

# Cooperative Learning and Attitude towards Research in University Students of Business Sciences

## *Aprendizaje cooperativo y actitud hacia la investigación en estudiantes universitarios de ciencias empresariales*

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Fecha de recepción: 22.11.2023

Fecha de aprobación: 10.02.2024

Fecha de publicación: 15.02.2024

Cómo citar: Loza, R. (2024). Cooperative Learning and Attitude towards Research in University Students of Business Sciences. *Psiquemag* 13 (1), e130109.

<https://doi.org/10.18050/psiquemag.v13i1.2782>

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between cooperative learning and attitude towards research in university business students in Tacna, Peru. Based on the existing literature, the dimensions of these variables were identified, using the Constructivist Theory of Learning and the Attitude Reinforcement Theory as a conceptual framework, in order to propose a model of hypothesized relationships between them. To validate this model, a structural equation approach was employed, using a probability sample of 614 university students. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between cooperative learning and attitude toward research ( $r_s=.663$ ), indicating a high level of fit between the empirical data and the proposed theoretical model, based on structural equations, to explain the relationship between cooperative learning and attitude toward research. These results have practical implications relevant for both university students and educators in higher education institutions in Tacna.

**Keywords:** Cooperative learning, attitude, research, students, university students.

### Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue examinar la relación entre el aprendizaje cooperativo y la actitud hacia la investigación en estudiantes universitarios de ciencias empresariales en Tacna, Perú. Basándose en la literatura existente, se identificaron las dimensiones de estas variables, utilizando como marco conceptual la Teoría Constructivista del Aprendizaje y la Teoría del Reforzamiento de Actitudes, con el fin de proponer un modelo de relaciones hipotéticas entre ellas. Para validar este modelo, se empleó un enfoque de ecuaciones estructurales, utilizando una muestra probabilística de 614 estudiantes universitarios. Los hallazgos revelaron una correlación positiva significativa entre el aprendizaje cooperativo y la actitud hacia la investigación ( $r_s=.663$ ), indicando además un alto nivel de ajuste entre los datos empíricos y el modelo teórico propuesto, fundamentado en ecuaciones estructurales, para explicar la relación entre el aprendizaje cooperativo y la actitud hacia la investigación. Estos resultados poseen implicaciones prácticas relevantes tanto para los estudiantes universitarios como para los educadores de las instituciones de educación superior en Tacna.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje cooperativo, actitud, investigación, estudiantes, universitarios.

## INTRODUCTION

In the university context, the health crisis imposed a rapid transition from face-to-face to online teaching, with the complete delivery of classes through internet-based methodologies and information and communication technologies (Garrote et al., 2019). Comprehensive online assessment became a challenge for face-to-face universities from an institutional perspective (Román, 2020), leading university teachers to rapidly adapt their teaching methods and develop digital lessons (Blondeel et al., 2021).

The changes induced by the COVID pandemic caused a shift towards a cooperative approach in the learning process, where group members interact and share information and knowledge to carry out their academic activities (Buchs et al., 2018). This led to the implementation of teaching methodologies such as cooperative learning (CL), which promotes peer interaction between students and teachers to impart knowledge and develop skills needed in today's competitive world (Estrada et al., 2016).

Based on the constructivist theory of learning, supported by Basantes & Santiesteban (2019), it is argued that there are no absolute truths and that every theory must be subjected to verification, giving the student a central role in their learning process, with the teacher acting as a tutor for problem-solving, inquiry, and participation through forums and discussions.

Cooperative learning, through participation and interactive communication among group members, allows teachers to change students' individualistic perspectives and increase their motivation and sense of responsibility (Garrote et al., 2019). This approach involves students working in small teams to achieve a common goal (Gil-Galván, 2018), fostering mutual support among group members to achieve learning objectives (Juárez-Pulido et al., 2019).

Cooperative learning has gained a significant presence in various educational stages in recent times (Delgado-García et al., 2021). Although numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of this methodology, few have explored the factors that influence student performance. One of these key factors is proactivity, especially in cooperative environments that require active

student participation (Garcia & Cabrera, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to move away from an individualistic approach in the educational process and adopt a cooperative one, where participation and interaction between the actors involved (teachers and students) is constant, especially in the context of research (Loza, 2021).

In this sense, facilitators should take advantage of cooperative learning to foster a research-oriented mindset, promoting positive attitudes toward scientific exploration as a way to acquire new knowledge and catalyze social change (Carrillo et al., 2021). Although the main objective of higher education is not necessarily to train researchers, it does seek to instill in students a favorable disposition towards research so that they become competent users of research, applying a scientific approach to solve problems in their professional field (Aldana et al., 2020).

It is crucial to better understand the potential of students to encourage their participation in research (Assar et al., 2022). The current situation demands the active participation of all involved and the development of social skills that allow them to interact and build knowledge collaboratively (Lenkauskaitė et al., 2020; Ruiz & Vega, 2019).

As Castañer (2022) points out, participants should dialogue about their work together, evaluate whether they are achieving their goals, and discuss their group dynamics. Team members must understand that the achievement of a common goal depends on the cooperation of each of them, which implies an essential interdependence for successful teamwork (Castañer, 2022; Juárez-Pulido et al., 2019).

However, a disconnect is often observed among team members, who focus on individual problems instead of fulfilling group tasks. It is essential to emphasize that cooperation requires direct interaction to achieve the desired results. In this way, each student establishes relationships that reinforce the learning efforts of their peers, demonstrating that they are more than mere passive participants (Espinoza & Peralta, 2021). On many occasions, conflicts arise among team members when they are required to comply with the assigned tasks.

According to Klang et al. (2020), students who participate in team learning activities and maintain consistent communication perform

better than those who do not. However, the different contexts and procedures in which the cooperative learning methodology is implemented may need to be more favorable and sufficient to foster attitudes toward research that incorporate a cognitive component conducive to learning and contributing objectively to the group (Loza, 2021). In this sense, Vossen et al. (2021) point out that, according to the reinforcement theory of attitudes, attitude formation is influenced by classical conditioning processes, which can give rise to future behaviors among interacting individuals.

In addition, empirical evidence indicates that the effectiveness of a workgroup decreases in conflictive situations, and the weaknesses generated by the diverse personalities of its members can affect the development of

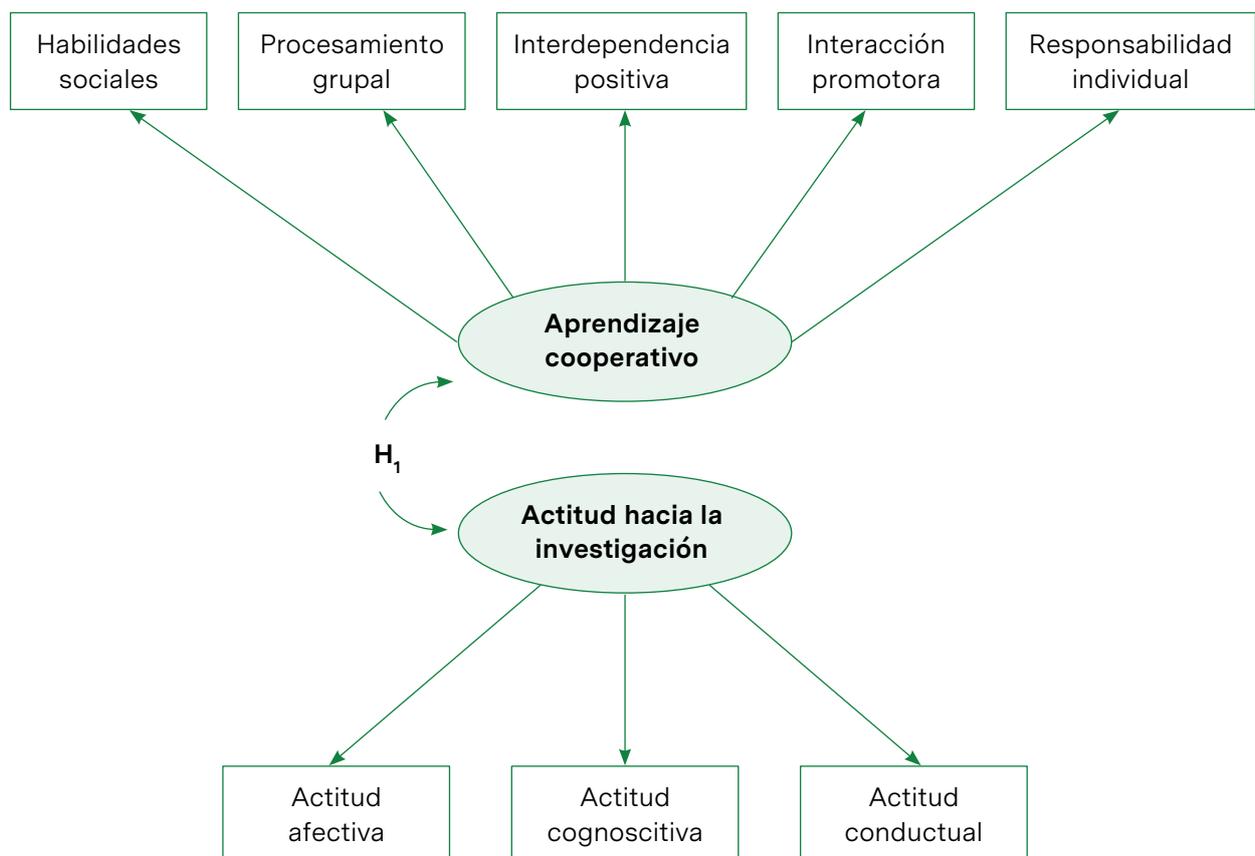
cooperative learning. Therefore, it is essential to promote positive attitudes towards research in order to encourage the production of high-quality research that contributes to the advancement of knowledge and society.

Based on the problems described, the following hypothesis emerges H1: There is a positive correlation between cooperative learning and attitude toward research in a virtual environment among students of licensed universities in Tacna, Peru.

The theoretical review leads to the formulation of the following conceptual model, where it is postulated that cooperative learning has a positive relationship with attitude towards research (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Proposed theoretical model*



## METHOD

### Research design

The study adopts a non-experimental design of a correlational nature, which focuses on analyzing the relationship between variables from the comparison between theory and practice, i.e., events observed in real life (Ñaupas et al., 2018).

### Participants

The sample is composed of 614 university business students from licensed institutions in Tacna, Peru.

### Instruments

To assess cooperative learning, the Cooperative Learning Scale was used, originally developed by Fernández-Rio et al. (2017) and adapted to the Peruvian context by Loza (2021). This instrument includes the following dimensions: social skills, group processing, positive interdependence, promoting interaction, and individual responsibility. It is composed of 20 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” In terms of internal consistency, the instrument demonstrated good reliability in this study, with an omega coefficient ( $\Omega$ ) of 0.87.

On the other hand, to measure attitudes toward research, the Research Attitude Scale, originally developed by Quezada-Berumen et al. (2019) in Mexico and adapted to the Peruvian context by Loza (2021), was used. This scale covers three dimensions: cognitive, behavioral, and affective. It is composed of 32 items and is also evaluated on a five-point Likert scale. Like the previous scale, the internal consistency of this instrument was adequate in this study, with an omega coefficient ( $\Omega$ ) of 0.861.

### Variables

The proposed theoretical framework comprises the exogenous variable of cooperative learning, which is related to the endogenous variable of attitude toward research. The construct of the exogenous variable of cooperative learning is composed of five dimensions (latent variables): social skills, group processing, positive interdependence, promoting interaction, and individual responsibility, according to the Cooperative Learning Scale, assessed by a Likert-type scale (see Table 1). The endogenous variable construct of attitude toward research is constituted by the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions (latent variables), according to the Attitudes toward Research Scale, also evaluated by means of a Likert-type scale (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the participants*

| Variable                                | Dimensions               | Indicators                                | Instrument                 |
|---|--------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Learning learning</b><br>(exogenous) | Social skills            | Capacity for dialogue                     | Cooperative Learning Scale |
|   |                          | Climate of trust                          |                            |
|   |                          | Conflict management                       |                            |
|   | Group processing         | Goal planning                             |                            |
|   |                          | Group work                                |                            |
|   |                          | Decision making                           |                            |
|   | Positive interdependence | Common objectives                         |                            |
|   |                          | Commitment                                |                            |
|   |                          | Individual efforts                        |                            |
|   | Promoting interaction    | Promoting learning                        |                            |
| Doing activities together               |                          |   |                            |
|   |                          | Encouraging and congratulating each other |                            |

|  |                           |                                 |                                    |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Attitude towards research</b><br>(endogenous) | Individual responsibility | Participation                   | Scale<br>attitude towards research |
|  |                           | Effort                          |                                    |
|  |                           | Responsibility                  |                                    |
|  | Cognitive                 | Rigor and precision             |                                    |
|  |                           | Consistency                     |                                    |
|  |                           | Creativity                      |                                    |
|  | Behavioral                | Interest in research            |                                    |
|  |                           | Appreciation of scientific work |                                    |
|  |                           | Tolerance                       |                                    |
|  |                           | Honesty                         |                                    |
|  |                           | Appreciation of limitations     |                                    |
|  |                           | Enjoyment of research           |                                    |
|  | Affective                 | Active participation            |                                    |
| Perseverance                                     |                           |                                 |                                    |

Note: Adapted from (Loza, 2021) and Quezada-Berumen et al. (2019).

## Reliability

Table 2 presents the reliability analysis of the variable constructs and their respective dimensions using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. It is important to highlight that all the values obtained exceed the minimum threshold of 0.7.

Specifically, the coefficient for the construct of the cooperative learning variable was 0.865, while for the construct of the attitude toward the research variable, it was 0.861. In addition, the results of the variable constructs, evaluated by the average variance extracted (AVE), also exceeded the acceptable threshold of > 0.5.

**Table 2**

*Reliability and validity assessment.*

| Variable   | Dimensions                | Indexs | Alpha | (AVE) |
|--|---------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Cooperative learning</b><br>(exogenous)       | Social skills             | 0,801  | 0,865 | 0,82  |
|  | Group processing          | 0,799  |       |       |
|  | Positive interdependence  | 0,803  |       |       |
|  | Promoting interaction     | 0,799  |       |       |
|  | Individual responsibility | 0,804  |       |       |
| <b>Attitude towards research</b><br>(endogenous) | Cognitive                 | 0,807  | 0,861 | 0,81  |
|  | Behavioral                | 0,805  |       |       |
|  | Affective                 | 0,869  |       |       |

## RESULTS

### Correlation of variables

The purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between cooperative learning and the disposition towards research among business science students belonging to the graduate universities of Tacna. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to explore the correlations

between the exogenous variable (cooperative learning) and the endogenous variable (attitude toward research). It was observed that the variables with the strongest correlation were positive interdependence (Indpos) with a value of 0.702, group processing (Respr) with 0.701, and promoter interaction (Intprom) with 0.786. On the other hand, the variables with the lowest correlations were affective attitude (Acafec) with 0.547, cognitive attitude (Accog) with 0.307, and behavioral attitude (Accod) with 0.339, as detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Correlation of variables.*

|      | APRE      | ACT       | Indpos    | Respr     | Intprom   | Habsoci   | Pgrup   | Acafec    | Accog    | Acod |
|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|------|
| APRE | 1         |           |           |           |           |           |         |           |          |      |
| ACT  | 0.414     | 1         |           |           |           |           |         |           |          |      |
|      | 0.721     |           | 1         |           |           |           |         |           |          |      |
|      | 0.650 *** | 0.326     |           | 1         |           |           |         |           |          |      |
|      | <.001     | 0.525     |           |           | 1         |           |         |           |          |      |
|      | 0.701 *** | 0.415     | 0.365 *** |           |           | 1         |         |           |          |      |
|      | <.001     | 0.705     | <.001     |           |           |           | 1       |           |          |      |
|      | 0.786 *** | 0.439     | 0.373 *** | 0.409 *** |           |           |         | 1         |          |      |
|      | <.001     | 0.336     | <.001     | <.001     |           |           |         |           | 1        |      |
|      | 0.851 *** | 0.003     | 0.379 *** | 0.487 *** | 0.627 *** |           |         |           |          | 1    |
|      | <.001     | 0.943     | <.001     | <.001     | <.001     |           |         |           |          |      |
|      | 0.789 *** | 0.362     | 0.344 *** | 0.419 *** | 0.541 *** | 0.692 *** |         |           |          |      |
|      | <.001     | 0.125     | <.001     | <.001     | <.001     | <.001     |         |           |          |      |
|      | 0.420     | 0.704 *** | 0.414     | 0.338     | 0.327     | 0.336     | 0.413   |           |          |      |
|      | 0.629     | <.001     | 0.727     | 0.351     | 0.511     | 0.379     | 0.744   |           |          |      |
|      | 0.307     | 0.725 *** | 0.302     | 0.342     | 0.327     | 0.037     | 0.329   | 0.669 *** |          |      |
|      | 0.861     | <.001     | 0.967     | 0.302     | 0.508     | 0.358     | 0.470   | <.001     |          |      |
|      | 0.339     | 0.712 *** | 0.032     | 0.225     | 0.329     | 0.388     | 0.388 * | 0.303 *   | 0.315 ** |      |
|      | 0.334     | <.001     | 0.433     | 0.540     | 0.472     | 0.030     | 0.030   | 0.411     | 0.404    | 1    |

Note. \* p <.05, \*\* p <.01, \*\*\* p <.001

## Model Estimation

In the framework of the proposed model, attitude towards research is presented as the endogenous variable explained by cooperative learning. After the estimation of the model, it is observed that the indices obtained are acceptable since they are within the range of the goodness-of-fit measures. Specifically, the CMIN/DF value is 1.96, fulfilling the condition of being less than 3.00; the quadratic error rate (RMR) is 0.69 close to zero as expected; the error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.040, below the threshold of 0.05; the normalized fit index (NFI) is 0.974, exceeding the minimum value of 0.90; and, the CFI reaches a value of 0.987, also within the acceptable range of 0.90 or higher. This indicates that there is a high level of goodness of fit between the empirical data and the proposed covariance model based on structural equations to analyze the relationship between cooperative learning and the attitude towards research in business students of the graduate universities of Tacna.

It is relevant to highlight that the model yielded an R coefficient of 0.63, which means that 63% of the variability of cooperative learning is positively

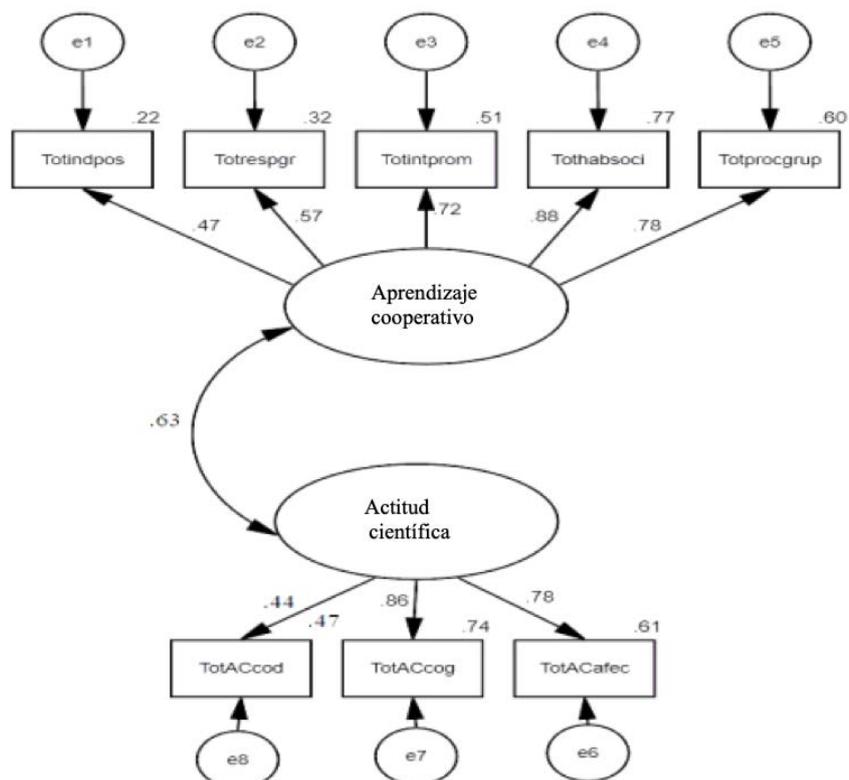
related to the attitude towards research of university students. This indicates a high degree of fit in the proposed theoretical model.

Figure 2 illustrates the covariance model between cooperative learning and attitude toward research, considering the dimensions of social skills, positive interdependence, promotive interaction, and individual responsibility for cooperative learning, and the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions for attitude toward research. The covariance between these variables reached a correlational index of 0.63, indicating a significant positive relationship between them and supporting the study hypothesis. This suggests a positive correlation between cooperative learning and attitude towards research in business students of Tacna's undergraduate universities, as expected.

To establish the relationship between the variables, Pearson's correlation test was used, where a value of  $p = .001$  was obtained, lower than the chosen significance level (0.05), which allows accepting the research hypothesis, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Covariance model between cooperative learning and attitude toward research.*



## DISCUSSION

According to previous research, such as those of Hernández & Yallico (2021), the possibility of acquiring research skills through cooperative learning methodology is highlighted, especially when there is an intrinsic motivation to learn since teamwork is often preferable to individual work. It is essential to promote collaboration between teachers and students to find solutions that integrate methodological and technological options while ensuring fairness, safety, and transparency for all involved, both internal and external, as suggested by García-Peñalvo et al. (2020).

Likewise, the results obtained in this study agree with the conclusions of Cruz et al. (2021), who highlight that the active methodologies applied in cooperative learning place the student at the center of the educational process, while the role of the teacher is reduced to being a mediator, motivator and facilitator. Furthermore, it aligns with Bustamante's (2021) research, which points out how collaboration among students promotes meaningful learning by fostering a shift from a passive and receptive position to the active construction of knowledge through interaction with peers.

The findings also coincide with the study by Zurita (2020), who indicates that through activities such as explanation, description, exemplification, and con-textualization, cooperative learning facilitates students' assimilation of knowledge. Interaction in cooperative teams plays a crucial role in the development of cognitive skills, allowing students to learn, develop, and transfer knowledge while interacting socially.

In summary, cooperative learning is positively related to attitude towards research. Furthermore, a high degree of fit has been demonstrated between the empirical data and the proposed model based on structural equations. This supports the covariance between cooperative learning and attitude towards research in undergraduate business students of Tacna's undergraduate universities.

## CONCLUSIONS

A significant positive correlation is identified between cooperative learning and the disposition towards research in a virtual environment, specifically in business students from authorized universities in Tacna, Peru ( $p=.001$ ;  $r_s=0.63$ ).

In order to promote or improve attitudes conducive to research, both in cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, necessary to generate innovative research work that contributes to local, regional, and global progress, it is essential to focus on cooperative learning. The fostering of social skills characterizes this pedagogical approach, the facilitation of teamwork, and the promotion of individual responsibility. It is anticipated that these results will serve as a starting point for educational managers and teachers, who will be able to implement corrective measures to optimize the educational process and cultivate a favorable disposition towards research, which in turn will stimulate the generation of innovative ideas that will benefit the development of the community.

Among the limitations identified, it is noteworthy that the study was limited only to business students from authorized universities in Tacna, Peru, using a cross-sectional research design. Therefore, future research could expand its scope to a national level, covering longer study periods to facilitate comparisons between the findings. In addition, it would be pertinent to explore the application of cooperative learning in different educational modalities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is grateful for the help of the authorities of the private institution who gave permission to carry out the research.

## FUNDING

Self-financed

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RL: Analyzed statistical results, collected and processed data, writing up, interpreting results and proofreading.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares under oath not to incur in problems of interest in carrying out this work.

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