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UNIVERSITIES:**

**A CASE OF NORTH RIFT REGION, KENYA**

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# EFFECT OF STAFF ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CASE OF NORTH RIFT REGION, KENYA

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of staff on the performance of public universities in north rift region, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The author in this paper adopts a cross sectional survey research design to achieve the study objective. Taking into consideration a population of three hundred teaching and nonteaching staff from public universities headquartered in the North Rift region, a sample size of 170 respondents from the target population was selected. The study sample was obtained through stratified proportionate sampling technique. Data collection was done by use of questionnaires. Data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics presented in form of frequency, mean and standard deviation, and correlation and multiple regressions respectively.

**Findings:** it was found out that Staff perspective had a significantly positive effect on performance of public universities in North Rift region Kenya. This positive impact was attributed to the compensation plan used by the universities to boosts morale of staff which in turn improves their performance. Notably the study demonstrated a low rate of resignation among university staff implying high staff commitment. It was also clear that human resource practices positively affect strategy implementation with majority of the respondents agreeing that rewarding is based on merit. The overall mean effect of staff on performance was 74.4%. Correlation results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship with performance of the universities ( $R^2=0.339$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). Staff was therefore a good predictor of performance of public universities as supported by an F statistic of 11.944 and the reported p value (0.000) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05. Nonetheless, the regression results confirmed that there was a significant relationship between staff and performance of public universities in North Rift Kenya with a beta coefficient of 0.246 and significance of ( $p=0.002$ ). The study thus failed to reject the hypothesis that stated: there is a significant relationship between staff and performance of public universities in North Rift Kenya.

***Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:*** Public universities should practice the culture of providing feedback to the employees on their performance. The university management ought to develop strategies that are fully aligned to the human resource professionalism the government should appraise the universities on the extent of their strategic plan's implementations. This is to encourage universities to transform their plans into action by showing evidence of what has been achieved in the time period that was proposed. Further research can be done to establish other factors that contribute to strategy implementation and performance in universities. In addition, more research should also be carried out to investigate the effect of the external environment on the implementation of strategic plans in public universities or other organizations.

**Keywords:** *Staff Perspective, Performance, Public universities, Strategy implementation*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

While staffing in public universities remains to be a tasking practice, the staff, both academic and non-teaching is considered key players in any university's success. This paper demonstrates the extent to which staff impact on the performance of public universities in Kenya. The paper is drawn upon a study that was conducted in the North Rift region of Kenya and thus all the findings are applicable to especially the public universities in the region and across other public universities with similar characteristics in the country. The study was guided by the McKensey's 7's model established by Robert H. Waterman, Jr. and Tom Peters (1980's) The theory postulates that for the public sector to perform well, these seven elements, structure, style, strategy, shared value, staff and system need to be aligned and mutually reinforced. So, the model can be used to help identify what needs to be realigned to improve performance, or to maintain alignment and performance in strategy implementation. the model can be used to understand how the organizational elements are interrelated and ensure that the wider impact of changes made in one area is taken into consideration (Robert, Waterman & Peters, 2014). In relation to this study researcher used one of the variables of the 7S's model in tracking its performance. Staff perspective is a measurement indicator as to what extent the company's strategy, implementation and execution are affecting performance. An organization's staff is important in determining the process of implementing strategy (Pearce & Robinson, 2013). Higher institutions of learning should be aware of all their resources, capabilities and core competencies, which have a direct link to their ability to implement workable strategies (Kinyanjui & Juma, 2014). In Mutahi and Busienei's observation, institutions should establish strategies that meet employees' needs because they are a key resource in implementation of the organizational goals. Employment policies need to be on merit principle, rewarding fairly, retaining the best performing staff in order to enhance their performance (Mutahi & Busienei, 2015). The resource-based view (RBV) of a firm indicates that companies can be ahead in the market if they have resources that are of value to the firm, which cannot be imitated by their rivals (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). In addition, Okumu (2003) proposes that resources like time, money staff and information should be considered before strategy implementation, with Mango, Zamasiya, Makate, Kefasi and Siziba (2014), arguing that having the right staff is critical for execution of management's plans. In this paper therefore we focus on the effect of staff on the performance of public universities and how various factors influence their engagement into strategy implementation.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

University education is a critical component of human resource development and the main driver of growth, information and communication revolution in today's world (CUE 2016). University Education should foster innovation, produce graduates that are relevant in the market and highly involved in research (Njuguna, 2014). This however may not be the case. Many university graduates cannot find jobs (Marwa, 2014); a high percentage of postgraduate students do not complete their studies (Ogeto, 2015). Furthermore, the rapid increase in the numbers of universities and enrolment of students has increased challenges in the universities, like crumbling infrastructure and poor governance. (Rajasekar, 2014; Madegwa, 2014; Rabah, 2015; Ogeto, 2015). Public universities are facing difficulties emerging from the dynamic economy and technologies of the 21st century, as well as unprecedented demands from their stakeholders namely students, staff, government, employers and society among others (Marwa, 2014). The efforts by universities to implement strategic plans tend to pull and diffuse apart since less has been done to uncover the problems they face during implementation (Rajasekar, 2014). This study intends to investigate the extent of the effect of staff on performance of public universities, with the purpose to establishing the extent to which strategy implementation affects performance in public universities in the north rift region, Kenya.

### **1.2 Objective**

The objective of the study is to establish to what extent staff affect the performance of public universities in north rift, Kenya.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Kaplan and Norton (2012) defined performance as a set of factors that describe procedure by which countless outcomes and results are attained. Waldner, Poetz, Grimpe, & Eurich, (2015) postulate that performance refers concurrently to the action, the action results, and to the triumph of the outcome matched to some standard. Organizational performance is identified with effectiveness and efficiency (Lufthans, 2012). Oni-Ojo, Salau, Odunayo, Olumuyiwa and Abasilim (2014) argue that effectiveness is the extent to which stakeholders' requirements are met, while efficiency is a measure of how financially the firm resources are used when meeting a given level of customer satisfaction. To attain superior relative-performance, an institution of higher learning must achieve its objective with highest efficiency and effectiveness. Generally, research outcomes on performance stay inconclusive, and several reasons have been advanced for the indecisive results including methodological defects, snubbing organizational characteristics in performance relationships and related application of models (Munyambu, 2015). Performance is therefore a balanced and multi-dimensional concept better reflecting stockholder interests. Performance is the perfect opportunity to address long-term goals that may not be on the everyday to-do list. Not only does this provide the employee with an opportunity to be of greater use to an organization, the employee feels pleased and valued.

Lighting the way toward a successful career path in organizations inspires loyalty and stability and can improve organizational performance, especially when the employee's first concern is the health of the business, and subsequently, his/her career. Celebrating a job well-done is the easy part of

the performance appraisal. Areas of improvement are not so easy, nevertheless, no one is perfect, and the performance appraisal is an ideal time to diplomatically highlight areas that need improvement. Even the most valuable employee could benefit from additional training, while those who are on the cusp of dismissal need the heads-up (Byremo, 2015). When a company has detailed information on employee performance, business decisions become easier. Filling open positions with existing staff strengthens the organization and promotes loyalty. Knowing which employees display what strengths improves the speed with which projects can be assigned and completed. Appraisals also provide a framework when making decisions about compensation and layoffs such that if the organization becomes the unfortunate party to a lawsuit, the performance appraisal can refute or support claims. As a result, the effective use of performance appraisals helps an organization operate efficiently and with focus (Lee, 2016). This explains why in this paper, the author looks at the reward system in the public universities and the staff's perspective on how the same influences their performance.

Staff perspective as used in this paper as a measurement indicator as to whether the universities' strategies, their implementation and execution are affecting Performance. Staff goals for big companies are the same as for public universities and they are included but not limited to simply rewarding the employees fairly and equitably, staff retention and continuous staff growth and development. The performance indicators for universities are different from other companies in this study Kaplan and Norton's measures were applied. The study measured performance by **Customer perspective** (Student enrolment Community service) **Learning and growth Perspective** (Physical facilities, Research output).

Mutahi and Busienei (2015) conducted a study on the effect of human resource management practices on performance of public universities in Kenya; it was a census survey study, targeting the public universities and their constituent colleges. The unit of analysis was the universities senior staff officers and administrators. Questionnaires were used as data collection instruments and data analysis was by SPSS. The findings revealed that strategic human resource management practices had a significant effect on the performance of public universities in Kenya. It was recommended that Management of public universities should develop employment policies that encourage job security; invest in staff information systems to automate resourcing practices; government should ensure that selection in public universities is based on equity principle, management to conduct a staff competency analysis in order to address training and development needs.

Mango, Zamasiya, Makate, Kefasi and Siziba (2014) argue that right staff is critical for execution of management's plans. Byremo (2015) carried out a study in Norway with the aim to find out if human resource management leads to improved organizational performance, because the majority of studies seemed to depict a reality where companies could simply implement HR practices or systems of HR practices and they will automatically achieve greater success. The research question was whether there existed a causal link between HRM and performance. Whether companies could simply add HRM into their organizational equation and receive increased performance in return. The researcher concluded that researchers had failed to demonstrate that HRM causes higher performance, and it is thus still unclear whether HRM leads to increased organizational performance or not. Following the foregoing discourse on the effect of staff on performance of

public universities, this paper focused on involving responsive opinions from the staff perspective to meet the set objective. It was therefore hypothesized that:

**H0:** There is a significant relationship between staff and performance of public universities in North Rift Kenya.

### 3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out among the staff in public universities headquartered in North Rift region of Kenya. A cross sectional survey research design was employed in putting together different groups of people who differ in the variable of interest but share other characteristics. The design was considered appropriate for the study as it enabled the author to test the assumptions of the study. The design was also not costly and covered a short period of time as only quantitative data was collected from the respondents. The study targeted public universities in North Rift region totaling to 300 employees from two public universities in the region. The sampling frame for the study was therefore 300 employees. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a sampling frame is a directory or index of cases from which a sample can be selected. The sample size was computed from the following Formula as devised by Fisher (1954).

$$N = \frac{Z^2 P (1-P)}{C^2}$$

C<sup>2</sup>

Where:

N=Sample size

P=Prevalence

G=Z value

C=1- confidence level

Taking a confidence level of 95%, Z value of 1.96 and prevalence of 50%,

$$\begin{aligned} N &= \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} \\ &= \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} \\ &= 384. \end{aligned}$$

Since the study population was less than 10,000, the following formula as adopted by Johnson and Christensen's (2012) for proportionate sampling was used:

$$nf = \frac{n}{1 + n/N}$$

Where:

$n_f$  = desired sample for a population less than 10,000

$n$  = sample size derived for a population greater than 10,000

$N$  = estimated size of population with the characteristic of interest

Let  $N$  to be 300,

$$n_f = 384$$

$$1 + 384/300$$

$$= 384/2.28$$

$$= 170 \text{ respondents}$$

Consequently, 170 respondents were examined for the study. Patton's (2001) criterion sampling technique was adopted to select the representative sample. Employees were stratified as per their position that is; teaching staff, technical staff and Heads of department academics and administration. The study adopted close-ended questionnaires and document analysis as data collection methods.

The collected data was then analyzed descriptively and by use of inferential statistics as proposed by Mugenda (2008) that the two provide primary features of the study variables and establishing the strength of relationships between the variables respectively. In particular the regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Response Rate**

The aim of this paper was to develop an assessment of the effects of staff on the performance of public universities in North Rift region, Kenya. The number of questionnaires that were administered was 170. 142 questionnaires were filled and returned. This represented an overall successful response rate of 83.5%. This agreed with Babbie, (2004) who asserted that return rates of 50% are acceptable to analyze and publish, 60% was good and 70% was very good. Based on these assertions 88.8% response rate was adequate for the study.

### **4.2 Descriptive Findings**

In line with the conducted study, frequency tabulation depicting the mean and standard deviation was derived from the data analysis. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study findings. Rewards for the staff, training and retention capacity formed the key study variables in this paper.

**Table 1: Effect of staff on Performance of Public Universities**

Statement		SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	Std. D
							<b>3.87</b>	
<b>Reward</b>								
Compensation plan of the university boosts morale of staff which in turn improves university performance.	F	4	5	4	101	28	4.01	0.79
	%	2.8	3.5	2.8	71.1	19.7		
I would recommend others to work for this university.	F	0	7	25	75	35	3.97	0.79
	%	0	4.9	17.6	52.8	24.6		
Rewarding of staff is based on merit which encourages the staff to work hard to improve university performance.	F	0	29	28	53	32	3.62	1.05
	%	0	20.4	19.7	37.3	22.5		
							<b>3.41</b>	
<b>Training</b>								
We are taken for leadership development trainings which help improve performance.	F	4	7	5	116	10	3.85	0.73
	%	2.8	4.9	3.5	81.7	7		
We are sometimes sent to bench mark in higher performing universities.	F	27	28	29	39	19	2.96	1.33
	%	19	19.7	20.4	27.5	13.4		
							<b>3.67</b>	
<b>Retention</b>								
The best performing staff are retained in the university which improves the university performance.	F	4	27	14	77	20	3.58	1.04
	%	2.8	19	9.9	54.2	14.1		
The low rate of resignations is good for improving university performance.	F	5	9	24	79	25	3.77	0.93
	%	3.5	6.3	16.9	55.6	17.6		
							<b>3.99</b>	
<b>General</b>								
Staff practices positively affect Strategic plan Implementation in the University.	F	0	7	5	113	17	3.99	0.6
	%	0	4.9	3.5	79.6	12		
							<b>3.73</b>	
<b>Valid N</b>							<b>142</b>	

Source: (Field data, 2019)

**SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, UD = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, M = Mean and Std D = Standard Deviation**

From Table 1 above, the study sought to know the respondents' level of agreement on various statements relating to staff at the studied universities. On **Staff rewards**, it was established that 28 (19.7%) of respondents strongly agreed, 101(71.1%) agreed, 4(2.8%) were undecided while 5(3.5%) and 4(2.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement that compensation plan of the university boosts morale of staff which in turn improves university performance. The highest number of respondents showed agreement with the statement which means that the compensation plan of the university helped to boosts morale of staff which in turn improved the universities' performance. The study finding also indicated that 10(7.0%) of respondents strongly agreed, 116(81.7%) agreed, 5(3.5%) were undecided, 7(4.9%) disagreed and 4(2.8%) strongly disagreed



with the statement that they are taken for leadership development trainings which help improve their performance. On the high, 81.7% agreed meaning that majority supported the fact that they were taken for leadership development trainings to help improve performance. Notably, 35(24.6%) of respondents strongly agreed, 75(52.8%) agreed, 25(17.6%) were undecided and 7(4.9%) disagreed with the statement that they could recommend others to work for the university. Considering that most of the staff would recommend working for the university, it was clear that the staff were at a level of satisfaction as concerned working for the university as far as employee rewards were concerned.

Second the study sought to examine the **Staff Retention** as portrayed in Table 1, the study results showed that 20(14.1%) of respondents strongly agreed, 77(54.2%) agreed, 14(9.9%) undecided, 27(19.0%) disagreed and 4(2.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the best performing staff are retained in the university which improves the university performance. The majority 54.2% agreed with the statement that the best performing staff are retained in the university which improves university performance. The study findings revealed that 25(17.6%) of respondents strongly agreed, 79(55.6%) agreed, 24(16.9%) were undecided, 9(6.3%) disagreed and 5(3.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the low rate of resignations is good for improving university performance. 55.6% agreed that the rate of resignation is low.

The study results further depicted that 17(12.0%) of respondents strongly agreed, 113(79.6%) agreed, 5(3.5%) were undecided, 7(4.9%) disagreed with the statement that human resource practices positively effects strategic plan implementation in the University. 79.6% majority agreed with the statement that human resource practices positively affect strategy implementation.

On staff **training**, the study results further proved that 19(13.4%) of respondents strongly agreed, 39(27.5%) agreed, 29(20.4%) were undecided, 28(19.7%) disagreed and 27(19.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement that they are sometimes send to bench mark in higher performing universities. In addition, the study findings portrayed 32(22.5%) of respondents strongly agreeing, 53(37.3%) agreeing, 28(19.7%) showing indecisiveness and 29(20.4%) disagreeing with the statement that rewarding of staff is based on merit which encourages the staff to work hard to improve university performance. Agreeably, majority agreed with the statement that rewarding is based on merit. The overall mean on effect of staff on performance was 74.4% as shown in Table 1, implying that staff had a high contribution on performance of the universities under study. The standard deviation was low and closely around the mean implying the data was reliable.

### 4.3 Inferential Statistics

#### 4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

**Table 2: Correlation Findings**

		Performance	Staff
<b>Performance</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
<b>Staff</b>	Pearson Correlation	.577**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	

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

*Source: (Field data, 2019)*

Correlation referred to the strength of association between two variables. A strong or high correlation meant that two or more variables had a strong relationship with each other while a weak or low, correlation meant that the variables were hardly related. Correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represented a perfect negative correlation while a value of +1.00 represented a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00, Means that there is no relationship between variables being tested (Orodho, 2003). The most widely used types of correlation coefficient are the Pearson Correlation. This analysis assumes that the two variables being analyzed are measured on at least interval scales. It shows that staff was strongly positively and statistically significant ( $r=0.577$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) to performance of the universities.

#### 4.3.2 Regression Analysis

The study sought to determine the relationship between the staff and performance of public universities. The findings are represented in Table 3, 4 and 5 for the Model summary, Fitness of the Model (ANOVA) and correlation coefficients respectively. The Model summary provides the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) which shows proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variable and correlation coefficient ( $R$ ) shows the degree of association between the dependent and independent variables. The results presented in Table 3 presents the fitness of model used of the regression model in explaining the study phenomena of staff. This is supported by coefficient of determination also known as the R square of 34.4%. This means that staff explains 34.4% of the variations in the dependent variable which is performance of public universities. The results further imply that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory. Adjusted  $R^2$  is a modified version of  $R^2$  that has been adjusted for the number of predictors in the model by less than chance. The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.339 which was slightly lower than the  $R^2$  value was exact indicator of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable because it is sensitive to the addition of irrelevant variables.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
.586 <sup>a</sup>	.344	.339	.40344

*Source: (Field data, 2019)*

The ANOVA Table 4 for the regression indicated that the results computed using the regression model were significant meaning that the regression model had been computed well and not by chance as supported by a p value of 0.000 which is lesser than the critical p value of 0.05. Further, the results imply that staff is a good predictor of performance of public universities. This was supported by an F statistic of 11.944 and the reported p value (0.000) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05.

**Table 4: Fitness of the Model (ANOVA)**

	Sum of Squares	D of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11.944	1	11.944	73.385	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	22.786	140	.163		
Total	34.731	141			

*Source: (Field data, 2019)*

Table 5 on the other hand presented study results on statistical significance of staff. The  $\beta$  coefficient was significant to be used for regression with ( $\beta=0.507$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). An implication that a unit increase in staff caused 0.507-unit increase in performance of public universities. Therefore, the regression model equation was developed from the coefficient as shown in equation 1;

$$Y = 2.116 + 0.507X_1 \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 1}$$

**Where;**

Y represents performance of public universities

$X_1$  represent Staff

**Table 5: Correlation Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.116	0.227		9.34	0.000
Staff	0.507	0.059	0.586	8.567	0.000

*Source: (Field data, 2019)*

## **5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Discussions**

Staff perspective is a measurement indicator as to whether the company's strategy, implementation and execution are affecting the performance of the public universities. According to Kaplan and Norton (1992), for the public universities the customer goals are simply to continue to exist and offer the community services, to continue having student enrolment and high research output, though their forms vary widely. The study findings showed that staff had positive effect on performance of the public universities. This implied that for the universities to realize performance they should, reward staff fairly, take their staff for training and practice staff retention. The study findings confirms Byremo's (2015) study which was carried out in Norway with the aim to find out if human resource management leads to improved organizational performance, because the majority of studies seemed to depict a reality where companies could simply implement HR practices or systems of HR practices and they would automatically achieve greater success.

The findings of this study also show that different resources have different impacts on organizational performance in accord with the study conducted by Lee (2016) on impacts of organizational resources on agency performance of Federal Agencies in Romania. The researcher tested the relative impacts of different organizational resources (administrative, human, financial, physical, political, and reputation resources) on federal agencies 'effectiveness through the Resource-Based View, The findings revealed that different resources showed relatively varied impacts on agency effectiveness: some resources had positive and significant influences on agency effectiveness and others had negative or insignificant relationships with agency performance (Lee, 2016).

### **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concluded that staff practices, positively affects performance in public universities in North Rift Kenya. This is because every institution has some internal processes to support implementation and run its day-to-day affairs. It is implied that there is a strong positive correlation between staff practices and performance. The overall mean on effect of staff on performance was 74.4%. The study found out that the respondents agreed on the entire aspects of staff. (Reward management, Training and Staff retention). They agreed that compensation plan of the university boosts morale of staff which in turn improves university performance; they are taken for leadership development trainings which help improve performance, best performing staff are retained in the university which improves the university performance, human resource practices positively effects strategic plan implementation in the University, they are sometimes send to bench mark in higher performing universities, and that they could recommend others to work for the university, rewarding of staff is based on merit which encourages the staff to work hard to improve university performance and that the low rate of resignations was good for improving university performance. The study findings also showed that staff was statistically significant had a positive effect on performance of public universities in North Rift, Kenya. The study failed to reject alternative hypothesis that there is a statistically significant effect of staff on the performance of public universities in North Rift, Kenya. Therefore, the study also concludes that for universities to realize

good performance they should take their staff for training, retain the best performing staff, send their staff to the best performing universities to benchmark and reward staff based on merit.

### **5.2.1 Implication to Research and Practice**

Public universities should practice the culture of providing feedback to the employees on their performance. The university management ought to develop strategies that are fully aligned to the human resource professionalism the government should appraise the universities on the extent of their strategic plan's implementations. This is to encourage universities to transform their plans into action by showing evidence of what has been achieved in the time period that was proposed. Further research can be done to establish other factors that contribute to strategy implementation and performance in universities. In addition, more research should also be carried out to investigate the effect of the external environment on the implementation of strategic plans in public universities or other organizations.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, this study recommends that:

1. Public universities should pay more attention to both internal environment and external environment in attempts to enhance university performance.
2. Public universities should practice the culture of regularly providing feedback to the employees on their performance.
3. The university administration to consistently train their employees so as to improve their practices, since staff practices affects strategy implementation in public universities in Kenya.
4. The leadership should offer compensation that matches the expectancy of the employees and is comparable to the market.

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