

Education Problems That Autistic Children Faced in Integrated Education and the Way to Improve

Yingning Gao^{1,a,*}

¹*Dalton Academy, Affiliated High School of Peking University, No. 82, Daniwan Road, Haidian District, Beijing, 100037, China*

a. 17718511296@163.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: There are about 2 million children with autism in China, however, most of them are not able to receive appropriate education because of various factors, such as autism symptoms that diminish the quality of their learning. In this paper, this paper aim to figure out what teachers' attitudes and knowledge are toward autistic children? what dilemmas will autistic children face in their growth and how they deal with them? how can people better help autistic children get engaged in society and express themselves? Through the questionnaire, I concluded that the teachers' lack of knowledge about autism and their low exposure to autistic children led to a lack of theoretical and operational knowledge, which led to a shallow and optimistic perception of integrated education. The case study revealed that children with autism face difficulties in socialization and learning, and that many children with autism need a long process to adapt to integrated education. In terms of how to help children with autism adapt to integrated education, schools can adopt a flexible program that is designed to meet the characteristics of each child with autism, primarily through art, music, and sensory modifications.

Keywords: integrate education, autism, special education

1. Introduction

Integrated education is currently the predominant educational pathway for children with autism in China, and is achieved by sending children with autism to regular schools for education. However, most of the autism children are not able to receive appropriate education because of various factors. For example, autism symptoms may diminish the quality of their learning [1]. Also, teachers involved in inclusive education do not have sufficient knowledge about autism [2]. The vast majority of elementary school teachers have not been exposed to children with autism. In Lee's research, 117 out of 128 elementary school teachers had no contact with autistic children, but they believe that schools should provide teaching resources for children with autism and that more than 70% of teachers believe that integrated education is beneficial to the development of children with autism [2]. However, this article only pointed out elementary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their responses to the specific behaviors of autistic children and did not mention the teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and autistic children. Children with autism faced some other problems in integrated education. For example, stereotypical behaviors of children with autism, such as randomly walking around the class and making uncontrolled noises, may disrupt the classroom and reduce their

learning effectiveness [3]. Some of the common teaching dilemmas caused by the condition are outlined in general terms in this article for the entire population of children with autism, but the symptoms are not exactly the same for every person with autism. The symptoms mentioned in the article may cover the majority of children with autism, but it is through case studies that a more detailed understanding of the difficulties faced by different individuals can be gained. There are several ways to alleviate the symptoms of children with autism, such as music can be very calming for children with autism presents, this is been explain by a physiological perspective on the triggers of autism, in the context of the stimulation that music brings to the brains of children with autism [4]. There is a wide range of opinions on ways to alleviate the symptoms of children with autism, with each scholar holding a different viewpoint, but there are no more summarized conclusions.

Therefore, by answering what teachers' attitudes and knowledge are toward autistic children? what dilemmas will autistic children face in their growth and how they deal with them? how can people better help autistic children get engaged in society and express themselves? This paper can fill out the gap in the previous study.

2. Literature Review

There are many challenges for children with autism in China. Children with autism in China currently learn mainly through integrated education, which means that children with autism are educated in regular schools [5]. However, due to the unique nature of autistic children's condition, they may make strange noises or make strange movements in the classroom. At the same time, autistic children's language impairment prevents them from communicating properly with teachers and classmates, which results in poor absorption of knowledge by most autistic children [1].

In addition to autistic children's conditions, teachers' teaching style and their low suitability for children with autism are also one of the reasons why children with autism do not receive knowledge well. Most teachers in regular schools do not understand the behavior of children with autism, their thought patterns, and how to teach them [5]. At the same time, the scarcity of special education teachers is also one of the problems of integrated education [6]. The difficulties that children with autism face at school lead to parental anxiety and distrust of schools.

During the pandemic, the shift from offline teaching to online teaching has also led to concerns among parents about their autistic children and whether the change in teaching format will lead to a worsening of their autistic child's condition. For example, it is difficult for teachers to keep abreast of what is happening to children with autism. Therefore, this will lead to a regression in education [7]. The good news is that integrated and online education is not the only way to teach children with autism, and there are still many new and more appropriate ways to teach children with autism, such as the use of toys [8]. Moreover, some scholars pointed out that psychological education is also important in integrated education [9]. The Chinese government is also very supportive of the development of autism education [10]. In conclusion, this study focused on finding out what problems autistic children faced and how to solve them.

3. The Integrated Education

Integrated education is an emerging approach to education, but it still has its drawbacks. For example, children with autism are extremely sensitive to their surroundings, so regular students also tend to be ambivalent towards autistic children. Not only do they disrupt the classroom, but they are also unable to communicate properly with their teachers and classmates, making them ineffective learners [3]. Moreover, most teachers in regular schools are not familiar with autistic children and do not have the means to give appropriate instruction. On the whole, there are still many problems with integrated education as it stands. These problems faced by children with autism in integrated education lead

parents to distrust regular schools and they are more inclined to send their children to special schools for education.

Teachers' lack of knowledge about children with autism and the fact that only a few teachers choose the field of special education result in teachers becoming the deficient in inclusive education. Teachers at regular schools do not fully understand what integrated education is and do not know enough about the characteristics of children with autism [5]. Li's article supports this view with data that 91.4% of the 128 elementary school teachers had no contact with children with autism and only 14.1% had attended special education training. And teachers' level of knowledge about the behavior of children with autism lies between the average level and agreement, more towards the average, so most teachers do not understand the characteristics of children with autism and are unable to develop special learning plans for them [2]. In addition to the difficulties faced by general teachers when facing integrated education, the small number of existing special education teachers is also one of the difficulties of integrated education. It takes at least three years for a professional special education teacher to become independent, and many special education teachers often give up after less than three years [6].

Autistic children's medical conditions also contribute to their inability to adapt to a regular school environment and teaching methods. Children with autism have more difficulty socializing with others because they often suffer from language and social impairments. The main manifestations of language impairment in children with autism are Saying the same things over and over again, even though they have nothing to do with the actual situation or the fact that the content expressed does not correlate with the content received by the child with autism. As a result, the feelings of autistic children are often ignored by teachers and classmates, and even when they encounter problems in their studies, it is difficult to solve them promptly. Coupled with different language habits from other students, children with autism are likely to fail to integrate into the class [1]. Therefore, children with autism are more likely to send their children to special schools because they fear that their children will be discriminated against by their peers in regular schools [5].

Although it is possible to give children with autism access to education through an integrated education approach, autistic children still face dilemmas in friend-making, knowledge acquisition, and insufficient understanding from teachers. Overall integrated education is not very helpful for children with autism, there are still problems that need to be solved.

4. New Dilemmas Brought by Covid-19

COVID-19 has made a big impact on people's lives, it has changed the pace of life and lifestyle, and the way of teaching has changed from offline to online. It can't deny that in most cases, online teaching is less efficient than offline teaching, even for the average student, because due to the lack of teacher management in the process of online teaching, students are more likely to be distracted, and the teacher can't know the student's learning status in time. Therefore the knowledge levels can regress, let alone for children with autism, who are already slow to absorb knowledge [11]. At the same time, online education reduces the social interaction between children with autism and their teachers and classmates. This has also caused anxiety among parents of children with autism, who worry whether their child's condition will worsen because of the effects of COVID-19, because the long-term inability to contact with others may cause the autistic child's social skills to regress. Although countries are now gradually liberalizing their controls on the epidemic, going back to school again may aggravate the condition of children with autism who have already adapted to online education because of the change in the pace of life.

As a result of COVID-19, a large number of schools have switched to online teaching, making it impossible for children with autism to adapt to the change in the teaching environment and more difficult for teachers to assess children with autism. Although a large number of schools offer online

instruction, most parents of children with autism do not feel that such instruction will serve its purpose. The lack of interaction with the teacher that comes with online teaching reduces learning efficiency, and the home environment makes it harder for children with autism to focus on the teacher's lessons. Parents of children with autism are also concerned that the reduced interpersonal socialization caused by COVID-19 will set back the social skills of their children with autism, "there was a significant linear increase over time in parent-rated child concerns about the lack of peer interaction" [7]. Not communicating with others for long periods is likely to slow or even regress an autistic child's already delayed language development. Children with autism can effectively improve with special classroom placement and guidance from teachers, but online education does not satisfy this.

Offline education allows teachers to more accurately assess a child with autism's current condition and change teaching strategies promptly, and stable offline instruction is better for autistic children. However, in online learning, observation of various behaviors of children with autism becomes more difficult, and teachers are unable to accurately assess the situation of children with autism. Although offline teaching has been gradually resumed, the change in environment also has the potential to exacerbate the condition of children with autism. Children with autism are more sensitive to changes in their environment. They need a stable life, and even the slightest change may have a negative impact on them. The constant transition between online and offline instruction can take a lot of effort for children with autism to adapt, causing them more stress [11]. In conclusion, the epidemic has had many negative effects on the education of children with autism, not only in terms of regression in knowledge, but also in terms of the social skills of children with autism. Although there has been a gradual shift to offline programs, the change in the pace of life is likely to have a negative impact on children with autism.

5. Actions for Improve the Situation of Children with Autism

Different provinces have different policies, but all support the education of children with autism, and the enrollment of children with autism is increasing. At the same time, some new research has been looking at the most appropriate teaching methods for children with autism. For example, the use of different toys to guide children with autism is a teaching method that is effective and easy to follow. Moreover, some scholars indicated that therapy is also important to autistic children.

National policies to actively improve the educational environment for children with autism. The city of Chongqing, for example, has an enrollment rate of 90% for children with autism, and at the same time is planning to establish a special school for children with autism [10].

Toys are an effective therapeutic tool for engaging the attention of children with autism and alleviating symptoms. Different toys can have different healing effects and enhance different aspects of your abilities, so you can quickly find a cure to maximize the healing benefits. During the studying, the student is an active learner rather than a passive receiver of knowledge, so it will be easier for them to remember the knowledge. the article also mentions that "Play Happens Under No Pressure or No Stress Situation" and "Play is Enjoyable, Pleasurable, and Rewarding" so the whole studying process will be relaxed for autistic children. Moreover, toys are easy to handle, so parents can also guide their autistic children when they are at home [8].

The mental health of a child with autism also plays a decisive role in the symptoms. Mental health education for children with autism can not only reduce the occurrence of their problem behaviors and various emotional disorders to some extent, but also benefit the development of autistic children's potential and various necessary life skills, enhance their social adaptability, and take care of themselves with a healthy and good mindset and ability [9].

The Chinese government's support has been instrumental in advancing the education of children with autism, while a variety of new teaching methods are emerging that allow children with autism to receive a higher level of education.

As conclusion, the main problem is the lack of professionalism of teachers, who are unable to provide effective guidance to children with autism. Therefore, children with autism learn less well in regular schools and have difficulty socializing with regular students because of their language barriers. At the same time, the deficiencies of children with autism have led to anxiety among parents and distrust of regular schools. On the other hand, parents are concerned that their children's knowledge and social skills will regress because of the impact of the epidemic on the teaching model, and that the constant change in the teaching model may aggravate the condition of children with autism. The government is currently very supportive of the development of autism education.

Even if there's research gap such as most of the literature does not mention the impact of COVID-19 on the education of children with autism, which makes it difficult to accurately assess the impact of COVID-19 on the education of children with autism. Moreover, most teachers in regular schools do not understand the condition of autistic children and do not have the means to develop teaching programs that meet the needs of autistic children, and the implementation of integrated education is only superficial. However, by using the method of the survey this paper answer the question about what are teachers' attitudes and knowledge toward autistic children? By using the method of case study, this paper answer the question about what dilemmas will autistic children face in their growth and how they deal with them? By using the method of interview, this paper answer the question about how can better help autistic children get engaged in society and express themselves?

6. Method

6.1. Participants

Eleven teachers participated in the questionnaire on Inclusive Education and Autism Awareness, 9 were female and 2 were male. 3 were aged 20-30 years, 3 were aged 31-40 years, 2 were aged 41-50 years, and 3 were aged 51-60 years. The age range of the participants was 28 - 54 years old ($M = 39.18$). All teachers were from regular schools, 3 from elementary schools, 3 from middle schools, and 3 from high schools.

Two teachers participated in the interviews, one from the regular middle school and one special teacher. Both teachers were female. The junior high school teacher was 30 years old and her position was classroom teacher as well as language teacher with 8 years of teaching experience. The special teacher was 61 years old and ran a special school for children with higher levels of autism and mental retardation.

The case study is based on a book titled *The Snail Takes Me for a Walk*, written by Chen Jie, the mother of an autistic child named Qiqi. The book describes her journey since Qiqi was diagnosed with autism and Qiqi's schooling from kindergarten to elementary school.

6.2. Measures and Procedure

The questionnaire included 10 questions, they are statement of consent, gender, age, type of school where they teach, position, whether they have participated in training in the education of autistic/special students, experience with autistic children, autism knowledge questionnaire, and inclusive education knowledge questionnaire. The autism knowledge questionnaire consisted of 11 questions with two options: agree or disagree. The questions were such as: 1) I've heard of autism. 2) Some autistic children may lose the language skills they already have. 3) Many autistic children have difficulty understanding facial expressions. 4) Many children need extra assistance to learn. 5) Many children with autism have difficulty expressing their needs in everyday language. The Inclusive Education Posture Questionnaire consists of 5 questions with options of strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, unsure, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. The specific questions are: 1) The disruptive behavior of children with autism affects other children in the class. 2) Children with autism and regular

children should receive their education in different schools.3) Children with autism do not benefit from regular school activities and instruction.4) I do not want to have a child with autism in my class.5) The lack of socialization in a child with autism prevents him or her from benefiting from peer interactions.

In the interview, for the elementary school teacher, the questions I asked her were: 1) whether there were children with autism in the classroom. Did he/she have any specific behaviors, like disrupting class or anything like that? 2) whether she had received training on autism and what the training was about. For the special school teacher, the questions I asked her were: 1) What kind of children come to special schools? 2) What kind of curriculum do autistic children usually study and what kind of treatment do they have?

I will use a book named *The Snail Led Me for a Walk* as the participants. This book was written by (Author name), who is a mother of an autistic child, and by reading it, I will find out what difficulties autistic children face in school and life. Correspond the current difficulties in school and life faced by children with autism in the book with the characteristics of the current stage of integrated education to find out if there are ways to improve.

7. Results

Table 1: Level of training on special education received by teachers in ordinary schools.

Answer	Number of participants	Percentage
never received any training	10	90.91%
Theoretical training only (understanding of the social context of autism/special education, causes, population characteristics, etc.)	1	9.09%
Hands-on only training (to understand how to teach and counsel special student populations, such as autism, in the classroom)	0	0%
Received both theoretical and hands-on training	0	0%

Table 2: Contact between regular school teachers and children with autism.

Answer	Number of participants	Percent age
direct teaching of children with autism	1	9.09%
had interaction with children with autism in school	3	27.27%
participated in volunteer activities related to children with autism	5	45.45%
never had any contact with children with autism	2	18.18%

Through the question “Have you participated in educational training for students with autism/special needs?” on the survey, this paper investigated how many participant teachers had experience with autistic children, that 10 teachers (90.9% of the total) had never received any training on autism and integrated education, 1 teacher (9.1% of the total) had received theoretical training (see table 1). In the question of Your experience with children with autism, 1 teacher (9.1% of the total) had direct teaching of children with autism, 3 teachers (27.27% of the total) had interaction with children with autism in school, 5 teachers (9.1% of the total) had participated in volunteer activities related to children with autism. Two teachers had never had any contact with children with autism, accounting for 18.18% of the total (see Table 2).

Testing of Teachers’ Awareness of Autism

Table 3: Testing of Teachers’ Awareness of Autism.

Answer	Agree	Disagree
I’ve heard of autism.	100%	0%
Some children with autism may lose pre-existing language skills	90.91%	9.09%
Children with autism may react oddly to the smell, look, feel or sound of things	100%	0%
Many children with autism have difficulty understanding facial expressions	90.91%	9.09%
Treatments exist to cure autism	27.27%	72.73%
Many autistic kids can’t tolerate loud noises or a particular kind of touch	100%	0%
All Autistic Kids Have Aggressive Behavior	9.09%	90.91%
Children with autism need extra assistance to learn	90.91%	9.09%
Many children with autism need stability, to stay the same	72.73%	27.27%
Autistic kids can’t learn any social skills	9.09%	90.91%
Many children with autism have difficulty expressing their needs in everyday language	72.73%	27.27%

In the autism knowledge questionnaire, all participants had heard of autism, and 9.09% of participants answered incorrectly to the question about sensory abnormalities or deficits in children with autism. For questions about behavioral abnormalities in children with ASD, 15.2% of participants answered incorrectly. 9.09% of participants answered incorrectly to the question about

life skills deficits in children with autism. 27.3% of participants answered incorrectly to the question about the questions related to the specialized area of autism.

Testing of teachers' knowledge of integrated education

Table 4: Testing of teachers' knowledge of integrated education.

Statements	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Unsure	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Disruptive behavior in children with autism affects other children in the classroom	0%	54.55%	27.27%	9.09%	9.09%
Autistic children and ordinary children should be educated in different schools	27.27%	9.09%	54.55%	9.09%	0%
Children with autism do not benefit from regular school activities and teaching	0%	27.27%	18.18%	45.45%	9.09%
I don't want autistic kids in my class.	9.09%	18.18%	45.45%	18.18%	9.09%
Inadequate socialization of children with autism prevents them from benefiting from peer interactions	0%	0%	54.55%	27.27%	18.18%

In the questionnaire on knowledge of integrated education, to the three questions related to whether children with autism should be educated in regular schools (Q2, 3, 4), 12.1% strongly agreed, 18.2% somewhat agreed, 39.4% of teachers were unsure, 24.2% somewhat disagreed, and 6.1% strongly

disagreed. Regarding the two questions about the suitability of integrated education for children with autism (Q1, 5), 49.1% of the teachers said they were not sure.

In the result of the interview, the elementary school teacher said that she had a student who behaved differently from other children, but her parents were not clear with her whether the child had autism. Based on the teacher's knowledge and investigation, she believed that the student should be a student with a mild form of autism. According to the teacher, the student was able to communicate with other people on a daily basis and can take care of himself, except that he sometimes makes strange uncontrollable noises and repetitive hand movements in class. Moreover, she said that she had not received training in autism or inclusion, but there are always a few "different" students in each grade level, so when teachers talk about these students, they share their teaching experiences. Also, the school does not provide this type of training. The teacher at the special school introduced that the school accepts children with severe autism or mental retardation, a few of whom can communicate with others verbally, while others cannot speak and only express their feelings through physical contact with others. Special school teachers also introduced their learning mode, it's depending on each individual's condition, teachers will give different teaching, for example, for those with milder conditions, teachers will take them to draw or do handicrafts, and will also teach them some simple knowledge.

Through the case study, shows that children with autism have weak social skills and may also act in a way that disrupts the classroom. First, children with autism face difficulties in socialization, because of their weak language skills, they can basically only express the simplest of personal needs, and some children with autism do not even communicate with others. Coupled with their weak physical coordination, some children with autism have stereotypical behaviors. The book discusses an example "He did not interact with the other children at all, except that he would stand up and walk around randomly during class and had no way to follow the discipline of the kindergarten. He always wanders off and plays with himself when doing exercises or playing games. If other children are building blocks or playing with toys, he either steals other children's toys or pushes down other children's finished blocks for fun." [4].

Parents often take on the role of acting as a bridge between their child with autism and the outside world. Compared to others, parents are more aware of their child's situation, have some knowledge of the behaviors that their child with autism does, and know better how to communicate with their child instead. For example, the book says, "When Qiqi began to have some simple language, I found that he had two preferences. One was cars, and he would ask me to buy him a card book with cars from different countries. He kept reading it over and over again and then memorized all the car brands, models, and places of origin. The second is the bus and subway routes and interchange stations. For the bus or subway lines he has taken, he usually remembers them and will consciously memorize the name of each stop and how to transfer. Everyone must think this is just a stereotype and special preference of an autistic child, but I don't think so. Since he's interested, I support him. Besides, it might be a good breakthrough for autistic Qiqi! I bought a lot of picture books about cars and a map of Shanghai with the names of all the public transportation lines and stations in Shanghai. That's how Qiqi started to have a conversation with us about language." [4]. However, in school, children with autism lose the help of their parents, which also makes it difficult for them to communicate with others.

8. Discussion

To answer the question what are teachers' attitudes and knowledge toward autistic children and integrated education? This paper find out that similar to the findings in King's article, most regular school teachers have not been exposed to children with autism in their classrooms. And this paper also found that teachers tend to use common sense to understand children with autism and have a

positive attitude towards integrated education, but this can also be blindly optimistic. There are many ways to gain knowledge about autism in life, and although they may not have received special training, most teachers have some understanding of autism from everyday life. "In the autism knowledge questionnaire, all participants had heard of autism, and teachers were 9.09% likely to answer incorrectly to the questions on sensory abnormalities or deficits in children with autism." But for the more specialized issues, they don't know it. "The probability that the teacher answered incorrectly was 27.3% for the questions related to the specialized area of autism." This also leads to a lack of practical experience because they don't know the real situation, so teachers may initially downplay the effects of autism and fail to be adequately prepared.

Teachers in regular schools do not know about children with autism and are unable to find effective ways to teach them appropriately when they have children with autism in their classrooms. The survey shows that only a very small amount of teachers have a direct connection with autistic children. Also, most of the teachers were not trained in the education of exceptional students. So when it comes to students with autism, they are likely to have to learn about teaching from scratch. However, learning takes time, and it is obviously too late to start this area of learning after having a child with autism in the classroom, so teachers may only teach students with autism based on their general knowledge, which can lead to poorer outcomes.

To answer the questions What dilemmas will autistic children face in their growth and how they deal with them? and how can we better help autistic children get engaged in society and express themselves? This paper finds out that as stated in McCormac, music and painting can help calm autistic children and ease their symptoms. Art therapy can be useful for some children with autism, and the process of painting can be a good way to improve attention span and calm children with autism. Because many of the autistic children showed some interest in drawing and the same interest was reflected in beading, both of which are more repetitive activities.

This paper also found that integrated education is more appropriate for children with autism who are less symptomatic, less likely to engage in behaviors that interfere with the classroom, and who also learn better. Because from the elementary school teacher's response, we can tell that the autistic children in her class are able to control their stereotypical behaviors most of the time and absorb most of what the teacher teaches them. Such students can better understand what they have learned, have less resistance in socializing, and ultimately will have proportionally better results in terms of grades and make some friends in terms of campus life. Special education is more appropriate for children with more severe symptoms of autism, such as those who are unable to communicate with others on a basic level or have stereotypical behaviors. "the answer from special school teachers: She accepts children with severe autism or mental retardation, a few of whom can communicate with others verbally, while others cannot speak and only express their feelings through physical contact with others."

For some children with autism, integrated education is not suitable for them, and forcing such children to receive integrated education will only cause more harm to them. Due to the utilitarian nature of education in general schools, teachers and parents only look at the final grades presented, but most children with autism learn more slowly than normal children due to their illness, which leads to less-than-ideal results when children with autism are evaluated using grades alone. At the same time, the differences between children with autism and other children, coupled with the fact that some children with autism disrupt the classroom uncontrollably, can lead to discrimination in school.

However, there are still some limitations in the research, such as the sample size of the questionnaire is small so that the results may not be representative for the entire teacher population.

Only teachers from elementary schools were interviewed in regular schools, and middle and high school teachers were not covered, which may have led to less comprehensive results being obtained.

9. Conclusion

Through the question of what teachers' attitudes and knowledge are toward autistic children? This paper found that teachers rarely receive special education training before they begin teaching and have little contact with children with autism during the teaching process, which makes it difficult for teachers to realize their lack of knowledge in this area and to acquire some special education teaching methods. Therefore, when a child with autism suddenly appears in the classroom, teachers have no way to respond and adjust their teaching plan in a timely manner. From the question of what dilemmas will autistic children face in their growth and how they deal with them? This paper found out that children with autism may face social difficulties in the process of integrated education. On the one hand, some children with autism have weak communication skills and cannot express themselves normally, and on the other hand, children with autism may engage in behaviors that disrupt the classroom. From the question of how can be better help autistic children get engaged in society and express themselves? This paper found out that children with autism should choose different forms of education depending on the severity of their symptoms, children with less severe symptoms of autism will be enrolled in regular schools, and children with more severe symptoms of autism will be enrolled in special schools. People still have a long way to go in inclusive education in the future, and it needs to be more adapted to the characteristics of children with autism. Some content about special education should also be incorporated into the training of teachers to ensure the quality of teaching in integrated education. People still have to explore different therapies to deal with children with autism who have different characteristics.

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