

Research Article

Group Counseling, Students' Confidence, and Motivation in Arabic Language Learning at Islamic Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

This study aims to examine students' perceived experiences of group counseling in relation to their confidence and motivation in Arabic language learning at STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa, an Islamic higher education institution in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This quantitative study involved 15 students who participated in group counseling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, pre-test and post-test measurements, and post-intervention evaluations. Questionnaire data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions, while pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test. The findings showed that 100% of students reported increased confidence, with 93.33% reporting very high confidence, and 100% reported that group counseling greatly increased their motivation to learn Arabic. Furthermore, 93.33% identified interactive discussion as the most helpful technique, 100% reported positive cooperation with group members, and 100% reported applying the learning techniques introduced during counseling. The broader pre-test and post-test analysis showed a statistically significant difference ($Z = -3.304$, $p = .001$). Overall, group counseling demonstrates potential as a complementary approach to Arabic language learning by supporting students' confidence, motivation, interaction, collaboration, and learning strategies.

Keywords: Group Counseling, Arabic Language Learning, Student Confidence, Learning Motivation, Islamic Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning occupies an important position in Islamic higher education because Arabic serves not only as a foreign or second language but also as an important instrument for accessing Islamic primary and classical sources. For students in Islamic higher education institutions, proficiency in Arabic is closely associated with their ability to understand the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Islamic literature, and other religious references. Consequently, Arabic learning requires students to develop not only linguistic knowledge but also sustained motivation, confidence, and active engagement in the learning process. These psychological dimensions are particularly important because language learning involves continuous practice, interaction, and willingness to communicate despite the possibility of making errors.

Motivation is one of the important psychological factors in second-language learning. In the context of Arabic as a second or foreign language, motivation can emerge from several sources, including learners' identity, academic goals, cultural interests, and religious orientation. Alshammari et al. (2024) found that Arabic learners demonstrated strong motivation associated with Islamic identity and the desire for cultural exposure. However, their study also identified speaking anxiety within the Arabic learning environment, suggesting that strong motivation does not necessarily eliminate psychological barriers to language use. Similarly, Calafato (2023) demonstrated that motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, and language learning strategies are important dimensions of Arabic language learning among university students. The relationship between these factors indicates that successful language learning cannot be understood solely in terms of linguistic competence, but should also consider learners' beliefs about their own abilities and their willingness to engage in learning strategies.

Students' confidence is particularly relevant in language learning because learners are frequently required to demonstrate their competence through speaking, reading, writing, and interaction with others. Low confidence may discourage students from participating actively, particularly when they are concerned about making linguistic errors or receiving negative judgments from others. Recent research in Arabic language education has identified self-efficacy, self-confidence, motivation, and language anxiety as important psychological factors affecting students' Arabic speaking ability (Wulandari et al., 2025). The presence of anxiety may become a barrier to speaking, whereas stronger self-efficacy and confidence can encourage students to participate more actively in language practice.

The situation becomes particularly relevant in Islamic higher education institutions where Arabic is an essential component of students' academic and religious learning. The present study was conducted at STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa, an Islamic higher education institution that places Arabic among its important areas of academic development. The institution's graduate competencies include the ability to understand and apply Arabic orally and in writing and to understand Arabic-language texts. Thus, students are expected to develop sufficient Arabic competence to support their academic and religious studies.

However, the findings from the present thesis indicate a discrepancy between students' motivation and their perceived learning progress. The majority of students reported strong motivation to learn Arabic, particularly because of their desire to understand the Qur'an and Hadith. Specifically, 93.33% of respondents identified the desire to understand the Qur'an and Hadith as a major source of their motivation. Nevertheless, 86.67% of respondents reported dissatisfaction with their progress in Arabic learning. This finding suggests that motivation alone may not be sufficient to produce

satisfactory learning experiences. Students may possess strong reasons for learning Arabic while simultaneously experiencing difficulties in translating this motivation into effective learning engagement and confidence.

The students' learning difficulties were also distributed across several linguistic components. The thesis data indicate that students experienced difficulties with Arabic grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking. Grammar was identified as a particularly important challenge, while vocabulary acquisition also represented a substantial difficulty. In addition, students' learning practices were predominantly oriented toward reading textbooks, memorizing vocabulary, and attending additional classes. None of the respondents identified conversation practice or audio/video materials as their primary learning methods. This pattern suggests that students' learning experiences were more strongly oriented toward knowledge acquisition and memorization than toward communicative practice.

This situation highlights the importance of interventions that address not only students' academic difficulties but also the psychological and interpersonal dimensions of language learning. Group counseling represents one possible approach because it provides students with opportunities to discuss their learning problems, exchange experiences, receive peer support, and develop more positive perceptions of their own abilities. Through group interaction, students may also become more comfortable expressing difficulties that they might be reluctant to communicate in a conventional classroom setting.

Previous research provides evidence regarding the potential contribution of group counseling to students' confidence and motivation. Khadafi et al. (2024), for example, found that group counseling services significantly increased both students' confidence and learning motivation. Their experimental study demonstrated greater improvements among students who received group counseling compared with those in the control group. Similarly, Dewi and Rusman (2024) reported that group counseling using cognitive defusion techniques improved students' self-confidence based on a one-group pretest-posttest design. Sari and Rusman (2023) also found that group guidance using cognitive defusion techniques was effective in increasing students' confidence. Although these studies demonstrate the potential of group counseling to influence confidence and motivation, most have examined general educational or psychological contexts rather than Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education. This distinction is important because Arabic learning in Islamic institutions has particular academic and religious characteristics. Students may be motivated by religious purposes, while simultaneously experiencing difficulties related to grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking, and confidence in using Arabic. Therefore, the role of group counseling should be examined within the specific context in which these linguistic and psychological factors interact.

The present study provides evidence from students at STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa. The thesis findings show that following participation in group counseling, 100% of the students reported feeling more confident in learning Arabic, with 93.33% describing themselves as very confident and 6.67% as somewhat confident. Furthermore, 100% of participants reported that group counseling greatly increased their motivation to learn Arabic. These findings are particularly noteworthy because the students initially demonstrated strong motivation but simultaneously reported dissatisfaction with their learning progress. The post-intervention responses therefore suggest that group counseling may provide a supportive environment for transforming students' existing motivation into greater confidence and engagement with Arabic learning.

The collaborative component of the counseling process also appears to be important. 93.33% of students identified interactive discussion as the most helpful technique for understanding Arabic learning materials, while all participants reported a very positive experience of working with other members of the group. In addition, 93.33% of students indicated a preference for learning in groups after participating in the counseling program. These findings suggest that peer interaction may have contributed to students' perceptions of confidence and motivation by creating an environment in which learning difficulties could be discussed collectively.

The perceived effects of the intervention also extended beyond confidence and motivation. The thesis data indicate that 93.33% of students reported substantial improvement in reading Arabic texts, while 100% reported greater ability to communicate in Arabic after the counseling sessions. Furthermore, 93.33% reported that additional learning materials helped them understand Arabic grammar, and 93.33% reported that they applied the learning techniques introduced during counseling to their everyday learning activities. These findings indicate that students perceived group counseling as more than a psychological support activity; it was also experienced as a space for developing practical learning strategies.

Another relevant finding concerns students' psychological well-being during Arabic learning. The thesis data show that 86.67% of students felt that group counseling was sufficiently helpful in dealing with anxiety or stress associated with Arabic learning, while 13.33% considered it very helpful. This finding is important given that anxiety has been identified as one of the psychological challenges associated with Arabic language learning (Alshammari et al., 2024). It suggests that a supportive group environment may help students feel more comfortable when confronting linguistic difficulties and participating in learning activities.

Despite growing research on motivation, self-efficacy, anxiety, and group counseling, there remains a need for studies that examine the affective outcomes of group counseling specifically within Arabic language learning at Islamic higher education institutions. Existing research has tended to examine Arabic motivation and self-efficacy as individual psychological constructs (Calafato, 2023; Alshammari et al., 2024), while research on group counseling has primarily focused on general student confidence, motivation, or psychological problems (Sari & Rusman, 2023; Khadafi et al., 2024). Therefore, the present study aims to examine students' perceived experiences of group counseling in relation to their confidence and motivation in Arabic language learning at an Islamic higher education institution. Specifically, the study focuses on students' perceived changes in confidence and motivation, the role of interactive group discussion, collaborative learning experiences, the application of learning strategies, and the perceived contribution of group counseling to students' engagement with Arabic learning.

The study contributes to the existing literature by shifting the focus from the general reduction of Arabic learning difficulties toward the affective and interpersonal dimensions of group counseling, particularly confidence and motivation. In this way, the study offers a complementary perspective to previous research and provides empirical evidence concerning how students experience group counseling as a supportive mechanism within Arabic language learning in an Islamic higher education context.

RESEARCH METHODS

Explain the type of research, data sources, data collection methods, data analysis and others. Example: this research is library research. Library research is research carried

out using library literature, either in the form of books, notes, or reports on the results of previous research (Hasan, 2008: 5).

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using an experimental design to examine students' confidence and motivation following participation in group counseling for Arabic language learning. The study was conducted at STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, Indonesia, an Islamic higher education institution in which Arabic language competence is an important component of students' academic and religious learning.

The research focused on students who experienced difficulties in learning Arabic and participated in a group counseling intervention. The quantitative approach was selected because the study involved the collection and analysis of numerical data obtained from questionnaires and pre-test and post-test measurements. The original research also used an experimental approach to examine the effects of group counseling on students experiencing difficulties in Arabic language learning. The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed to identify changes following the intervention.

Although the broader research examined the effectiveness of group counseling in addressing Arabic learning difficulties, this article specifically analyzes the affective dimensions of the intervention, particularly students' confidence and motivation, as reflected in the post-intervention evaluation.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of 15 students of STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa who experienced difficulties in learning Arabic and participated in the group counseling program. The same group of 15 students provided the data used to examine changes associated with the intervention. The thesis data indicate that the participants initially demonstrated high motivation to learn Arabic, although they simultaneously experienced difficulties in several areas of Arabic learning.

The selection of participants was based on their relevance to the research problem, namely students who experienced difficulties in Arabic language learning and therefore required additional academic and counseling support.

Data Sources

Primary data were obtained directly from the participating students through questionnaires, pre-test and post-test measurements, and evaluation of their experiences after participating in group counseling. The questionnaire was used to obtain information concerning students' Arabic learning motivation, learning difficulties, learning environment, learning methods, and experiences following the counseling intervention. The thesis contains specific questionnaire items concerning motivation and students' perceptions of their Arabic learning experiences.

Secondary data were obtained from relevant institutional documents and academic literature concerning Arabic language learning, learning difficulties, motivation, and group counseling.

Data Collection Instruments

The principal instrument used in the study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of questions addressing several dimensions of Arabic language learning. These included:

1. Students' motivation to learn Arabic;
2. Sources of motivation;

3. Perceived progress in Arabic learning;
4. Difficulties in understanding Arabic materials;
5. Learning environment;
6. Learning methods;
7. Learning obstacles; and
8. Students' experiences and perceptions following group counseling.

The questionnaire data show, for example, that all 15 participants reported being highly motivated to learn Arabic, while 14 participants identified the desire to understand the Qur'an and Hadith as a major source of their motivation. For the present article, particular attention was given to the evaluation items related to confidence and motivation after group counseling. The evaluation instrument included questions concerning students' confidence, changes in motivation, collaborative learning experiences, the usefulness of interactive discussion, application of learning strategies, and students' perceptions of the counseling process.

Group Counseling Intervention

The intervention was conducted through group counseling, which provided students with opportunities to discuss their Arabic learning difficulties and interact with other members of the group. The counseling process emphasized group discussion and interactive discussion as mechanisms for addressing students' learning problems. The evaluation data indicate that group discussion was reported by all 15 participants as the method most frequently used during the counseling process, while 14 participants (93.33%) identified interactive discussion as the technique that was most helpful for understanding Arabic learning materials. These findings demonstrate that interaction among group members constituted an important component of the intervention. The intervention also incorporated learning support related to Arabic grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and communication. Students were encouraged to apply the learning techniques discussed during the counseling sessions to their regular learning activities.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the participating students completed the pre-test to identify their initial condition before receiving the group counseling intervention. The students then participated in the group counseling sessions designed to address their difficulties in learning Arabic. Following the intervention, the students completed a post-test and an evaluation questionnaire. The post-intervention questionnaire was used to obtain students' perceptions of their experiences during the counseling process, particularly regarding their confidence, motivation, interaction with peers, learning strategies, and perceived improvement in Arabic learning. The thesis data show that the pre-test and post-test involved the same 15 students. Fourteen students demonstrated positive changes between the two measurements, while one student showed no change. No participant demonstrated a negative change.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the frequency and percentage of students' responses to the questionnaire. These descriptive results were used to identify patterns in students' perceptions of motivation, confidence, group interaction, and their experiences following the counseling intervention. For the pre-test and post-test data, the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' scores before and after the

intervention. This non-parametric test was appropriate for comparing two related measurements obtained from the same participants. The original analysis produced 14 positive ranks, 0 negative ranks, and 1 tie among the 15 participants. The Wilcoxon analysis yielded a Z value of -3.304 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test measurements. For the purposes of this article, however, the interpretation of the questionnaire data is emphasized rather than treating the Wilcoxon result as direct statistical evidence of changes in confidence and motivation. The confidence and motivation findings are presented primarily as students' reported perceptions following the group counseling intervention.

Data Interpretation

The questionnaire responses were interpreted using frequency and percentage distributions. Responses were organized according to the major dimensions examined in this article: confidence, motivation, interactive group discussion, collaborative learning, and application of learning strategies. For example, students' confidence was interpreted from their responses concerning their feelings after participating in group counseling, while motivation was interpreted from their reported perceptions of how the intervention affected their willingness to learn Arabic. The analysis also considered students' responses concerning the usefulness of interactive discussion and their preference for group-based learning. This analytical procedure allowed the study to move beyond the measurement of general Arabic learning difficulties and examine the affective and interpersonal experiences associated with group counseling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Confidence and Motivation after Group Counseling

The first finding concerns students' perceived confidence and motivation after participating in group counseling for Arabic language learning. The evaluation involved 15 students who participated in the counseling program. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Confidence and Motivation Following Group Counseling

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Confidence after group counseling</i>	<i>Very confident</i>	14	93.33%
	<i>Somewhat confident</i>	1	6.67%
	<i>Total</i>	15	100%
<i>Increase in motivation</i>	<i>Greatly increased</i>	15	100%
	<i>Other response</i>	0	0%
	<i>Total</i>	15	100%

As shown in Table 1, all 15 students (100%) reported feeling more confident after participating in group counseling. Of these participants, 14 students (93.33%) reported feeling very confident, while 1 student (6.67%) reported feeling somewhat confident. This finding indicates that the group counseling experience was positively perceived in relation to students' confidence in learning Arabic.

The finding regarding motivation was equally strong. All 15 students (100%) reported that group counseling greatly increased their motivation to learn Arabic. This result needs to be interpreted in relation to the students' initial condition. Before the intervention, all participants had already reported strong motivation to learn Arabic, and 14 students (93.33%) identified the desire to understand the Qur'an and Hadith as a major

source of their motivation. Therefore, the finding does not indicate that group counseling created motivation among previously unmotivated students. Rather, it indicates that students perceived the counseling experience as strengthening their existing motivation.

This finding is important because the students' initial motivation existed alongside difficulties in their Arabic learning progress. The thesis data showed that 86.67% of students reported dissatisfaction with their progress in learning Arabic, despite their strong motivation. This discrepancy suggests that motivation alone may not be sufficient to produce satisfactory learning experiences. Students may require additional psychological and interpersonal support to translate their motivation into active learning engagement. The present finding supports the importance of considering affective dimensions in Arabic language learning. Calafato (2023) emphasizes the relationship between motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, and language-learning strategies among university students learning Arabic. Similarly, Alshammari et al. (2024) highlight the importance of motivation while also identifying anxiety as a psychological challenge in Arabic language learning. Thus, the present findings suggest that group counseling may provide an additional environment through which students can strengthen confidence while maintaining their motivation to learn Arabic.

Interactive Discussion and Collaborative Learning

The second finding concerns the interactive and collaborative aspects of group counseling. These aspects are important because the intervention was conducted in a group setting in which students were able to discuss their learning difficulties and exchange experiences with other participants.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Interactive and Collaborative Learning

Indicator	n	Percentage
Interactive discussion was the most helpful technique	14	93.33%
Positive cooperation with group members	15	100%
Preferred group learning after the intervention	14	93.33%
Applied learning techniques in daily learning	15	100%

Table 2 shows that 14 students (93.33%) identified interactive discussion as the technique that helped them most in understanding Arabic learning materials, while 1 student selected another learning activity. The collaborative experience was even more consistent. All 15 students (100%) reported a very positive experience of cooperation with other group members. In addition, 14 students (93.33%) indicated that they preferred group learning after participating in the counseling program. These findings suggest that interaction was not merely a procedural component of group counseling but was perceived by students as an important part of the learning experience. Through interactive discussion, students had opportunities to express learning difficulties, exchange strategies, ask questions, and receive support from peers.

The preference for group learning after the intervention is also noteworthy. Before participating in group counseling, students' learning practices were predominantly associated with reading textbooks, memorizing vocabulary, and attending additional classes. After the intervention, 93.33% expressed a preference for group-based learning. This change in preference suggests that students may have recognized the value of peer interaction as a learning resource. The finding is consistent with the collaborative nature of language learning, in which interaction can provide opportunities for learners to practice communication and receive feedback. In the context of Arabic learning, this is particularly relevant because students may hesitate to communicate due to fear of making linguistic

errors. A supportive group environment may reduce this barrier by allowing students to learn collectively rather than experiencing difficulties individually.

Application of Learning Strategies and Perceived Arabic Learning Outcomes

The third finding concerns the extent to which students perceived that the counseling experience influenced their learning practices and Arabic language learning.

Table 3. Students' Perceived Arabic Learning Outcomes

Indicator	n	Percentage
Applied learning techniques in daily learning	15	100%
Substantial improvement in reading Arabic texts	14	93.33%
Felt more capable of communicating in Arabic	15	100%
Additional materials helped understand Arabic grammar	14	93.33%

The results show that all 15 students (100%) reported applying the learning techniques introduced during group counseling to their daily learning activities. This is an important finding because it indicates that students perceived the intervention as providing learning strategies that could be transferred beyond the counseling sessions.

Furthermore, 14 students (93.33%) reported substantial improvement in reading Arabic texts, while all 15 students (100%) reported feeling more capable of communicating in Arabic. In relation to grammar, 14 students (93.33%) reported that additional learning materials helped them understand Arabic grammar.

These findings indicate that students perceived the group counseling program as having practical relevance to their Arabic learning. The intervention was not perceived solely as an opportunity to discuss psychological difficulties but also as a setting in which students could develop and apply learning strategies.

However, these results must be interpreted as students' perceived improvements. The questionnaire data do not provide independent objective measurements of reading, grammar, or communication proficiency after the intervention. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to conclude that group counseling definitively caused improvement in these language skills. Rather, the findings demonstrate that students perceived improvements following their participation in the program.

Pre-test and Post-test Results

The original research also included pre-test and post-test measurements. These data provide supporting evidence concerning the broader Arabic learning outcome following the intervention.

The data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test because the measurements were obtained from the same participants before and after the intervention.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Comparison	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Ties	Z	p-value
Post-test – Pre-test	0	14	1	-3.304	.001

The results indicate that 14 of the 15 students demonstrated positive changes, no student demonstrated a negative change, and 1 student showed no change. The Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test produced $Z = -3.304$ and $p = .001$, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. This finding provides quantitative evidence of a significant difference in the broader Arabic learning outcome following the intervention. However, it is important to distinguish this result from the findings concerning confidence and motivation. The Wilcoxon test was not a separate statistical test of

confidence or motivation. The confidence and motivation findings presented in Tables 1–4 are based on students' reported perceptions following the counseling intervention. Consequently, the statistical result should be interpreted as supporting evidence for the broader intervention outcome rather than as proof that confidence and motivation increased significantly in statistical terms.

CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perceived experiences of group counseling in relation to their confidence and motivation in Arabic language learning at STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa. Based on the responses of 15 students, the findings indicate that group counseling was positively perceived as a supportive approach to Arabic language learning. All participants (100%) reported feeling more confident after participating in the counseling program, with 14 students (93.33%) reporting that they felt very confident and 1 student (6.67%) reporting that they felt somewhat confident. In addition, all 15 students (100%) reported that group counseling greatly increased their motivation to learn Arabic.

The findings also demonstrate that the interactive and collaborative dimensions of group counseling were important to students' learning experiences. Fourteen students (93.33%) identified interactive discussion as the most helpful technique for understanding Arabic learning materials, while all 15 students (100%) reported a positive experience of cooperation with other group members. Furthermore, 14 students (93.33%) preferred group-based learning after the intervention, indicating that students perceived peer interaction as a valuable component of their Arabic learning experience.

The counseling experience was also perceived to support students' learning practices. All 15 students (100%) reported applying the learning techniques introduced during group counseling to their daily learning activities. Moreover, 14 students (93.33%) reported substantial improvement in reading Arabic texts, all 15 students (100%) reported feeling more capable of communicating in Arabic, and 14 students (93.33%) reported that additional learning materials helped them understand Arabic grammar. These findings indicate that students perceived group counseling not only as a psychological support activity but also as a space for developing and applying practical learning strategies.

The broader pre-test and post-test analysis provides additional quantitative evidence of change following the intervention. Among the 15 participants, 14 students demonstrated positive changes, no student demonstrated a negative change, and 1 student showed no change. The Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test produced $Z = -3.304$ and $p = .001$, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. However, this result represents the broader Arabic language learning outcome examined in the original research and should not be interpreted as a separate statistical test of confidence or motivation.

Overall, the findings suggest that group counseling has potential as a complementary approach to Arabic language instruction in Islamic higher education, particularly by supporting students' confidence and motivation through interactive discussion, peer collaboration, and the application of learning strategies. The findings are particularly meaningful because the students initially demonstrated strong motivation to learn Arabic but simultaneously experienced dissatisfaction with their learning progress. Thus, group counseling may provide a supportive environment for helping students translate their existing motivation into greater confidence and more active engagement with Arabic learning.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The study involved only 15 students, and the confidence and motivation findings were based primarily on

students' perceived experiences following the intervention rather than dedicated pre-test and post-test measures of these two constructs. Therefore, the findings demonstrate perceived benefits rather than definitive causal effects. Future research should involve larger samples, validated instruments specifically measuring confidence and motivation, pre-test and post-test measurements of these variables, and a control or comparison group.

In conclusion, group counseling demonstrates potential not only as an intervention for addressing Arabic language learning difficulties but also as a supportive educational strategy for strengthening the affective, interpersonal, and learning-strategy dimensions of Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education.

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