

Assessing the Gap Between Behavioral Progress and Job Competency Among Samar Parolees and Probationers in Rehabilitation Programs

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Abstract

While community-based correctional programs heavily utilize Therapeutic Communities (TCs) to drive ex-offender rehabilitation, their impact on practical job readiness remains under-researched. This mixed-methods study investigated how TCs shape both the psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of probationers and parolees located in Samar. Utilizing an explanatory sequential design, researchers gathered quantitative metrics from 160 respondents followed by seven in-depth qualitative interviews. Survey data demonstrated that while participants achieved highly satisfactory emotional control and behavioral accountability, their occupational proficiencies and practical training scores were notably deficient. Furthermore, statistical modeling revealed a negligible correlation between therapeutic progress and workforce preparedness. Qualitative insights exposed that absent credentials, societal stigma, and restricted labor markets severely hinder successful reentry, despite strong participant desires for legitimate employment and financial stability. Ultimately, these findings reveal a critical gap: TCs successfully facilitate inner psychological recovery but fail to equip individuals for economic independence. Addressing this deficiency requires a holistic intervention framework that purposefully merges therapeutic rehabilitation with industry-aligned technical training to ensure sustainable societal reintegration...

Keywords : therapeutic communities, psychological behavioral management, psychomotor-vocational learning, offender reintegration, mixed-methods research.

Introduction

Successfully navigating reentry is a persistent hurdle for individuals under community supervision, especially within environments burdened by economic scarcity and pervasive social stigma. To mitigate recidivism and facilitate reintegration, community-based correctional systems frequently deploy Therapeutic Communities (TCs). These peer-driven frameworks are fundamentally designed to cultivate moral realignment, emotional discipline, and prosocial habits through structured routines and collective accountability (Gorman & VerBruggen, 2024; Shaver, 2023; Viglione & Labrecque, 2021). Extant literature confirms that active participation in TCs effectively repairs interpersonal bonds and diminishes antisocial cognition, particularly among justice-impacted groups navigating substance dependency and psychosocial instability (McCrary et al., 2022; Wiese et al., 2024; Wood & Suzuki, 2024). In rural Philippine locales like Samar, these rehabilitative efforts operate within a complex

social matrix characterized by historical skepticism and fragile public trust toward justice institutions (Alviola et al., 2025; Jimenez, 2022; Vivares & Cuevas, 2023).

A cornerstone of the TC model is psychological behavioral management, which instills the emotional control and self-regulation necessary for supervised individuals to function independently in complex social landscapes. Research indicates that structured behavioral interventions successfully reduce impulsivity and promote compliance with societal norms (Lamph et al., 2023; Vitales et al., 2024), equipping individuals to resist criminogenic influences and adhere to supervision mandates (Kendall et al., 2018; Radkovska, 2020). Nevertheless, scholars warn that prioritizing behavioral compliance over functional skill-building often results in a developmental plateau. Participants may achieve emotional stability, yet remain entirely unprepared for the practical demands of independent living (Levenson et al., 2021; Veale et al., 2023).

This developmental ceiling exposes a critical vulnerability in current rehabilitation models: psychological progress does not inherently produce psychomotor-vocational learning skills or job readiness. Securing lawful livelihood is widely recognized as a primary defense against reoffending, providing individuals with social legitimacy and economic stability (Mathlin et al., 2022; Towne et al., 2023). However, evidence suggests that community-based TCs frequently neglect practical, market-relevant training, leaving participants ill-equipped for the workforce (Evers et al., 2020). Consequently, a profound behavioral-vocational disconnect emerges, wherein individuals demonstrate heightened self-control and motivation but fail to achieve economic independence (Graves & Fendrich, 2024; Smith et al., 2024; Wakeland, 2023).

This disparity is exacerbated in provincial areas like Samar by severe structural impediments, including discriminatory hiring practices, a deficit of credentialed training, and an unyielding labor market (Shi & Denver, 2025). Bridging this divide requires interventions that strictly align with labor-market demands, reinforced by continuous academic and institutional scaffolding to ensure that internal progress translates into applied, real-world competencies (Chavez et al., 2023; Connell et al., 2023).

Despite the extensive documentation of these separate domains, contemporary evaluations of TCs frequently rely on broad satisfaction metrics, failing to investigate precisely how—or if—internal therapeutic milestones translate into tangible employment competencies. There remains a distinct lack of research isolating the specific interaction between internal behavioral recovery and external job readiness, particularly from the firsthand perspectives of the participants. By concentrating explicitly on the behavioral-vocational nexus, this study transcends generalized program evaluations to address established programmatic deficiencies in Samar. The resulting insights intend to inform a cohesive, market-aligned framework that intentionally pairs therapeutic healing with occupational empowerment, ultimately securing sustainable reentry pathways.

Research Questions

This study evaluated the impact of Therapeutic Communities (TCs) on the psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of probationers and parolees located in Samar.

Specifically, the investigation sought to answer the following:

What is the assessed level of psychological behavioral management among probationers and parolees located in Samar within their respective Therapeutic Communities, specifically regarding:

behavioral accountability;
emotional regulation and psychological safety; and
interpersonal and self-management skills?

What is the assessed level of psychomotor-vocational learning skills among the participants concerning their program involvement, specifically regarding:

2.1. acquisition of practical and livelihood-related skills;
2.2. training relevant to future employment; and
2.3. readiness for independent and lawful living?

Does a significant difference exist in the levels of psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills between the parolee and probationer cohorts?

Is there a significant relationship between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills among the supervised participants?

What lived experiences and perceived barriers do these individuals encounter when attempting to convert internal behavioral changes into actionable vocational competence and job readiness post-intervention?

What are the participants' overarching aspirations concerning lawful livelihood, financial security, and societal reintegration upon concluding the program?

Methodology

Research Design

To systematically investigate the study's objectives, the researchers implemented a qualitative-dominant explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach (QUAN → QUAL). This framework commenced with a quantitative evaluation to measure participant outcomes regarding psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills. Subsequently, an intensive qualitative phase was prioritized to unpack how the subjects experience and navigate these outcomes in their everyday lives. By heavily emphasizing the qualitative data, the design explicitly aimed to elucidate the quantitative trends—most notably, the persistent disparity between inner behavioral stability and external job preparedness resulting from participation in Therapeutic Communities (TCs). In contrast to previous, broadly focused programmatic assessments, this methodology specifically targeted the intersection of behavioral recovery and vocational proficiency, transcending basic satisfaction metrics to uncover the underlying mechanisms and obstacles dictating employment success.

Population and Sampling

The demographic for this investigation comprised probationers and parolees located in Samar (encompassing both the First and Second Districts) who were actively engaged in or had recently finalized their TCs programming.

During the initial quantitative stage, researchers utilized purposive sampling to recruit a cohort of 160 individuals. This group, split evenly between 80 parolees and 80 probationers, accounted for roughly 46.5% of the total eligible supervised population at the time of data collection. Strict inclusion parameters required respondents to possess the capacity to grant informed consent alongside their program enrollment status.

For the ensuing qualitative component, purposive criterion-based sampling facilitated the selection of seven primary informants—specifically, three probationers and four parolees. The selection criteria targeted individuals capable of deeply articulating their transitional journeys, vocational hurdles, and post-intervention goals. Qualitative data collection proceeded continuously until researchers reached thematic saturation.

Instrument

Data collection relied upon a dual-instrument approach. The quantitative tool consisted of a bespoke, Likert-scaled survey specifically constructed to assess the two primary domains. The first section measured psychological behavioral management by evaluating factors such as perceived psychological safety, interpersonal boundaries, emotional control, and personal accountability. The second section quantified psychomotor-vocational learning skills by gauging readiness for independent labor, practical competency acquisition, everyday life skills, and the relevance of occupational training. The foundation of this survey was built upon established TC evaluative criteria, enriched by preliminary qualitative observations. Prior to formal administration, reliability was verified, and expert panels confirmed content validity.

Conversely, the qualitative tool was a semi-structured interview protocol. This guide was formulated to probe the informants' firsthand narratives regarding their behavioral evolution, the specific barriers obstructing vocational mastery, their struggles securing employment, and their ultimate desires for societal reintegration and lawful income.

Data Gathering Procedure

The execution of data collection adhered to a strict sequential timeline. Upon obtaining necessary institutional clearances, researchers secured voluntary, informed consent from all participants. The process began with the administration of the quantitative survey, executed under conditions that guaranteed anonymity and voluntary compliance.

Once the preliminary quantitative metrics were analyzed, researchers conducted the key informant interviews within secure, private environments. With explicit permission from the subjects, these qualitative sessions were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. This qualitative step was purposefully executed to provide context for the statistical outcomes, particularly to shed light on the deficient scores recorded in employment and vocational metrics. Finally, during the interpretation phase, the researchers synthesized both data strands using a joint display technique, effectively bridging the statistical evidence with the subjects' personal narratives.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative phase, the ordinal data underwent coding and analysis utilizing relevant descriptive statistical measures, specifically relying on interpretive descriptors and medians. Where appropriate, researchers employed non-parametric inferential techniques—such as the Mann–Whitney U test—to ascertain any statistical variance between the parolee and probationer subsets.

The qualitative transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis through a blend of inductive and directed coding strategies. Preliminary codes were established based on the core variables of psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills, while supplementary themes were allowed to organically surface from the raw interview data. These codes were ultimately synthesized into comprehensive themes that directly addressed the vocational-behavioral gap. To finalize the analysis, a joint display matrix was

utilized to integrate the findings from both methodologies, allowing for a structured, comparative synthesis of the numerical trends and their corresponding qualitative justifications.

Ethical Considerations

Given the vulnerabilities inherent in justice-impacted demographics, rigorous ethical protocols were enforced throughout the study's duration. All involvement was strictly voluntary. Researchers ensured that every participant fully comprehended the research objectives, methodologies, and their unconditional right to terminate participation at any moment without risking negative repercussions to their legal or supervision standing.

To protect participant privacy, researchers assigned coded identifiers, ensuring that no recognizable personal details appeared in the final manuscript. Furthermore, all collected data was sequestered in password-secured digital files, restricted solely to the primary investigative team. Ultimately, the entire research process was governed by the fundamental tenets of human dignity, absolute confidentiality, and informed consent.

Results

This section details the quantitative and qualitative findings derived from the investigation. Adhering to the explanatory sequential mixed-methods framework, the statistical data are presented first, followed immediately by the corresponding qualitative narratives to provide context to the numerical trends.

Research Question 1. What is the assessed level of psychological behavioral management among probationers and parolees located in Samar within their respective Therapeutic Communities?

Table 1. Assessed Level of Psychological Behavioral Management

Assessed Indicators	Parolee Cohort (Median)	Interpretive Description	Probationer Cohort (Median)	Interpretive Description	Overall Description
Behavioral accountability	4.3	Very Satisfied	4.2	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Emotional regulation & psychological safety	3.1	Satisfied	3.2	Satisfied	Satisfied
Interpersonal & self-management skills	3.4	Satisfied	4.1	Very Satisfied	Satisfied
Overall	3.3	Satisfied	4.1	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied

Data gathered from the participants reveal that both cohorts attained satisfactory to highly satisfactory overall scores in psychological behavioral management following their engagement with Therapeutic Communities (TCs). For both supervised groups, behavioral accountability registered as the most robust dimension, illustrating a heightened capacity for personal responsibility, adherence to regulations, and internal discipline. Conversely, while psychological safety and emotional regulation received positive evaluations, they plateaued at a "Satisfied" threshold, indicating moderate emotional grounding rather than profound psychological transformation.

While probationers recorded a numerically higher overall median score (4.1) compared to their parolee counterparts (3.3), subsequent statistical testing (detailed in Table 3) confirmed this divergence is not statistically significant. This indicates that participation in TCs consistently fortifies internal behavioral regulation across both supervision categories, yielding equivalent behavioral outcomes regardless of the specific supervision mandate.

Research Question 2. What is the assessed level of psychomotor-vocational learning skills among the participants concerning their program involvement, specifically regarding: 2.1. acquisition of practical and livelihood-related skills?

Table 2. Assessed Level of Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills

Assessed Indicators	Parolee Cohort (Median)	Interpretive Description	Probationer Cohort (Median)	Interpretive Description	Overall Description
Practical skill acquisition	1.2	Very Dissatisfied	1.1	Very Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Employment-relevant training	1.3	Very Dissatisfied	1.2	Very Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Readiness for independent living	2.1	Dissatisfied	1.4	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Overall	1.5	Very Dissatisfied	1.3	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied

In stark contrast to the favorable behavioral metrics, evaluations of psychomotor-vocational learning skills yielded uniformly deficient scores across both cohorts. Respondents conveyed profound dissatisfaction regarding their preparation for autonomous living, the provision of occupational training, and the mastering of applied practical competencies. This severe deficit was universally recognized by all respondents, though the probationer cohort recorded marginally lower satisfaction concerning their overall occupational preparedness (1.3) compared to the parolees (1.5). The data explicitly illustrate a severe discrepancy between internal behavioral motivation and external vocational capability resulting from program participation.

Research Question 3. Does a significant difference exist in the levels of psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills between the parolee and probationer cohorts?

Table 3. Statistical Variance Between Cohorts (Mann–Whitney U Test)

Measured Variable	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Statistical Significance
Psychological Behavioral Management	3112	0.144	Not Significant
Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills	2635	0.008	Significant

Statistical testing confirmed no significant variance ($p = 0.144$) between the cohorts concerning psychological behavioral management. This indicates that Therapeutic Communities yield equivalent behavioral outcomes irrespective of the participant's specific supervision mandate.

Conversely, a statistically significant disparity ($p = 0.008$) emerged regarding psychomotor-vocational learning skills. As reflected in the medians from Table 2, the probationer cohort demonstrated noticeably deeper dissatisfaction with their vocational training and employment readiness than the parolees.

Research Question 4. Is there a significant relationship between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills among the supervised participants?

Table 4. Correlation Between Core Variables

Correlated Variables	Spearman's rho (ρ)	Interpretive Association
Psychological Behavioral Management $\times$ Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills	0.18 (Weak)	Not Strongly Associated

Correlational analysis identified a negligible relationship (Spearman's $\rho = 0.18$) linking psychomotor-vocational learning skills with psychological behavioral management. This statistical outcome demonstrates that advances

in behavioral rehabilitation and emotional regulation do not inherently correspond with or produce improvements in vocational competence and job readiness.

Research Question 5. What lived experiences and perceived barriers do these individuals encounter when attempting to convert internal behavioral changes into actionable vocational competence and job readiness post-intervention?

Psychological and Behavioral Transformation Through the Therapeutic Community

Six key informants detailed experiencing profound behavioral and psychological evolutions resulting from their enrollment in the TC framework. They articulated a newfound mastery over their emotional responses, enhanced self-discipline, and deepened self-awareness. The subjects credited this growth directly to the intervention's reliance on continuous self-reflection, mutual peer enforcement, and strict daily scheduling. The majority reported dramatic enhancements in their ability to manage anger, respect boundaries, and adhere to regulations. However, the informants clarified that their progress was almost exclusively moral and internal, possessing no direct correlation to actual job readiness.

"My behavior has changed significantly. I have learned to manage myself and adhere to the rules."

"Compared to my past self, I have improved—becoming more composed and showing greater respect to those around me."

Lack of Vocational Skills and Employment Preparation

Seven informants voiced severe frustration regarding the distinct absence of applied, technical training during their program tenure. While they felt psychologically equipped to rejoin their communities, they simultaneously recognized that they lacked the competitive, marketable skills required to secure legitimate work. The consensus among the subjects was that programmatic activities were overwhelmingly fixated on behavioral discipline, heavily neglecting tangible job preparation or technical instruction.

"While I am prepared to reform, the training provided was insufficient to help us secure employment."

"We made progress in our behavior, yet we still fall short when it comes to practical occupational skills."

Structural Barriers to Employment and Reintegration

Five subjects highlighted entrenched societal and structural impediments that actively blocked their transition from internal rehabilitation to external employment. Primary obstacles included an absence of educational qualifications, a heavily restricted local job market, and the intense societal prejudice attached to their legal status. Multiple informants recounted instances where simply disclosing their supervision status during the hiring process resulted in immediate disqualification.

"No matter how much I desire to work, employers immediately reject you once they discover your prison background."

"The prejudice remains, regardless of whether you have genuinely reformed."

Research Question 6. What are the participants' overarching aspirations concerning lawful livelihood, financial security, and societal reintegration upon concluding the program?

Aspiration for Lawful and Dignified Livelihood

All seven qualitative informants emphasized a profound ambition to obtain respectable, legitimate employment following their TC completion. They viewed a reliable job not merely as a tool for financial survival, but as a critical mechanism for rebuilding fractured community trust, restoring their personal dignity, and validating their rehabilitation to their families. Legitimate work was consistently framed as the ultimate, physical proof of their internal transformation.

"Securing respectable employment is how I want to demonstrate my genuine transformation."

"My greatest desire is to find a job so I can provide for my family."

Desire for Peaceful and Stable Reintegration

Six of the subjects shared future aspirations deeply rooted in living a tranquil, crime-free, and predictable existence. They envisioned futures defined by social integration, familial healing, and sustained emotional grounding. The informants clearly understood that successful reentry required vigilant maintenance of their new behavioral standards and the strict avoidance of environments tied to their prior offenses.

"All I seek is a tranquil life, far removed from any conflict."

"I have no desire whatsoever to revert to my previous way of living."

Alignment of Aspirations with Program Gaps

Even as the informants detailed their intense desires for societal reintegration and honest labor, they simultaneously acknowledged a severe disconnect between their personal ambitions and the actual resources supplied by their intervention program. Two subjects explicitly noted that without targeted employment advocacy, skills credentialing, and occupational training, their goals would likely remain permanently out of reach.

"We hold onto our dreams, yet we require external backing to turn them into reality."

Discussion

The synthesized quantitative and qualitative data collectively validate that Therapeutic Communities (TCs) are highly capable of instilling psychological behavioral management among probationers and parolees located in Samar. The impressive programmatic outcomes regarding behavioral accountability echo the foundational mechanisms of the TC model, which relies heavily on peer monitoring, structured social modeling, and collective responsibility to catalyze personal reform (De Leon, 2010; Wiese et al., 2024). These results are congruent with established research demonstrating that justice-involved individuals experience significant gains in impulse control, emotional regulation, and prosocial conduct following TC interventions (Messina et al., 2021; Wood & Suzuki, 2024).

Nevertheless, the data simultaneously revealed a developmental plateau concerning psychological safety and emotional regulation. This specific limitation supports contemporary critiques arguing that rehabilitative programming frequently secures outward behavioral compliance well before profound emotional healing occurs (Levenson et al., 2021). Consequently, while TCs reliably produce psychosocial improvements, this internal evolution often fails to address the comprehensive, functional requirements of reintegration, leaving a notable gap in actual livelihood preparedness (Evers et al., 2020).

This programmatic gap is starkly illuminated by the severe deficits observed in psychomotor-vocational learning skills and the negligible statistical correlation tying these skills to behavioral progress. This explicit disconnect confirms a critical premise of this investigation: psychological behavioral management does not organically yield occupational competence. Although TCs successfully foster vital soft skills like discipline and interpersonal accountability, these abstract values cannot serve as proxies for the technical certifications and hard skills demanded by the modern labor market (Smith et al., 2024).

The pervasive dissatisfaction regarding vocational training reported by both cohorts underscores a systemic flaw within community supervision frameworks, which frequently sideline market-relevant skills development in favor of purely therapeutic goals (Evers et al., 2020; Connell et al., 2023). Because securing lawful employment is a fundamental pillar of sustained reentry—providing necessary income, daily routine, and social legitimacy (Towne et al., 2023)—this programmatic oversight leaves participants economically defenseless. This vulnerability is heavily magnified in provincial territories like Samar, where fierce job competition and scarce employment opportunities dominate the economic landscape (DOJ, 2020).

Furthermore, the distinct experiences of the supervised cohorts highlight how varying legal parameters dictate reintegration pressures. The statistically significant finding that probationers experienced deeper dissatisfaction with their vocational readiness aligns with literature asserting that the specific context of community supervision heavily influences a participant's self-assessment and societal reintegration (Harding et al., 2022). Because probationers are continuously embedded within their communities, they likely face more immediate, unrelenting societal expectations to generate income, thereby magnifying their awareness of their occupational shortcomings. Beyond individual competencies, the qualitative narratives expose severe systemic impediments—most notably, an enduring societal stigma and an absence of formalized educational credentials. Employers' persistent refusal to hire justice-impacted applicants effectively neutralizes the participants' hard-won behavioral advancements, a structural barrier exhaustively documented in modern reentry scholarship (Pager, 2007; Shi & Denver, 2025). These lived experiences confirm that true rehabilitation is contingent upon societal receptivity; without cooperative labor-market policies and active employer partnerships, individual moral reform remains insufficient to overcome systemic economic exclusion (Harding et al., 2022).

Finally, the informants' unified desires for respectable employment and a tranquil, crime-free existence firmly align with desistance theory. Theoretical frameworks consistently posit that obtaining legitimate work acts as a transformative catalyst, solidifying a prosocial identity and actively preventing recidivism (Maruna, 2001; Uggen, 2000). The participants' specific yearning for "dignified" labor transcends basic financial survival, illustrating a profound pursuit of moral reclamation, familial trust, and societal acceptance—themes frequently emphasized in qualitative reentry investigations (Bushway & Apel, 2012).

Their articulated aspirations for stability signify a successful internalization of the prosocial norms championed by TCs (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). However, the participants themselves explicitly acknowledge the severe mismatch between their reentry ambitions and the actual resources provided by their rehabilitation programs. This disparity underscores the most pressing limitation of current TC models: they successfully ignite internal motivation but fail to furnish the external tools necessary to realize those ambitions. To genuinely secure long-term reintegration, scholars insist that rehabilitation paradigms must evolve into integrated frameworks that

intentionally bridge psychological healing with concrete labor-market opportunities (Graves & Fendrich, 2024; Smith et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This research investigated the impact of Therapeutic Communities (TCs) on the psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of probationers and parolees located in Samar. The gathered evidence clearly establishes that these interventions successfully cultivate profound psychological and behavioral advancements, most notably in areas of personal accountability, interpersonal boundary setting, and emotional control. Both the statistical metrics and qualitative narratives corroborate that supervised individuals undergo substantial internal growth, thereby validating the efficacy of the TC framework as a robust tool for moral rehabilitation and behavioral grounding within community corrections.

Notwithstanding these psychosocial triumphs, the investigation exposed severe deficiencies regarding psychomotor-vocational learning skills. Supervised individuals recorded profound dissatisfaction with their exposure to practical abilities, industry-relevant instruction, and overall preparedness for autonomous living. Furthermore, the negligible statistical correlation linking psychomotor-vocational learning skills with psychological behavioral management illuminates a critical programmatic flaw: achieving behavioral reform does not organically generate workforce readiness. The qualitative narratives contextualized this disparity, identifying a lack of formal credentialing, inadequate technical instruction, pervasive societal prejudice, and a highly restricted local job market as primary hurdles to occupational reentry.

While these insights offer valuable perspectives on offender rehabilitation, they must be contextualized within specific methodological constraints, namely the reliance on self-reported data and the study's confinement to a singular provincial setting, which may restrict broader generalizability. Regardless of these limitations, the evidence explicitly dictates an urgent pivot toward a cohesive behavioral-vocational paradigm. Therapeutic Communities (TCs) must intentionally synchronize their psychological interventions with labor-market demands, comprehensive skills training, and direct employment advocacy. Bridging this specific divide is absolutely critical to transmuting internal therapeutic milestones into economic stability, societal acceptance, and enduring reintegration. Subsequent academic inquiries should expand upon this foundation by evaluating these dual-focused frameworks across diverse geographical landscapes, utilizing longitudinal methodologies and objective employment metrics to comprehensively track long-term reentry success..

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