that individuals in romantic relationships reported significantly higher QoL than singles, supporting the first hypothesis and prior research highlighting the emotional and psychological benefits of intimate partnerships. Romantic relationships offer companionship, emotional support, and shared responsibilities, which contribute to better mental health and life satisfaction (Bowlby, 1969; Deci & Ryan, 2000). These partnerships may also promote collaborative goal setting and fulfillment of psychological needs like relatedness and competence.

In contrast, single individuals may lack consistent emotional support, leading to increased loneliness and reduced well-being (Adamczyk, 2017). The findings also suggest that relationship status influences goal orientation, with partnered individuals more likely to pursue shared, interdependent goals, while singles may focus on autonomy and personal growth (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010). These insights have practical implications for mental health professionals, who can support clients by addressing the role of relationships in well-being and guiding singles toward alternative sources of purpose and connection.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how romantic relationship status affects quality of life and goal-setting. Findings showed that individuals in relationships reported higher scores in

environmental and overall QoL, suggesting that such partnerships may provide emotional, social, and practical support that enhances well-being. While no significant differences were found in social, psychological, or physical health, relationship status appeared to influence how individuals prioritize goals.

However, these results should be viewed cautiously due to limitations like the cross-sectional design and sample homogeneity. Future studies should use more diverse, longitudinal approaches. Overall, the study highlights how romantic relationships can shape well-being and goal orientation, offering valuable insights for mental health and relationship counselling.

6.1 Limitations Of The Study

Although this study offers insightful information about the connection between goal-setting, quality of life, and romantic involvement, it must be noted that it has several drawbacks.

- **Simplistic categorization of relationship status-** Participants were classified into only two groups: those who were single and those who were in a romantic relationship. This binary categorization may overlook important variations within each group. For example, individuals in long-distance relationships, casual relationships, or cohabiting partnerships may experience different levels of support and well-being. Similarly, single individuals who are voluntarily single may differ significantly in their experiences from those who are involuntarily single. Including more nuanced relationship categories and assessing relationship satisfaction could have provided a deeper understanding of the findings.
- **Self-report bias-** Self-report measures, which are prone to response biases like subjective interpretation and social desirability, were used to collect all of the data. Participants' reports of their relationship status or quality of life may reflect their desired perception rather than their true experiences. The results' validity could be improved by adding more behavioral or objective measurements or by including reports from significant others.
- **Limited generalizability-** It's possible that the sample doesn't accurately reflect the general population. The results might not apply to other groups with different age distributions, relationship expectations, or social standards if the sample was taken from a particular demographic group (students, city dwellers, or members of a certain cultural environment, for example). Future studies should take into account how

cultural, social, and developmental variables can affect the significance and value ascribed to romantic relationships and goal-setting.

- **Narrow focus on romantic relationships-** The study exclusively focused on romantic relationships and did not consider other forms of social support, such as friendships, family ties, or community involvement. Single individuals may still have rich and fulfilling social lives that contribute positively to their quality of life. Future studies could adopt a broader view of interpersonal connections to better understand the full range of social influences on well-being.

6.2 Future Research

The current study provides significant new information about the relationship between quality of life and romantic relationship status, especially with regard to goal-setting. Nonetheless, a number of avenues for further investigation are suggested in order to expand and enhance the comprehension of these aspects.

- **Expand relationship status categories-** Subsequent studies should include more detailed classifications of relationship status (e.g., dating casually, cohabiting, married, long-distance, recently separated, etc.) and consider the quality and satisfaction within those relationships. This would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how different types and qualities of romantic involvement relate to well-being and personal goals.
- **Examine role of relationship quality and satisfaction-** Future research should focus on the importance of relationship quality rather than romantic relationships as inherently beneficial. While high-conflict or dissatisfied relationships may negatively affect quality of life, healthy and helpful relationships may be particularly advantageous. Metrics measuring attachment style and relationship satisfaction could make these interactions easier to comprehend.
- **Control for demographic and contextual variables-** In subsequent studies, it would be advantageous to account for potential confounding factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic level, education, and cultural background. By adjusting for these factors, one can better understand the distinct impacts of relationship status, which may affect both subjective well-being and relational experiences.
- **Use mixed-method approaches-** Lastly, using qualitative techniques like open-ended surveys or interviews to record people's subjective experiences in various relationship circumstances might be beneficial for future research. These qualitative

revelations can enhance quantitative results and offer a more comprehensive view of how relationship status, goal-setting, and life satisfaction interact.

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