Satisfaction with Life in High School Students from Arequipa

Satisfacción con la vida en escolares de la ciudad de Arequipa

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Summary

This study, in the framework of the Positive Educational Psychology, has two objectives: to perform a psychometric analysis of the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and to compare the resulting values according to gender, age and educational institution, in a group of schoolers from the city of Arequipa. We worked with a sample of 872 students in the 4th and 5th year of high school, from five mixed and single-sex schools. Besides, 46.9% of this sample are male students and 53.1% are female students. The sample was obtained by probabilistic methods. The Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale was used. The outcomes indicate that the test has a one-dimensional factorial structure and suitable reliability for latent variables (ω= .99 and H= .99). The comparisons suggest that, male students and those who are older have higher levels of satisfaction with life.

Keywords: Satisfaction with life, Positive Psychology, Education, Psychometry.

Resumen

El presente estudio, que se enmarca dentro de la Psicología Positiva Educativa, tiene dos objetivos, analizar psicométricamente la Escala de Satisfacción con la Vida, y comparar los valores resultantes en función del sexo, la edad y la institución de procedencia, en un grupo de escolares de la ciudad de Arequipa. Se trabajó con una muestra de 872 estudiantes de 4to y 5to de media de cinco escuelas de gestión mixta y diferenciada, donde el 46.9% son varones y el 53.1% mujeres, obtenida por métodos probabilísticos. Se utilizó la Escala de Satisfacción con la Vida de Diener. Los resultados indican que la prueba cuenta con una estructura factorial unidimensional y una confiabilidad adecuada para variables latentes, (ω= .99 y H= .99). Las comparaciones efectuadas sugieren que los varones y los estudiantes de mayor edad presentan niveles mayores de satisfacción con la vida.

Palabras clave: Satisfacción con la vida, psicología positiva, educación, psicometría.

Introduction

The contemporaneous research states that the subjective wellbeing (SWB) is an important and relevant construct for psychology (Wu & Yao, 2006) and has three components: positive affection, negative affection and satisfaction with life (SWL) (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The SWL is the cognitive dimension of the SWB (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985; Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003) and it is defined as the degree to which a person evaluates the global quality of their life as a whole, or specific domains such as work, family, friends, among others, based on their own criteria (Diener, 2000; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Pavot & Diener, 1993; Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2009a; Rodgers, Neville & La Grow, 2017). Along with internal factors, external conditions such as family life quality and schooling are important when making global evaluations of the SWL (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013).

The SWL is important for people of all ages due to correlations with a set of mental health indicators (Silva, do Céu Taveira, Marques & Gouveia, 2015). The studies about the SWL has mostly focused on adults (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo & Mansfield, 2012; Pavot & Diener 2008), and there are few research works in children or adolescents, at least in countries of Latin America (Castro, 2012; Arias, Espiñeira & Huamani, 2017). However, in the last decades, there have been an increase of research works focused on children and adolescents (Gilman & Huebner 2006; Goldbeck, Schmitz, Besier, Herschbach & Henrich, 2007; Pavot & Diener, 2008; Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2009b).

The SWL study in adolescents is a key component of comprehensive evaluations of the SWB in adolescents due to the implications for the good psychological, social, educational and physical functioning (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 2001; Moksnes, Løhre, Byrne & Haugan, 2014; Proctor et al., 2009a; Suldo, Huebner, Friedrich & Gilman, 2009). Satisfaction with life has been studied in educational contexts where school-age adolescents with high levels of SWL and minimum levels of psychopathology show better

social relationships, educational achievements and physical health than those with minimum level of psychopathology but with low levels of SWL (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). In addition, school-age adolescents with a high SWL show more favorable attitudes towards teachers and the school (Gilman & Huebner 2006), as well as more academic commitment (Lewis, Huebner, Malone & Valois, 2011) and academic aspirations (Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2010). On the other hand, adolescents with higher level of SWL, with a positive family environment (Luna, Laca, & Mejía, 2011), have lower risk of being harassment victims (Povedano, Hendry, Ramos & Varela, 2011; Totan, Özer & Özmen, 2017). Another study states that the teacher's positive appraisals of the student is related with higher levels of SWL (Martínez-Antón, Buelga & Cava, 2007). There are also relationships between the SWL and academic goals (Díaz, & Martínez, 2004), a better use of free time (Pavot & Diener, 1993), positive core self-evaluations (Tan, Yang, Ma & Yu, 2016), lower vulnerability to consequences of family unemployment (Frasquilho, Matos, Neville, Gaspar & Almeida, 2016) and less probability of risky behaviors (Çakar, Tagay & Karataş, 2015). The SWL is related to resilience in high school students (Salgado, 2009) and their positive effect combined influences the possible completion of studies (Bernal, Daza & Jaramillo, 2015).

Taking into account that the SWL is different during the adolescence compared to other development stages, due to the several biological psychological, social and cognitive changes occurring during this period (Goldbeck et al., 2007), in the last years, many research works aimed at adolescents have had as an objective to analyze the SWB determinants, highlighting the importance of identifying several factors promoting the SWL (Proctor et al., 2009b). One of these factors is the age. The results of a transnational study (Woynarowska, Tabak & Mazur, 2004) conducted in several European countries, showed a reduction of the SWL with age, which is similar to the outcomes reported in Australian adolescents aged 12-16 (Meuleners, Lee, Binns & Lower, 2003). Opposed to these outcomes, a research conducted in 63 public schools of South Carolina in the United

States of America (Huebner, Suldo, Valois, Drane & Zullig, 2004), showed no SWL changes in high school students from grade 9 to 12. On the other hand, in Peru, outcomes showed significant differences with respect to satisfaction with life according to age (Martínez, 2004, 2006).

Regarding gender, studies with adolescents show that findings have not been conclusive (Chui & Wong, 2016). Some studies state that the average levels of SWL are mostly similar between men and women (Casas et al., 2007; Froh, Yurkewicz & Kashdan, 2009; Gilman & Huebner, 2006; Huebner, Drane & Valois, 2000; Huebner et al., 2004). However, other studies with school-aged adolescents in the United States (Suldo, Minch & Hearon, 2015), Germany (Goldbeck et al., 2007), Peru (Tarazona, 2005), Portugal (Neto, 1993), Turkey (Verkuyten, 1986) and Norway (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013) show that men have slightly higher levels of SWL (although significant) than women. SWL differences have been also analyzed according to the different socioeconomic levels and races (see Gilman & Huebner 2003).

In order to evaluate the satisfaction with life, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS, Diener et al., 1985) was designed as a short 5-item instrument intended to measure the level of satisfaction with life of an individual. It is one of the most used instruments to measure the SWL (Silva et al., 2015; Oishi, 2006) and it is very useful for research purposes (Pavot & Diener 1993; 2008). The five items are coded in a positive direction, so they can be added to achieve a total score for the scale (Diener et al., 1985).

The SWLS has been used in more than 4000 studies (Gouveia, Milfont, Da Fonseca & de Miranda Coelho, 2009), and it is translated in several languages such as Chinese (Sachs, 2004), French (Fouquereau & Rioux 2002), Turkish (Durak, Senol-Durak & Gencoz, 2010), Norwegan (Vittersø, Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2005), Swedish (Hultell, & Gustavsson, 2008), Taiwanese (Wu & Yao, 2006), Spanish (Atienza, Pons, Balaguer & García-Merita, 2000; Pons, Atienza, Balaguer & García-Merita, 2002), Korean (Lim, 2015), among others, apart from being used in several groups like senior citizens (Pons et al., 2002), children (Atienza et al., 2000), nonpsychiatric

outpatients (Arrindell, Meeuwesen & Huyse, 1991), pregnant women (Cabañero et al., 2004) and others. However, since the increasing need for studies on SWL in adolescents due to the numerous studies worldwide (Atienza, Balaguer & García-Merita, 2003; Gilman & Huebner 2001; Neto, 1993), it was translated into Spanish and the SWLS was validated in this population. (Atienza et al., 2000; Pons et al., 2002).

Regarding the psychometric properties of the SWLS, a research that analyzed 6 studies stated that the alpha coefficient values for the SWLS vary between .79 a .89, which indicates a high internal consistency (Pavot & Diener, 1993). A latest meta-analysis, which included reliability data from 62 studies using the SWLS, showed that the average value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .78 with a reliability interval at 95% (IC95%) from .766 to .807 and that English versions and samples of young people prove to have better reliability of scores. These findings coincide with other outcomes presenting Cronbach's alpha coefficients that vary between .70 and .90 (Gouveia et al., 2009; Laranjeira 2009; Neto, 1993; 2001; Pavot, Diener, Colvin & Sandvik, 1991; Simões, 1992) and others higher than .90 (Lent, do Céu Taveira, Sheu & Singley, 2009; Sancho, Galiana, Gutierrez, Francisco, & Tomás, 2014). Based on these outcomes, a high level of variability between different populations can be considered (Pavot & Diener 2008).

Regarding a factorial structure of the SWLS, the original study (Diener et al., 1985) analyzed the main axes resulting in a single cognitive dimension. Although the SWLS factorial structure analysis is less studied in adolescents (Atienza et al., 2000), research works made with other samples replicate the single-factor structure (Atienza et al., 2003; Gouveia et al., 2009; Lewis, Shevlin, Smekal & Dorahy, 1999; Neto 1993; Oladipo & Balogun 2012; Pavot & Diener, 1993; Pons et al., 2002; Sancho et al., 2014). However, a study with Swedish university students (Hultell & Gustavsson, 2008) showed that a second-order model of two factors exhibited higher fit indices compared to the one-dimensional model; while other research works in university students from Taiwan (Wu & Yao, 2006) stated that both the single-factor model

and the two-factor models showed an acceptable fit index. These outcomes suggest that the internal structure of the SWLS can be reconsidered (Hultell & Gustavsson, 2008). Although several studies have evaluated psychometric aspects of the SWLS, there is no this type of research in Peruvian adolescents according to a review of the literature.

In Peru, the SWLS has been used in several studies (Alarcón, 2000, 2001; Salgado, 2006; Martínez, 2004, 2006; Velásquez et al., 2016), but only a few of them have been focused on adolescents (Salgado, 2009; Tarazona, 2005). All of these studies have been conducted in the city of Lima, where Alarcon (2000) made the first psychometric evaluation of the SWLS in university students, informing about suitable values, but low reliability indices. On the other hand, in Arequipa there are no research works on SWLS, since there are no instruments duly validated for adolescents of the region. However, there are reports that showed a worrying reality for adolescents of the region, where there is a very low sense of life and it supposes the lack of a well-established future project, the very high risk of suffering from neurosis (Huamani & Ccori, 2016) and a greater presence of depressive symptoms (Rivera, Arias & Cahuana, 2017).

In this context, positive emotions developed in childhood and adolescence make the school into a privileged space for their promotions and intervention (Oros, Manucci & Richaud, 2011). Based on the positive psychology, several applications in the education field that have sought to promote a greater psychological well-being and vital satisfaction through experiencing positive emotions and the design of flexible educational environments have been performed (Adler, 2017; Bisquerra & Hernández, 2017; Merchán, Bermejo & González, 2014; Palomera, 2017). To measure the impact of these initiatives properly, it is necessary to have validated SWL measurements instruments for adolescents (Alfaro et al., 2016).

Related to the foregoing, this study is aimed at analyzing the evidences of construct and reliability validity of the SWLS to use it in high school

students of the city of Arequipa and, at analyzing the satisfaction with life of these students according to gender, age and their education institute.

Method

This study is on the one hand, instrumental, and on the other hand, associative (Ato, López & Benavente, 2013; Montero & León, 2007) according to the research objectives. Based on the typology of Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (1997), it is about a design of non-experimental, descriptive and cross-sectional research.

Participants

The population was made up of students in the fourth and fifth year of high school from five public educational institutions of the city of Arequipa (2 boys, 2 girls and 1 mixed), and it is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Distribution of frequencies and percentages of students in the fourth and fifth year of high school

| Educational institutions | Grade | | | | Total | |
| | 4to | | 5to | | | |
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%
Educational institution 1	195	25.90	182	24.80	377	25.35
Educational institution 2	110	14.61	108	14.71	218	14.66
Educational institution 3	198	26.29	208	28.34	406	27.30
Educational institution 4	113	15.01	110	14.99	223	15.00
Educational institution 5	137	18.19	126	17.17	263	17.69
Total	753	100.00	734	100.00	1487	100.00

The sample was selected using a stratified probability sampling method and it was made up of 872 students in the fourth and fifth year of high school

from five educational institutions of Arequipa, aged 15 on average (D.E.= 0.8), within a range from 14 to 18 years old. A percentage of 46.9% was men and 53.1% women. 51.8% of them were in fourth year of high school and 48.2% of them were in fifth year of high school.

Instruments

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was applied and it was translated into Spanish by Atienza et al., (2000), and validated for the Peruvian context by Alarcón (2000). The test is composed of 5 Likert-scale items with five alternatives answers ("fully disagree = 1" to "fully agree = 5"), where the highest scores indicate a higher degree of SWL. The test can be applied to children from 11 years of age onwards and it has a mean length of 3 minutes (Alarcón, 2000).

Procedure

First, authorizations were asked to the principals of the educational institutions selected. Once they were given, the necessary arrangements were made to set the dates of evaluation and the procedures to follow. The data collection was carried during classes with the authorization of the teacher. The students were explained about the purposes of the study and the data confidentiality. All the students participated voluntarily and signed an informed consent. Data were collected between August and October, 2016.

Data Analysis

Reliability of latent variables was estimated by using the Omega coefficient (ω; Mcdonald, 1999; Ventura-León & Caycho-Rodríguez, 2017) and H coefficient (Hancock & Mueller, 2001) values of which > .80 indicate suitable reliability (Raykov & Hancock, 2005).

Regarding the evidence of the construct validity, the internal structure was verified by using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was not conducted because in principal the scale assumes the one-dimensionality. The CFA was conducted based on the matrix of polychoric correlations and the maximum likelihood estimation (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 2014). The relative chi-square was calculated ($\chi2/df$; Bollen, 1998) and its values ≤ 3 show a suitable fit (Carmines & McIver, 1981). Taking into account the recommendation of Hu and Bentler (1999), the mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the Goodness of fit index (GFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were calculated. The values of GFI and CFI > .90, RMSEA <.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) show a good fit. Many values of the standardized factorial loads (λ) $\geq$ .50 were considered to be suitable (Johnson & Stevens, 2001). The average variance extracted from the factor was calculated (AVE; Average Variance Extracted), and it showed values >.50 that proved the internal convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Wixom & Todd, 2005).

Finally, to conduct the statistical treatment of comparisons, the Student's test t was applied and the variance analysis was conducted. In addition, Cohen's d coefficient values (Cohen, 1998) and Omega-squared (ω^2, Caycho-Rodríguez, 2017; Fritz, Morris & Richler, 2012) were calculated as effect size measures (ES) of the difference between two groups and more than two independent groups, respectively. For the interpretation of d, values of .20, .50 and .80 indicate a small, moderate and large ES, respectively (Cohen, 1998; Ferguson, 2009). For ω^2, values of 0.04, 0.25 and 0.64 indicate a small, moderate and strong ES, respectively (Fritz et al., 2012).

Outcomes

Construct and Reliability Validity of the SWLS

To conduct the CFA, 5 items of the SWLS was loaded on a single latent variable (Figure 1). Goodness fit indices indicate that the one-dimensional model suitably fits to the data ($\chi 2/df = .281$; GFI = .999; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.000 [IC90% .000, .038]). The λ for the one-dimensional model were significant and as expected (item 1 = .55; item 2 = .96; item 3 = 1.26; item 4 =.99; item 5 =.98) with a λ-$_{average}$ of .948 higher than .70 recommended (Hair et al., 2014). All the items show high λ, being item three (I am satisfied with my life) the one that better accounts for the model. Magnitudes of λ are shown in Figure 1. The AVE value was .520, higher than .50, which shows empirical evidence of internal convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).
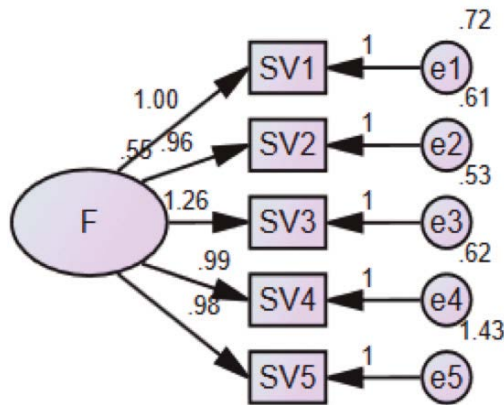

Figure 1. Final estimated model of the SWLS

Reliability for latent variables calculated through ω coefficient values = .99 and H= .99, indicate a suitable reliability of the one-dimensional model of the SWFLS.

Comparison of the SWLS according to Gender, Age, and Educational Institution

Table 2 shows the differences of the SWL according to gender. Thus, when making the global evaluation of the current life, men perceive their current circumstances more positively than women ($t_{(870)}$ = 2.048, p = .041, d = .138 IC95% .004 - .271). Although there is a statistically significant difference, these outcomes do not show practical importance based on the ES (d <.20). In this regard, outcomes show that belonging to one gender or the other does not make any important difference in the SWL.

Table 2.

Satisfaction with life according to gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Levene's test		T test for independent samples		
					F	p	t	gl	p
Satisfaction with life (SWLS)	Men	409	18.99	4.07	18.850	.000	2.048	870	.041
	Women	463	18.37	4.86					

Moreover, there are statistically significant differences in the SWL according to the age, where students aged 18 show more satisfaction with life than students aged 15, 16 and 17 (Table 3). However, the value of ω^2= 0.01 would indicate the lack of SE. So it could be said that although the legal age is reached, there is a more positive evaluation of life, these outcomes would not allow an interpretation of its practical importance.

Table 3.

Satisfaction with life according to age.

		Total sum of squares	gl	Mean square	F	p
Satisfaction with life (SWLS)	Among groups	235.338	4	58.834	2.911	.021
	In groups	17524.959	867	20.213		
	Total	17760.297	871			

Finally, satisfaction with life according to the educational institutions does not show statistically significant differences and practical importance ($\omega^2= 0.00$), that is, belonging to all-boy, all-girl or mixed institutions does not show differences in the evaluation the students make of their life in general (Table 4).

Table 4.

Satisfaction with life according to the educational institution.

		Total sum of squares	gl	Mean square	F	p
Satisfaction with life (SWLS)	Among groups	118.399	4	29.600	1.455	.214
	In the groups	17641.898	867	20.348		
	Total	17760.297	871			

Discussion

This study is aimed at analyzing the psychometric properties of the SWLS of Diener et al. (1985) and comparing the SWL scores according to gender, age and educational institution in a group of schoolers of the city of Arequipa.

Regarding the first objective, the outcomes of the CFA give empirical support for the one-dimensional model of the SWLS. Besides, the factorial loads of each item are all significant although only 4 items are higher than the value of. 70 that represent more than half of the variance explained in each item. This outcome means that the error variance for each item is lower than the variance explained by the SWLS, which provides support for the construct validity of the SWLS (Hultell & Gustavsson, 2008). The difference between factorial loads of item 1 and the remaining four shows that the first item influences the definition of the SWL construct in a different way. Thus, for the sample of schoolers from Arequipa, a proper interpretation of the SWLS score is related to a different weighting of each item (Merino-Soto & Salas, 2017).

The values of the reliability coefficients for latent variables (ω= .99 and H= .99) supposes an adequate level of internal consistency of the one-dimensional model of the SWFLS. It is worth mentioning that our reliability values are higher than those reported by Alarcón (2000) for university students of Lima. This is possibly due to the fact that a different calculation method was used. While Alarcón used the Split-halves method, in this study, coefficients ω and H that are useful for factorial models were calculated. Another factor that explains the differences has to do with the sample, since for the study made by Alarcón, students from private universities were evaluated, and here a sample of students from public high school institutions were obtained. Our data suggest that the SWLS allows valid and reliable interpretation for use in students aged 14 and 18 from public school of Arequipa.

Regarding the second objective, it was recorded that male students have higher scores in satisfaction with life than female students although these differences do not show practical importance. These data are similar to those reported in the international literature, in which there are no important differences (Casas et al. 2015; Froh et al., 2009; Gilman & Huebner, 2006; Huebner et al., 2000; Huebner et al., 2004), but they differ from those that indicate that female students have higher SWL than male students (Laca, Verdugo & Guzmán, 2005) or from those studies where male students show higher levels of SWL (Bernal et al. 2015; Goldbeck et al., 2007; Moksnes & Espnes, 2013; Neto, 1993; Suldo et al., 2015; Tarazona, 2005; Verkuyten, 1986). While in Peru, no significant differences of the SWL according to gender of the students involved have not been recorded (Alarcón, 2001; Salgado, 2009).

The age also showed statistically significant differences for older students, specifically, those who are 18 years old, although there is no practical importance. Yet the slight differences can be possible explained, due to the fact that legal age for a student means to have access to certain sources of entertainment that minors cannot like going to discos, drinking

alcohol, etc. We cannot say that this is the reason because the happiness sources of schoolers have not been evaluated (Alarcón, 2002). However, previous studies in Peru, with samples of schoolers and university students from Lima, do not show significant differences according to age (Alarcón, 2001; Salgado, 2009). Another studies, but with samples with a wide age spectrum, has shown that as age increases, higher scores are obtained in the SWL (Baird, Lucas & Donnellan, 2010). In this regard, Martínez (2004) also found that in 570 people aged between 16 and 65 in the city of Lima, those who are older, have higher SWL scores.

Finally, regarding the educational institution, we have not find significant differences and practical importance between mixed or single-sex schools. So this is corroborated by some studies that state that mixed and single-sex education do not represent significant differences in disruptive behaviors or in the levels of self-esteem of schoolers from Arequipa (Gordillo, Cahuana & Rivera, 2016). However, Tarazona's work (2005) found significant differences of the type of school management for private educational institutions of Lima.

With this brief but original study, since it is the first study that addresses the SWL in the city of Arequipa, an instrument of measurement, although is known worldwide, it has not been validated in Peru for high school students, is made available to local researchers. New psychometric, correlational or experimental research works that allow us to delve into the understanding of the subjective well-being of younger generations can be conducted by using these outcomes. Besides, our outcomes show the behavior of this variable of study according to gender and age, which supposes the design of strategies to improve the level of satisfaction of schoolers from Arequipa.

The study shows several limitations. First, participants were only students in the fourth or fifth year of high school. Therefore, there is a need to analyze psychometric properties in adolescents of a wide range of ages. Second, the evaluation of the discriminant validity was not included in this study and therefore, it is suggested the development of a study that uses

scales evaluating different constructs from the SWL (for example: depressive symptoms). A third limitation lies in the fact that findings were based on self-reports, so it was subject to a possible bias typical of these procedures. Besides, it is necessary more information about nature and directionality of the relationship between SWL and the sociodemographic variables studied beyond the cross section; design used in this study. Thus, future research works should use a longitudinal design that will allow strengthening the study by allowing changes to be evaluated and compared with time.

In conclusion, the study suggests that SWLS is a proper instrument to evaluate the SWL in schoolers from Arequipa and it is an important predictor of health, well-being and academic and professional success (Diener, 2000). The SWLS will benefit future studies in children of all ages. In addition, it is recommendable to use it in epidemiological studies and in clinical research studies. In this regard, this work gives new opportunities for research on SWL variable in the city of Arequipa, since there are not previous studies about such construct in our city. By using the SWLS, new research works can be conducted and intervention strategies can be designed. These strategies should allow, through satisfaction with life, the evaluation of other constructs related or their variability according to the sessions, programs or educational workshops applied.

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