

Analysis of the Utilization of Village Funds in the Field of Community Empowerment to Improve the Welfare of the Adabang Village Community

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the use of village funds in the field of community empowerment to improve community welfare in Adabang Village, Titehena District, East Flores Regency. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive method involving observation, interviews, and documentation. Informants include the Village Head, village officials, BPD members, and the community. Findings indicate that the use of village funds has focused on empowerment activities such as agricultural support, food security, and the development of early childhood education centers. The study also highlights issues such as limited community participation, weak administrative capacity, and lack of sustainability awareness. Nevertheless, the programs have contributed to improving social and economic welfare, reflecting public financial management principles of transparency, accountability, and participation.

Keywords: Village Funds, Community Empowerment, Community Welfare, Adabang Village.

1. INTRODUCTION

A village is a legal community unit that has the rights and authority to regulate and manage governmental affairs as well as the interests of the local community. Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages states that a village is a legal community unit that has defined territorial boundaries and is authorized to manage its own governmental affairs. As an integral part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), villages play an important role in the social, economic, and cultural development of the community. Villages not only function as residential areas but also as social and economic entities that have dynamic interactions with other regions (Virgilia & Konstantinus, 2023).

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), a village is an area inhabited by a group of families with an independent governance system. Villages also have great potential to become economic centers through community empowerment. One important factor in strengthening the village economy is the management and utilization of Village Funds allocated from the State Budget (APBN). These funds are used to finance various activities in the village,

such as infrastructure development, community empowerment, institutional development, and disaster management (Nikmah & Dewi, 2021).

Community empowerment has become one of the main areas receiving primary attention in the utilization of Village Funds. This empowerment includes programs aimed at increasing the capacity and quality of life of village communities, in terms of economic, social, and cultural aspects. Through empowerment programs, it is hoped that villagers can manage their potential and improve their welfare. However, despite the Village Funds providing great opportunities, there are various challenges in its implementation, such as a lack of understanding about the role of cooperatives, insufficient community involvement in planning, as well as limitations in infrastructure and efficient management (Mukhtar, 2019).

Adabang Village, located in Titehena District, East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), is one of the villages that receives Village Fund allocations. As a coastal village with natural potential, Adabang Village faces challenges in community empowerment, especially concerning the use of Village Funds to improve welfare. Although efforts have been made to utilize the Village Funds, issues such as the community's inactivity in empowerment programs and the low understanding of the benefits and principles of cooperatives remain significant obstacles (Fairus Adira, 2020).

The utilization of Village Funds for community empowerment in Adabang Village has been carried out; however, in recent years, there has been a gap between the available budget and the implementation of empowerment programs. In 2021, although the allocation of Village Funds was quite substantial, most of the funds were redirected to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the following year, there was a significant increase in the budget allocation for empowerment, although it could not be fully realized to the maximum extent (Lamawitak & Emilianus, 2021).

According to Todaro and Smith (2006), the social welfare of a community can be measured through several indicators, such as income, education, health, and employment. The improvement of village community welfare can also be seen from the declining poverty rate, increased quality of life, and the sustainability of programs that can enhance the local economy. Therefore, it is important to assess how effective the Village Fund is in supporting the empowerment of the Adabang Village community.

Based on observations, although the Village Fund has been used to finance various empowerment programs, such as food security, infrastructure development, and social programs, the results achieved have not been fully optimal. Many members still do not utilize the assistance to the fullest, which is caused by the lack of community awareness in maintaining the sustainability of the aid provided, such as poorly maintained livestock assistance (Ronaldo et al., 2022).

The Adabang Village Government has allocated Village Funds for five main areas, namely Governance, Development, Empowerment, Guidance, and Disaster Management. However, despite having a budget for community empowerment, the implementation of this program often faces obstacles related to limitations in coordination, communication, and understanding of the importance of community participation in supporting these programs. Various studies related to Village Funds, such as those conducted by Setyoaji and Rina (2021), indicate that the use of Village Funds must constantly be monitored and evaluated to determine its impact on community welfare.

In addition, the management of Village Funds in Adabang Village is also hindered by limited infrastructure and inadequate market access. This results in the resources that exist not being maximized to improve the living standards of the community (Wahab, 2020). Therefore, the village needs to conduct a more in-depth evaluation regarding the utilization of Village Funds in the field of community empowerment, so that the available funds can be used effectively to enhance the welfare of the community.

Although there have been some improvements, there are still issues that need to be addressed, such as dependence on temporary assistance and the low awareness of the community about the importance of maintaining the assets provided. This poses a significant challenge for the

Adabang Village Government to ensure that community empowerment can provide long-term benefits (Umi, 2012).

Therefore, it is important to conduct more in-depth Research on how the Village Fund is utilized in the community empowerment sector in Adabang Village. This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the Village Fund provides tangible impacts on improving community welfare, as well as to identify the factors that hinder the implementation of the empowerment programs in the village.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Finance Management Public Theory

According to Mardiasmo (2018:17), Public Financial Management is the management of state finances that involves the processes of fiscal policy formulation, budget preparation, budget execution, and financial accountability carried out by public institutions to provide services to the community. According to Rosen and Gayer (2014:10), public financial management encompasses the entire process of planning, budgeting, implementation, supervision, and accountability concerning state or regional finances. In the context of village governance, this theory serves as an important framework in managing Village Funds, which are part of the central government's fiscal transfers to village governments.

Village Fund

According to Pamungkas, et al (2021:137), village funds are funds sourced from the State Budget (APBN) allocated for villages, transferred through the regional revenue and expenditure budget of regencies/cities, and the use of village funds is prioritized for the development and empowerment of village communities, particularly for improving the quality of life and the welfare of the community.

Utilization of Village Funds

According to Suwondo (2019:58), the utilization of Village Funds should ideally be directed towards development based on local potential. Village Funds must be used for activities that encourage the productivity of village communities, create employment opportunities, and strengthen local economic institutions so that they can contribute to sustainable village development. In practice, the utilization of Village Funds is divided into several sectors, including: The Village Development Sector: such as the development of basic infrastructure (roads, bridges, irrigation, sanitation); The Community Empowerment Sector: such as job skills training, provision of micro-business assistance, and the development of local economic potential; The Community Guidance Sector: such as health education, public education, and the strengthening of local culture; The Disaster and Emergency Management Sector: such as direct village cash assistance (BLT-DD), food security, and stunting prevention.

Challenges in the Utilization of Village Funds

According to Suwondo (2019:60), although Village Funds have great potential in promoting development and empowering village communities, their implementation in the field is not without various challenges. These challenges include: Limited Capacity of Village Officials, Low Community Participation, and Limited Data and Evidence-Based Planning.

Function of Village Funds

According to Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning villages, the utilization of village funds is directed towards supporting the development and empowerment of village communities in order to improve the welfare and quality of life of village residents.

The main objectives include:

- a. Improving the Welfare of Village Communities
Village funds are used to support activities that have a direct impact on improving the living standards of the community, such as the development of basic infrastructure, productive economic assistance, and the provision of basic services.
- b. Supporting Community Empowerment
Village funds are directed towards training activities, capacity development, strengthening village institutions, as well as empowering community business groups (SMEs, agriculture, livestock, etc.).
- c. Strengthening Village Economy
Through the establishment and development of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), Village Funds are used to create original village revenue sources and open new employment opportunities.
- d. Reducing Poverty and Inequality
By providing access to infrastructure, social assistance, education, and healthcare, the Village Fund is aimed at reducing poverty and decreasing regional disparities.
- e. Supporting Basic Infrastructure Development
Village funds are used for the construction of village roads, irrigation, small bridges, clean water, and other public facilities to improve connectivity and community access to basic services.
- f. Encouraging Participation and Transparency
The Village Fund aims to increase community participation in the planning, implementation, and supervision of village development as well as to foster a culture of accountability and transparency.

The Relationship Between Public Finance Management Theory and Village Funds

Public Finance Management Theory has strong relevance in the context of managing Village Funds. Village Funds are part of government fiscal policy allocated directly from the State Budget (APBN) to village governments. The goal is to support village development and empower communities in a self-sufficient and sustainable manner. From the perspective of Public Financial Management, the management of Village Funds must refer to the basic principles of public finance, namely efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and community participation. Every stage in the management of Village Funds, from planning, budgeting, implementation, to reporting and accountability, represents a direct implementation of this theoretical framework.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze the utilization of Village Funds in the field of community empowerment to improve the welfare of the Adabang Village community. The study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how Village Funds are utilized in the field of community empowerment, as well as to explore the factors that influence the effectiveness of the use of these funds in the context of Adabang Village.

In this study, a qualitative approach was chosen over a quantitative approach because the primary focus of this research is to understand the social processes occurring in Adabang Village, particularly how the utilization of village funds contributes to community empowerment and welfare improvement. The qualitative method enables researchers to explore social interactions, local perspectives, and community dynamics that are challenging to quantify with numbers. The qualitative approach provides a deeper understanding of subjective experiences and local knowledge, as well as the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of village fund utilization. Conversely, the quantitative approach can only provide statistical data, which cannot accurately depict the level of community engagement, participation, or social challenges faced by village residents. Therefore, the qualitative method is more appropriate for this study because it can

capture deeper narratives, identify existing patterns, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social impact of village funds.

This research was conducted in Adabang Village, Titehena District, East Flores Regency. All data collection activities were focused on this village, allowing direct observation of the community's interaction with village funds. The data collection process was conducted over three months (March to May 2025). The data collected in this study are qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation related to the management of Village Funds in Adabang Village. The data were collected from five relevant informants for the Research topic, namely the Village Head, Village Secretary, Village Treasurer, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and the community members directly involved in the implementation of village development. The purpose of collecting this data is to describe how the accountability for the allocation of Village Funds to the community is carried out.

According to Sanusi (2014), primary data in qualitative Research is obtained through direct interviews with informants related to the Research problem. Secondary data, such as planning and reporting documents of the Village Fund, are also used to support the analysis. This secondary data is obtained through documentation available at the Adabang Village Government, such as RPJMDes, RKPDes, APBDes, and LKPI, in accordance with the Minister of Finance Regulation Number 108 of 2024. These documents provide an overview of fund allocation and its utilization in various sectors, particularly community empowerment.

Interviews are used to collect primary data from informants who are directly involved in the management of Village Funds in Adabang Village. Interviews are conducted face-to-face and supported by recording devices to ensure that no information is missed. These interviews allow researchers to delve deeply into the processes of allocating and utilizing village funds as well as their impact on community empowerment. Observations are conducted to observe the implementation process of Village Funds in the field, particularly in community empowerment. This observation aims to understand the social dynamics that occur, how the community is involved in empowerment programs, and the extent of the programs' success. Documentation is used to collect secondary data that supports the results of interviews and observations.

The data analysis in this study was carried out using the interactive data analysis technique proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992), which involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Research Results

a. Mechanism for Planning and Implementing Village Fund Budgets for Community Empowerment

The planning and implementation of the Village Fund budget for community empowerment are conducted participatory, starting from the hamlet level up to the village level. In the first stage, the community proposes various needs through the Hamlet Consultation Meeting (Musrenbangdus). After that, the results from the Musrenbangdus are further discussed in the Village Consultation Meeting (Musrenbangdes), which determines the priority activities based on the real needs of the community. The documentation from these consultations is compiled into the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDes) and included in the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes), which serves as the basis for carrying out empowerment activities.

The Head of Adabang Village explained that the entire planning process directly involves the community, ensuring that the allocation of funds meets their needs. The results of interviews with the Village Secretary and Village Treasurer also support this statement, showing that each stage of the village deliberation is followed by active community participation.

b. Forms of Community Empowerment Activities Funded by Village Funds

Various empowerment programs funded by the Village Fund in Adabang Village have been implemented with a focus on improving food security, basic services (Posyandu, Polindes, and Kindergarten), providing incentives, as well as supplying supporting facilities and infrastructure. Food security is one of the main priorities, with the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) managing horticulture development programs and providing food assistance. In addition, village funds are also allocated to strengthen basic services such as operating posyandu that provide supplementary food for stunted babies, as well as early childhood education (Kindergarten and PAUD) that provides educational access to children in the village.

Interviews with the Village Head, Village Secretary, and Village Treasurer confirmed that this empowerment activity includes providing business capital for MSMEs, training for business groups, and providing incentives for village support personnel. Community participation in these programs is very high because they are designed according to their needs.

c. Community Participation Level in the Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Process

The level of community participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of village empowerment programs is excellent, although some community members are not yet optimally involved. At the planning stage, the community is allowed to express its aspirations and needs. During the implementation stage, they are not only beneficiaries but also active participants in carrying out the activities. Program evaluation is conducted openly, involving the community in assessing the effectiveness and impact of each activity that has been carried out.

The results of interviews with the Village Head and Village Secretary indicate that although there are some challenges in increasing full participation, the majority of the community has shown active involvement. Based on the observations, there is a noticeable community presence in every deliberation and activity involving village funds.

d. Program Contribution to the Improvement of Basic Service Quality and Community Access to Food, Health, and Early Childhood Education

The empowerment program funded by the Village Fund in Adabang Village has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of basic services. Community access to health services has become easier with the presence of Posyandu and Polindes, which provide free health services. Stunting programs and supplementary food for toddlers have also helped improve the health status of village children. In the field of education, children now have better access to early childhood education through PAUD and kindergartens supported by the village fund. In terms of food security, the community is increasingly involved in agricultural activities empowered by the village fund. The increase in agricultural yields, especially horticultural crops, has boosted the household economy of villagers working as farmers.

The significant contribution of this empowerment program is reflected in the comments from the community who directly experience the benefits of the activities carried out, which they believe greatly influence their social and economic lives. Interviews and field observations support this statement, indicating that the sustainability of these programs is crucial for long-term well-being.

e. The Impact of Providing Incentives to Cadres, Village Health Workers, and Kindergarten Teachers on Their Motivation, Performance, and Participation in Community Services

Providing incentives to cadres, health workers, and kindergarten teachers in Adabang Village has brought a significant positive impact on their performance and enthusiasm in delivering services to the community. Incentives not only increase work motivation but also strengthen their participation in improving the quality of basic services in health and education. Interviews with the Village Head, Village Secretary, and Village Treasurer confirm that the incentives greatly influence

the work spirit of these supporting personnel, which in turn enhances the quality of services in the village.

f. The Effectiveness of Utilizing Facilities and Infrastructure Funded by Village Funds in Supporting Community Empowerment Activities

The utilization of facilities and infrastructure funded by the Village Fund in Adabang Village shows high effectiveness in supporting community empowerment activities. The facilities and infrastructure provided are in accordance with the community's needs, such as the provision of health facilities, educational facilities, and other supporting infrastructure. All of this directly contributes to improving the quality of life of the village community, as reflected in interviews with the Village Head and the Village Secretary.

g. Overall Contribution of the Village Fund-Financed Community Empowerment Program to the Improvement of Village Community Welfare

Overall, the community empowerment programs funded by the Village Fund in Adabang Village have shown a very positive impact on improving the welfare of the community. These programs not only meet the basic needs of the community but also empower them to be more economically independent. The significant contribution of this program has been felt by the villagers, who hope that the program will continue even with changes in government.

Interviews with the Village Head, Village Secretary, and community members indicate that the empowerment carried out by the village has a tangible impact, further improving their quality of life. The contribution of each program in the fields of health, education, and food security increasingly supports a better social life for the people of Adabang.

Table 1 Village Funds and Expenditure in the Empowerment Sector in Adabang Village

Year	Village Fund Amount (Rp)	Empowerment Sector Expenditure (Rp)	Percentage
2021	663.022.000	-	-
2022	961.824.000	121.100.000	12,6%
2023	782.387.000	154.244.000	19,7%
2024	788.787.000	159.650.000	20,2%

Source: Adabang Village Office (Processed data)

Through this table, it can be seen that the use of Village Funds for community empowerment has increased from 2022 to 2024. The percentage of fund usage in the field of empowerment continues to rise, indicating the village government's commitment to allocating village funds effectively to improve community welfare. Thus, the utilization of Village Funds in Adabang Village, particularly in the area of community empowerment, has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of life of the community and promoting better economic self-reliance.

DISCUSSION

a. Participatory Program Empowerment Planning

The Research results indicate that the planning of the empowerment program in Adabang Village has been going quite well, through a participatory approach that involves the community from the hamlet level to the village level. The planning process begins with the Hamlet Deliberation (Musrenbangdus), followed by the Village Deliberation (Musrenbangdes). It is then documented in the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes) and the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDDes). The community is not only a beneficiary but also plays an active role in proposing and determining the priority activities to be carried out.

The findings indicate that participation in decision-making and program implementation is still limited. This indicates that although formal participation exists, there remains a need for a more inclusive approach that actively and sustainably engages the community. This aligns with Chambers (1995), who emphasized that empowerment can only occur if the community has complete control over the resources and decisions that affect their lives.

Community participation in this planning process reflects the fundamental principles of public financial management as proposed by Mardiasmo (2018), who stated that public budget management must involve a participatory process from all elements of society. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the community empowerment theory by Chambers (1995), which emphasizes the importance of empowerment through community involvement in development planning. This study also aligns with Wulandari (2021), who found that community participation in Musrenbangdes determines the success of the Village Fund program.

b. Implementation of the Empowerment Program

The implementation of the empowerment program in Adabang Village is based on the results of deliberations conducted during the planning stage. The programs carried out cover several important sectors such as health, education, food security, and economic empowerment. This program has successfully improved the quality of life of the community, with the provision of health facilities (Posyandu and Polindes), early childhood education (PAUD), and fishing equipment assistance for fishermen.

Mardiasmo (2002), in the theory of public financial management, revealed that the public budget should be directed towards producing productive and beneficial outputs for society. This study supports the findings of Rahmawati (2022), which show that Village Funds focused on the economic and educational sectors provide a significant contribution to the welfare of communities in remote villages. This indicates that the implementation of empowerment programs based on Village Funds in Adabang Village has successfully achieved the objectives that had been set.

Community involvement in the village empowerment process in Adabang Village is outstanding, with active participation at every stage from planning to evaluation. The community has the space to propose programs they need, and important decisions are not only made by the village government but also involve the community's aspirations. The success of this empowerment program lies not only in timely implementation but also in high community participation.

Ife & Tesoriero (2008), in their empowerment theory, explain that effective empowerment is the kind that involves active participation of the community in every stage of development. This finding is in line with the Research by Prasetyo (2020), which shows that community participation in empowerment programs significantly affects the success rate of the programs. Nevertheless, this study also found that there are still some community members who are less active in participating, especially in the development stages. This indicates a need further to increase awareness and community involvement in more inclusive development.

c. The Impact of Village Fund Utilization on Community Welfare

From the Research results, it is evident that the utilization of Village Funds in Adabang Village has had a significant impact on the welfare of the community. Programs funded by Village Funds, such as strengthening food security, early childhood education (PAUD), and improving health facilities, directly provide substantial benefits to the community. The enhancement of health services, such as the provision of Posyandu and Polindes, as well as funding for children's education, demonstrates rapid progress in improving the quality of life of the residents.

Todaro and Smith (2011), in their theory of sustainable development, stated that development should focus on improving human welfare, which is not limited to economic aspects but also includes social and environmental aspects. This study supports the findings of Lestari (2021), which showed that Village Funds focused on the health and education sectors make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life of people in remote villages. This indicates

that Village Funds in Adabang Village have made a positive contribution to improving the quality of life of the community.

d. Obstacles in Implementation

Despite many visible achievements, there are several obstacles in the implementation of empowerment programs funded by the Village Fund. Some of these obstacles include low levels of active participation among certain community members, limited human resources, barriers to coordination and communication among relevant parties, and insufficient supporting facilities to sustain empowerment activities. Although the food security program has had a positive impact, its implementation faces challenges, including a lack of technical knowledge in managing horticultural agriculture. In this context, the community empowerment theory, as outlined by Chambers (1995), emphasizes the importance of strengthening community capacity, which can be crucial to improving the program's sustainability.

Suwarno (2014), in the theory of village development institutions, stated that the success of empowerment programs highly depends on strong institutional support, good coordination among actors, and bureaucratic efficiency. This finding is also in line with Yusuf's (2019) Research, which identified the main challenges in the implementation of community empowerment programs as delays in funding and a lack of active participation from the community. This indicates that although there has been significant progress, there are still many aspects that need to be improved to achieve optimal results.

In terms of program empowerment evaluation, the village community is actively involved in providing input and assessments on program implementation. The village government demonstrates openness in receiving criticism and suggestions, indicating that the program evaluation is conducted transparently and accountably. However, despite active community participation in the evaluation, there is still room to improve the effectiveness and smoothness of the evaluation process so that the program can run more optimally in the future. While the presence of posyandu and polindes has improved community access to basic health services, the limitations of human resources and medical facilities remain significant issues. Community involvement in managing health facilities can be strengthened to address this issue, as highlighted by Mardiasmo (2018), who emphasizes the importance of active community participation in the management of public services.

The theory of development evaluation, according to Rossi et al. (2004), states that a good evaluation must involve all parties engaged in the process, including the community as beneficiaries. This finding aligns with Yuliana's (2018) Research, which asserts that evaluations involving active community participation can enhance the effectiveness of empowerment programs and ensure that the community's needs are truly met.

The sustainability of community empowerment programs in Adabang Village is an issue that needs to be addressed in the long term. Although many programs have been running well, the sustainability of these programs largely depends on the commitment of the village government, active participation of the community, and transparent and efficient management of Village Funds. Proper management will ensure that the empowerment programs that have been initiated can continue to be implemented even in the event of a change in administration.

According to the theory of sustainable development (Sachs, 2015), the sustainability of development can only be achieved if there is a commitment from all parties involved and efficient resource management. Therefore, the sustainability of this empowerment program needs to be a primary concern for the village government, so that the community can continue to benefit from the programs that have been implemented.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained through interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the Village Fund allocated for community empowerment has made a significant contribution to improving the welfare of the community. The utilization of these funds includes various programs, such as food security, strengthening basic services (Posyandu, Polindes, PAUD), as well as economic empowerment through the development of BUMDes and business capital assistance for farmer and fisherman groups. The planning and implementation of empowerment programs in Adabang Village are carried out participatory through hamlet and village deliberations, enabling the community to actively engage in designing activity plans that meet their needs. This reflects the success of the empowerment principle, which emphasizes community participation in every stage of development.

The positive impacts of the empowerment program are evident in improved access to healthcare services, early childhood education, and better food security. In addition, the empowerment program has boosted the spirit and participation of the community in village development activities. Although there are some obstacles, such as low participation from certain members of the community and limited resources, overall, the empowerment program has been implemented well and has provided positive impacts for the residents of Adabang Village. As for the suggestions in this study:

- a. Although the level of community participation in planning and implementing programs is pretty good, there is still a small portion of the community that is not actively involved. Therefore, it is recommended to enhance socialization and adopt a more inclusive approach, such as continuous training and guidance, to ensure that all layers of the community are engaged in the empowerment process
- b. The village government needs to improve the capacity of human resources, particularly in terms of village financial management and coordination between village institutions. Training and skill development in village financial management will be beneficial in optimizing the use of Village Funds.
- c. It is important to implement more structured and regular monitoring and evaluation of the empowerment program's implementation. This will help in assessing the program's effectiveness and identifying areas that need improvement to achieve better outcomes.
- d. To ensure the empowerment program's sustainability, it is recommended to seek funding sources other than Village Funds, such as collaborating with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, or international donors. This additional funding will help expand the program's reach and enhance its positive impact on the community.

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