

Exploring the strenght

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EXPLORING THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF RUMAH KATA SORONG: A STUDY OF A COMMUNITY READING PARK

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Abstract

Papua faces significant literacy challenges, with the 2019 ALIBACA survey and the 2022 Provincial Literacy Development Index ranking West Papua and Papua among the lowest in the country. Community reading parks (TBMs), such as Rumah Kata Sorong, play a vital role in addressing these challenges by promoting literacy and fostering a reading culture. However, there is a lack of specific research on TBMs in Papua, especially in Sorong. Thus, a SWOT analysis of Rumah Kata Sorong, focusing on its strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats, is essential to develop strategic recommendations for its growth and improved impact on local literacy. This study uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, utilizing case studies, interviews, observations, and historical documents to explore Rumah Kata Sorong, focusing on its founder and volunteers, and aims to develop strategic

recommendations to strengthen TBMs and enhance community literacy. Rumah Kata Sorong stands out among community reading parks with its curated book collection, diverse facilities, and community-driven initiatives like reading clubs and literary workshops, while also facing challenges such as limited volunteers and financial sustainability, which it addresses by recruiting a manager, engaging youth, and adapting to modern trends like digital literacy, ensuring its continued relevance and impact. In conclusion, Rumah Kata Sorong distinguishes itself by offering a unique collection of books, fostering reading communities, and promoting literacy through initiatives like reading clubs, while addressing challenges such as limited management and volunteer support by recruiting a library administrator and focusing on community engagement, ensuring its long-term sustainability and adaptability to changing literacy trends, though future research could further explore the program's impact through quantitative analysis of community involvement and outcomes.

Keywords: Literacy, community reading parks, rumah kata sorong, SWOT analysis, community development

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous literacy challenges in Papua. The significant literacy issues in the region are highlighted by the 2019 ALIBACA survey, which ranked two Papuan provinces among the lowest in the country (Solihin et al. 2019), as well as by the 2022 Provincial Literacy Development Index (IPLM), which placed West Papua (37.58) and Papua (20.0) at the bottom (Perpustakaan Nasional 2023). These issues are further compounded by high illiteracy rates and low literacy levels, where many school-aged individuals continue to struggle with fundamental reading and writing skills (Nursalim and Sudibyo 2018; Parker and Sudibyo 2024; Wijaya et al. 2025; Yektingtyas-Modouw and Modouw 2023).

To address the reading challenges in Papua, various initiatives have been implemented, with involvement not only from schools but also from a range of community-driven initiatives including efforts by community reading parks or taman baca masyarakat (TBM) (Kahar et al. 2019; Rifanto, Hufad, and Hasanah 2024; Widiati et al. 2022).

Community Reading Centers or TBM warrant significant consideration for their contributions, particularly as the National Library's reports classify them under public libraries. As data about library in Indonesia, which also encompasses Public Libraries (ranging from provincial to village levels, including Independent Reading Parks (Taman Bacaan Mandiri) and Community Public Libraries), School Libraries (across all educational stages), University Libraries, and various Special Libraries serving government, private institutions, healthcare, religious centers, and other sectors. This extensive and diverse system collectively underscores Indonesia's commitment to ensuring widespread literacy access for its population (Aziz and Bondar 2024).

Table 1. Distribution of libraries in Indonesia (Aziz and Bondar 2024)

Province	General	School	Higher Ed	Special	Total
Papua	48	488	24	28	588
Papua Barat Daya	51	302	8	3	364
Papua Pegunungan	41	62	2	0	105
Papua Barat	26	374	9	15	424
Papua Tengah	58	220	4	3	285
Papua Selatan	27	115	3	2	147
Total	251	1561	50	51	1913

Community reading parks or TBM promote literacy, foster a love of reading, and preserve cultural heritage within local communities. They are crucial in encouraging reading habits and cultivating a literacy culture (Hamna et al. 2024; Jovanda et al. 2021). By establishing community reading parks, societies can create hubs that offer access to reading materials and serve as learning centers for community members (Afrina et al. 2023; Novrita et al. 2025; Rodin 2022; Tebay 2023).

The strategic placement of these reading parks is essential for their effectiveness. Research emphasizes the significance of situating community reading spaces in easily accessible locations frequented by the public, such as near main roads, educational institutions, and places of worship, to maximize their impact and reach (Nuraini et al. 2023). Additionally, the presence of various non-governmental organizations, as umbrella organizations for TBM, such as Forum TBM and Pustaka Bergerak Indonesia, contributes to supporting community reading parks (TBM) to continue their activities and grow (Abdillah et al. 2022; Forum TBM 2024; Mahargono 2018; Pustaka Bergerak 2024).

Existing academic literature offers numerous insights into the multifaceted roles of Community Reading Parks (TBMs) in Indonesia. For instance, (Putri, Adrias, and Zulkarnaini 2025) examines the contribution of a reading house in Padang to fostering reading interest among elementary school students. Similarly, (Mawaddah, Komariah, and Rodiah 2024)

investigate the role of TBM Sehati in Bandung in promoting a social inclusion-based literacy movement. Furthermore, studies like that by (Firdaus, Harista, and Noblana Adib 2023) highlight how TBMs, such as Taman Baca Lamtui in Aceh, have been instrumental in cultivating a collective awareness regarding the importance of reading and literacy within society.

Beyond these, research on TBM Jiwa Khatulistiwa in Serdang Bedagai Regency illustrates its function as a community hub in Lubuk Saban Village, promoting reading materials and enhancing child development through character education (Prayogo and Syahputra 2022). Concurrently, (Fatwa 2021) explores the empowering impact of TBM Pustaka Keliling Adil on community literacy and economic well-being in Yogyakarta. Other TBMs, such as Taman Baca Masyarakat Pagon Sinau in Karanganyar, have been effective in educating children by providing infrastructure and various activities designed to boost reading interests (Purwanto, Lestari, and Surakarta 2020). Lastly, (Prahardika 2020) demonstrates the significant role of Taman Baca Masyarakat Silayung in enhancing information literacy within its community in Bandung.

Despite the existing body of research on Community Reading Parks (TBMs), limited studies have specifically focused on those located in Tanah Papua, especially in Sorong. Available research primarily includes general mappings of literacy communities in Jayapura, studies on three TBMs in West Papua, and one TBM Pinjam Pustaka in Sorong (Nasrulloh, Fatimah, and Dwi 2024; Rifanto et al. 2024; Yonggom and Iwong 2021).

For this reason, research on literacy issues remains a compelling topic, particularly in Southwest Papua, where various Community Reading Parks (TBMs) play a crucial role. In this context, Rumah Kata Sorong (Aras 2018), established in 2015, has been operational for about ten years, making it one of the longest-serving community reading parks in Sorong. Therefore, to gain a more profound understanding of its role, it is imperative to conduct a **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis** (Bonnici and Galea 2017), and will focus on SO (Strengths-Opportunities) and WT (Weaknesses-Threats) strategies, enabling the reading park to maximize its strengths in leveraging opportunities while mitigating the impact of weaknesses in facing threats of Rumah Kata Sorong. This analysis will facilitate the formulation of strategic recommendations for Rumah Kata's development, enabling the TBM to grow and make a more significant impact on literacy within the community.

RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive-analytical qualitative approach was chosen to explore the subject matter in depth. This method prioritizes the meanings people assign to experiences, making it ideal for studying complex human and social dynamics. A variety of empirical materials, such as case studies, personal narratives, interviews, observational data, and historical documents, are used to capture both the everyday and more challenging aspects of life (Aspers and Corte 2019). Following data collection, the analysis involves organizing and interpreting the data to identify patterns and themes.

Our research focuses on Rumah Kata Sorong, with its founder, Suhardi Aras, and two managing volunteers serving as key informants. This study was conducted over one month, specifically observing the reading center. Additionally, we employed triangulation by gathering data from multiple sources, interviews, observations, and relevant documents. Through this comprehensive approach, the study aims to develop strategic recommendations designed to strengthen TBMs. These strategies will address identified challenges and enhance existing opportunities, thereby ensuring that TBMs continue to contribute significantly to community literacy and education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Rumah Kata is an initiative founded by Suhardi Aras on August 30, 2015, in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, specifically at Jl. Dorowati km 12 Masuk, Giwu Village, Klaurung District. This community reading park aims to provide access to reading materials that are still difficult to find in the area, particularly high quality books. The idea for establishing this reading space originated

during Suhardi's college years when he struggled to find discussion partners with similar reading interests. This experience prompted him to lend his book collection to friends with common interests. After acquiring his own home, this idea was realized in the form of Rumah Kata, which then became a community reading park.

As a TBM, Rumah Kata offers a variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction. The collection at this location comprises approximately 2,000 books, including children's stories, young adult novels, literary works, and translated literature in the fiction category. Meanwhile, the available non-fiction books typically relate to issues in the humanities, education, and personal development, although their quantity is not as large as fiction books. Rumah Kata is also open to various collaborations and partnerships to expand its reach and impact in Sorong City.



Figure 1. Suhardi Aras, founder of Rumah Kata Sorong

Established on August 30, 2015, coinciding with the founder's wife's birthday, Rumah Kata Sorong operates from the residence of its founder, Suhardi Aras. It is located at Jl. Dorowati km 12 Masuk, Kelurahan Giwu, Distrik Klaurung, Sorong City. The center maintains an active social media presence via Instagram, @rumahkatasorong. As of June 12, 2025, their Instagram account features 1223 posts and has garnered 2186 followers. Additionally, the website sapukata.co serves as a platform for curated poetry and prose managed by Rumah Kata Sorong.

The primary motivation for its establishment stemmed from Suhardi's desire to provide access to quality reading materials, which were scarce in Sorong City at that time. The concept of managing a community reading park had been contemplated since his university days and materialized once he acquired his own home. Suhardi noted,

"Upon returning from university, finding discussion partners with similar reading interests was challenging. By lending out book collections, I aimed to connect with individuals who shared these interests, which subsequently led to formalizing the initiative by creating a reading space."

The book collection at Rumah Kata comprises approximately 2,000 books, comprising both fiction and non-fiction titles. Specifically, the collection includes children's storybooks, young adult novels, literary works, and translated literature. The non-fiction section, while less extensive than the fiction collection, primarily focuses on humanities, education, and self-development topics. Suhardi Aras also prioritizes the values of collaboration and cooperation in developing Rumah Kata.

From the strength perspective, the book collection at Rumah Kata Sorong is distinctive, beyond reflecting the owner's preferences. It contains numerous rare and valuable books that are difficult to procure commercially. This unique collection sets it apart from other Community Reading Centers (TBMs).

The aspiration for Rumah Kata Sorong, according to Suhardi Aras,

"Is not to be a silent library, but rather a catalyst for the emergence of new communities."

This is partly achieved by,

"Distributing books to individuals and communities who are initiating reading spaces in their own locales."

The Rumah Kata Sorong is further distinguished by its available facilities, including a PC room, an Infocus projector, a screen, and a diverse book collection. Regarding its operational network and resources, Rumah Kata maintains a collaborative relationship with the national Forum Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (FTBM), which facilitates easy access to information concerning books and activities.

Furthermore, Rumah Kata Sorong frequently receives book donations from both individuals and corporations, such as Pizza Hut, Gramedia, and PLN, all of whom have channeled their programs through Rumah Kata. In 2023, Rumah Kata had the opportunity to receive and manage literary community assistance from the Language Agency to facilitate literary activities in Southwest Papua.

According to Suhardi Aras, they need to do,

"Extra effort is required, such as establishing a reading club where individuals can share their reading experiences with the hope of inspiring others."

Currently, Rumah Kata is championing the public reading of literary works, thereby encouraging the formation of the Bengkel Sastra Sorong community. With the overarching hope, *"More people can subsequently enjoy, present, and ultimately create literary works."*

Meanwhile, regarding weaknesses, regarding resource or facility limitations, Suhardi acknowledged that Rumah Kata still faces constraints in human resources for its management. Suhardi stated,

"The aforementioned limitations represent a shortcoming for Rumah Kata Sorong, as they hinder optimal management of its library space. We are currently endeavoring to address this by recruiting a library administrator and improving the physical premises."

These limitations have primarily hindered Rumah Kata's operations, particularly in its efforts to provide optimal library services. This means establishing a routine operational schedule, such as daily availability, rather than being open only on specific days of the week. Furthermore, consistent staffing would enable more organized recording of book circulation.

When asked about potential financial or sustainability issues, the response was,

"Because Rumah Kata Sorong originated from a hobby of collecting books, there's no obligation to acquire books routinely. Its operations also don't yet require significant funding."

On the other hand, in terms of opportunities, Rumah Kata Sorong is actively leveraging current societal trends and developments to expand its impact. The organization is currently fostering the emergence of a digital literacy sharing session class, a timely initiative given the pervasive integration of AI technology into daily life. This program is reportedly progressing successfully.

"Rumah Kata Sorong is currently promoting the emergence of a digital literacy sharing session class, a topic of significant discussion given the pervasive integration of AI technology into our lives. This initiative is progressing well."

Furthermore, Rumah Kata Sorong maintains an open stance toward external collaborations and partnerships, recognizing these as avenues to amplify its reach and influence. There is also a clear commitment to enhancing and diversifying the programs offered. Rumah Kata strives to evolve with contemporary trends, prioritizing external conditions over rigid adherence to its

original format. Consequently, the organization remains open to collaborations, provided they align with its core principles and objectives.

Conversely, external threat, regarding potential competition from other local institutions for readers, visitors, or programs, Rumah Kata Sorong currently faces none. This absence of competition stems from the organization's foundational belief that it should function as a collaborative space. Its leadership views literacy work as a monumental endeavor a "work for civilization" that cannot be accomplished by a single individual or community.

"So far, there isn't any, because Rumah Kata is intended to be a collaborative space. We view literacy work as a monumental effort, a 'work for civilization,' that cannot be accomplished by just one person or one community."

In terms of policy shifts or funding changes, there are no current threats that could significantly impact Rumah Kata Sorong's operations. Similarly, direct threats from broader external factors such as social, economic, or political conditions are presently not impacting Rumah Kata Sorong directly, despite the organization's awareness and occasional intersection with contemporary issues and trends.

Table 2. Key findings

Aspect	Key Findings
Strengths	▪ Unique book collection with rare and valuable books. ▪ Aspiration to be a catalyst for new communities, not just a library. ▪ Facilities including PC room, Infocus projector, screen, and diverse book collection. ▪ Strong collaborative network with national Forum Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (FTBM) for book access and activities. ▪ Receives book donations from individuals and corporations like Pizza Hut, Gramedia, and PLN. ▪ Receives literary community assistance from the Language Agency for literary activities in Southwest Papua.
Weaknesses	▪ Limited human resources for management, affecting optimal library operation. ▪ Lack of consistent staffing and a routine operational schedule. ▪ Constraints in managing library space and book circulation due to limited resources. ▪ No significant funding required for operations, but some resource limitations exist.
Opportunities	▪ Promoting digital literacy classes to align with AI technology trends. ▪ Open to external collaborations and partnerships for program expansion. ▪ Evolving with contemporary trends, prioritizing external conditions over original formats.
Threats	▪ No competition from local institutions for readers, visitors, or programs due to collaborative approach. ▪ No significant threats from policy shifts, funding changes, or broader social, economic, or political conditions impacting operations.

Organizations do not operate in isolation; they exist alongside, compete with, and collaborate within a complex and interconnected environment. Understanding this environment is crucial for developing strategies, making decisions, and formulating appropriate plans. Therefore, by understanding an organization's internal and external characteristics—in this case, a reading park—such insights can assist the organization in its development while minimizing issues that may jeopardize its existence (Harris 2018).

SWOT analysis is a commonly used tool in organizations to assess internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). Internal analysis helps identify the resources, capabilities, core competencies, and competitive advantages of the organization. In contrast, external analysis identifies market opportunities and threats by examining competitors' resources, the industry environment, and the general environment. SWOT analysis aims to leverage the organization's understanding of its internal and external environment to formulate appropriate strategies (Bonnici and Galea 2017; Keban 2019).

Table 3. SWOT Model (Bonnici and Galea 2017)

	Weaknesses (W)	Strengths (S)
Opportunities (O)	Examines strategies that take advantage of opportunities to avoid weaknesses (WO)	Examines strategies that use strengths to make use of opportunities (SO)
	Examines strategies that minimize the effect of weaknesses and overcome or avoid threats (WT)	Examines strategies that use strengths to overcome or avoid threats (ST)
Threats (T)		

Our discussion will focus on SO (Strengths-Opportunities) and WT (Weaknesses-Threats) strategies, enabling the reading park to maximize its strengths in leveraging opportunities while mitigating the impact of weaknesses in facing threats. This approach is considered more relevant and balanced, allowing for more efficient use of resources to achieve the organization's goals.

SO (Strengths-Opportunities)

Conversely, Rumah Kata Sorong distinguishes itself among community reading parks (Taman Bacaan Masyarakat or TBM) through its curated book collection. This collection not only showcases the owner's tastes but also features books that are often hard to find in the market. This distinctive quality allows Rumah Kata to transcend the role of a mere library; it actively fosters the formation of new communities by distributing books to friends and groups interested in creating their own reading spaces. This strategy reflects a profound understanding that literacy involves not just access to books but also cultivating a vibrant reading culture within communities.

Alongside its unique collection, Rumah Kata is equipped with supportive facilities such as PC rooms, projectors, screens, and a diverse range of books, further solidifying its position as a literacy hub. However, Rumah Kata understands that interest in reading cannot be forced simply by providing free books. Consequently, initiatives like reading clubs and the Bengkel Sastra Sorong (Literary Workshop) community have been established to promote the reading of literary works in public settings. The formation of this community is vital, as research indicates that reading communities can transform individual reading habits into social activities, thereby enhancing collective literacy.

Additionally, Rumah Kata benefits from a vast network, including connections with the national Forum Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (FTBM). This network not only facilitates access to information regarding books and literacy activities but also paves the way for broader collaborations with various stakeholders, including book donations from major companies like

Pizza Hut, Gramedia, and PLN. For example, in 2023, Rumah Kata received support from the Language Agency to facilitate literary activities in Southwest Papua, showcasing how assistance from diverse parties can bolster their literacy mission.

Regarding opportunities, Rumah Kata is adapting to modern trends by encouraging the development of sharing sessions focused on digital literacy. This initiative illustrates Rumah Kata's responsiveness to technological advancements, ensuring that the reading park remains pertinent in an ever-changing environment.

Ultimately, Rumah Kata Sorong not only effectively maintains its relevance in the face of changing times but also expands its impact through strategies that blend traditional strengths with modern innovations. This collaborative and adaptive approach allows Rumah Kata to continue evolving as a dynamic initiative. The strategies employed by Rumah Kata can serve as an inspiration for other literacy centers, emphasizing the importance of not only providing books but also fostering active literacy communities that engage with contemporary technological and cultural developments.

WT (Weaknesses-Threats)

In the weaknesses and threats views, Rumah Kata Sorong encounters challenges due to a limited number of volunteers, particularly because no dedicated manager oversees this community reading park (TBM). This deficiency directly impacts the library's operational effectiveness, including space management and book circulation tracking. Ineffective management can hinder the library's primary service goals, such as providing the community with easy and regular access to books.

The steps taken by Rumah Kata to recruit a library administrator represent a suitable effort to tackle this issue. With a dedicated manager in place, Rumah Kata can improve operational management, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure accurate tracking of book circulation.

Financially, Rumah Kata does not require substantial funding, as its operations are more of a hobby that has evolved into a social initiative. This provides flexibility in operations but also means that financial sustainability depends on the interest and commitment of individuals or small groups. Although Rumah Kata is not currently facing major threats, either financially or externally, it needs to remain vigilant against potential future risks.

External factors, such as changing literacy trends or economic challenges, can impact operations if not managed properly. However, Rumah Kata's desire to become a collaborative space that engages many communities reflects their understanding of the importance of community engagement in maintaining the relevance and sustainability of their initiative.

The strategy implemented by Rumah Kata to encourage youth involvement through their communities is an important step for succession planning and long-term sustainability. By involving younger generations in operations and decision-making, Rumah Kata can ensure that its vision and mission continue, even amid changing social and economic dynamics. The implication is that Rumah Kata needs to continuously develop strategies focused on more professional management, resource diversification, and broader community engagement to ensure the sustainability of their initiative. This way, Rumah Kata can continue functioning as a relevant, adaptive, and sustainable literacy center in Sorong and its surrounding areas.

Table 4. Main findings SO & WT, Rumah Kata Sorong

Aspect	Rumah Kata Sorong
Main findings	A collection of unique and rare books
	Focus on building a reading and literary community.
	A vast network with the Community Reading Forum and collaboration with large companies

Strategies for Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities	Introducing sharing sessions on digital literacy.
	Combining traditional strengths with modern innovations.
Risk Mitigation and Addressing Limitations	Focus on collaboration and community engagement.
	Constraints in management without a dedicated manager.
	Tackling this by recruiting library administrators and enhancing operational management

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Rumah Kata Sorong sets itself apart from other community reading parks (TBMs) by offering a curated collection of books that go beyond personal preference, including rare and hard-to-find titles. This focus on unique literary resources enables Rumah Kata to foster new communities around reading, promoting a culture of literacy rather than merely providing books. Through supportive facilities and initiatives like reading clubs and the Bengkel Sastra Sorong community, Rumah Kata actively cultivates engagement with literature in public spaces, reinforcing the social aspect of reading.

In addition, Rumah Kata's extensive network, including partnerships with organizations like FTBM, as well as collaborations with corporations and government agencies, enhances its capacity to expand its reach and impact. By embracing opportunities like digital literacy programs, Rumah Kata remains adaptable to contemporary trends and ensures its continued relevance in an evolving technological landscape.

Furthermore, Rumah Kata exemplifies how blending traditional approaches with modern strategies can create a thriving literacy hub. Its collaborative, forward-thinking approach provides a valuable model for other literacy centers, demonstrating that the key to fostering lasting literacy growth lies in community involvement, adaptability, and the integration of both cultural and technological developments.

Rumah Kata Sorong also faces challenges such as a lack of dedicated management and limited volunteer support. It is taking proactive steps to address these issues. By recruiting a library administrator, Rumah Kata aims to improve operational efficiency, manage space more effectively, and ensure proper tracking of book circulation. Although the initiative does not require substantial funding, its financial sustainability depends on ongoing community interest and support.

Despite not currently facing significant threats, Rumah Kata must remain vigilant against future risks posed by shifting literacy trends or economic challenges. Its focus on community engagement, particularly through youth involvement, is a critical strategy for ensuring long-term sustainability and succession planning. To maintain its relevance and impact, Rumah Kata should continue developing strategies that emphasize professional management, resource diversification, and broader community engagement. This will allow Rumah Kata to remain a dynamic and sustainable literacy hub in Sorong and Southwest Papua.

On the other hand, this study also has its own limitations, where insights mostly rely on Suhardi Aras, the founder, and various activities at Rumah Kata, which, while valuable, have limitations due to the absence of broader visitor or community input, potentially affecting the depth of analysis. The focus on qualitative aspects may overlook quantitative data that could provide clearer insights into the program's impact, such as visitor numbers, participation rates, and long-term outcomes. Future research could evaluate the impact of Rumah Kata's literacy programs through surveys or interviews to assess changes in reading habits, knowledge, or digital skills, and conduct quantitative studies to analyze community engagement, participant demographics, visit frequency, and participation differences based on age, education, or community involvement.

SUGGESTION

To ensure the sustainability of Rumah Kata, several steps should be considered. First, strengthening management by recruiting professional staff and providing structured training for volunteers to improve operational efficiency. Second, Rumah Kata should seek additional funding sources through partnerships with local businesses or grants from the government and philanthropic organizations.

Additionally, increasing community engagement by organizing events such as literary festivals or workshops can expand its reach and reinforce Rumah Kata's role as a cultural hub. Rumah Kata could also collect quantitative data to measure the impact of its programs, such as through surveys or visitor tracking. Finally, introducing digital programs like online book clubs or virtual workshops will help Rumah Kata remain relevant and reach a wider audience, especially younger generations. With these steps, Rumah Kata can continue to grow and have a greater impact on the community.

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