

**FACTORS AFFECTING MARITAL QUALITY AND ITS DETERMINANTS:  
ADANA/TURKEY FIELDWORK\***

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**ABSTRACT**

Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ) is used to measure the marital quality and it especially focuses on four dimensions which are full marriage harmony, the number and frequency of marital conflict on certain issues, divorce risk, and marital satisfaction and instability. The purpose of this study is to explore MPQ and examine the reliability and validity of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), which measures full marriage harmony, for Adana. The study also focuses on determining important demographic characteristics affecting marital satisfaction, which is again measured with MPQ. For this purpose, a sample of 319 residents that are married and living in Adana is used. Factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficient are used to examine validity and reliability of DAS for the sample chosen. Using ANOVA and t-tests, significant differences for marital satisfaction are revealed for demographic characteristics.

**Keywords:** Marital Problems Questionnaire, Factor analysis, Validity and reliability

**EVLİLİK KALİTESİNİ BELİRLEYEN FAKTÖRLER VE BİLEŞENLERİNİN  
ANALİZİ: ADANA İLİ ÖRNEĞİ\***

**ÖZ**

Evlilik Problemleri Anketi (EPA) evlilik kalitesini ölçmek için kullanılan ve tam evlilik uyumu, belirli konulardaki evlilik çatışmalarının sayısı ve sıklığı, boşanma riski ve evlilik tatmini ve değişkenliği üzerine yoğunlaşan bir ölçektir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Adana için EPA'yı özetlemek ve tam evlilik uyumunu ölçen Evlilik Uyum Ölçeğinin (EUÖ) güvenilirlik ve geçerliliğini incelemektir. Çalışmada ayrıca yine EPA ile ölçülen evlilik tatminini etkileyen önemli demografik özelliklerin belirlenmesi üzerine odaklanılmıştır. Bu amaçla Adana ilinde yaşayan ve evli olan 319 kişiden oluşan bir örneklem kullanılmıştır. Faktör analizi ve Cronbach alfa katsayısı kullanılarak EUÖ'nin

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\* Bu çalışma Çukurova Üniversitesi İİBF2013BAP5 numaralı Bilimsel Araştırma Projesi ve TÜBİTAK BİDEB 2211-Yurt İçi Lisansüstü Burs Programı kapsamında desteklenmiştir.

\* This research is funded by Çukurova University Research Project İİBF2013BAP5 and TÜBİTAK BİDEB within the scope of 2211-A General Domestic PhD Scholarship  
Araştırma, Gönderim Tarihi: 31.07.2017 Kabul Tarihi: 17.10.2017

geçerliliği ve güvenilirliği seçilen örneklem aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. ANOVA ve t-testleri kullanılarak demografik özelliklere göre evlilik tatmini için anlamlı farklar belirlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Evlilik Problemleri Ölçeği, Faktör analizi, Geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik

## Introduction

This study examines marital satisfaction and factors affecting it. A word meaning of marital satisfaction is to be glad of spouse's marriage. On the one hand, some researchers interpret that marital satisfaction and marital happiness are synonyms (Douglass and Douglass, 1995). On the other hand, some researchers express that marital happiness is an indicator of marital satisfaction (Booth et al., 1984). Actually, terms such as marital satisfaction, marital adjustment and marital happiness affect marital quality and they are related to each other (Spanier and Lewis, 1980). In this study we focus on marriage and marriage related terms. Not only psychologists, but also other scientists such as Cherlin (1992), Previti and Amato (2003), Glenn (1991), Rauer and Volling (2013) studied marriage.

In this paper we examine full marriage harmony, marriage conflicts, marital satisfaction and instability, and divorce risk. For this purpose, a sample of 319 married people living in Adana is examined.

The organization of the paper is as follows: A literature review is given in the second section. The third section explains data and methodology used in the paper. Findings are given in the fourth section. Finally, section five concludes the paper.

## 1. Literature

Orden and Bradburn (1968) examined dimensions of marital happiness. They used Marriage Adjustment Balance Scale (MABS) and found that MABS is positively related with marital happiness.

Hicks and Platt (1970) reviewed papers about marital happiness and stability in the decade of sixties. Based on the literature, they provided some suggestions for future research.

Kimmel and Van Der Veen (1974) performed Locke marital adjustment questionnaire for 149 wives and 157 husbands. They performed factor analysis to reveal underlying dimensions of distinct components of marital adjustment for husbands and wives.

Glenn and Weaver (1978) investigated marital happiness of white males and females at the ages 18 through 59. On the contrary to former papers, they acquired that socioeconomic status is not an important factor affecting marital happiness.

Glenn and McLanahan (1982) investigated effects of the presence of children on their parents' marital happiness on the basis of sex, race, level of education, religious preference, and employment status and stated the ideal number of children for a family.

Norton (1983) presented Quality Marriage Index (QMI) using Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and improving some criterion. Index was constructed using data from 430 people across four states and the study showed several advantages of the QMI.

Douglass and Douglass (1995) described the Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ), which provides behavioral information about overall marital adjustment, specific conflict areas, and divorce risk. In their study, the questionnaire is applied on 350 couples. The results suggest that the MPQ is suitable for assessing marital problems in both clinical and research setting.

Gottman et al. (1998) investigated marital happiness of 130 newlywed couples. The study examined the effect of anger as a dangerous emotion, active listening, negative affect reciprocity, negative start-up by the wife, de-escalation, positive affect models, and physiological soothing of the male on divorce and marital stability.

Bachand and Caron (2001) examined marital happiness of 15 heterosexual couples who married at least for 35 years. Friendship, love, and similar interest were being determined significant factors affecting marital happiness.

Gottman and Notarius (2002) showed the advances made in the 20th century about marriage studies. Some subjects such as variable role of woman in American families at 1980s and 1990s, relationship with close relative, cultural variations at marriages were emphasized in the study.

Çelik (2006) developed a measurement tool to measure marital satisfaction of married people and acquired results that support validity of his scale.

Kamp Dush, Taylor, Kroeger (2008) conducted a latent class analysis to test for distinct marital happiness trajectories using data from six waves of the Study of Marital Instability over the Life Course. They found three distinct marital happiness trajectories: low, middle, and high happiness. Initial levels of life happiness were strongly associated with membership in the marital happiness trajectories and with various demographic and attitude-related control variables. Respondents in both the high and middle marital happiness trajectories also experienced a decline in depressive symptoms across time.

Şendil and Korkut (2008) examined significant differences of dyadic adjustment and marital conflict scores for demographic variables such as marriage style, duration of marriage, gender, number of children, education, and economic status. Their sample consists of 112 women and 59 men and the participants were administered for the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Marital Conflict Questionnaire and Personal Information Form. Results indicated that individuals who preferred arranged marriage have low dyadic adjustment scores in comparison with those who had chosen their partners themselves. They also found that individuals with lower education and economic status tend to have lower dyadic adjustment scores. In addition to that, their study revealed that an increase in marital conflict score and the number of children causes lower dyadic adjustment scores.

Cohen, Geron and Farchi (2009) examined the relationship between marital quality and global well-being among husbands and wives in enduring marriages in Israel using fifty one couples married for at least 40 years. The findings indicated while the husbands' marital satisfaction depend largely on the content of the marital relationship and not related to their general well-being, the wives' marital satisfaction was affected by both the content of their marriage and their global well-being.

Corra, Carter, Carter, Knox (2009) used data from the 1973-2006 General Social Survey to assess the interactive impact of race and gender on marital happiness over time. Findings indicated independent and significant effects for both variables, with Whites and husbands report the highest levels of marital happiness whereas Blacks and wives report the lowest.

Waite, Luo and Lewin (2009) examined the consequences for Psychological well-being of marital stability and change over the five year period between the two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households. They developed and tested four hypotheses. Firstly; those who divorce or separate experience declines in psychological well-being compared to those who remain married. Secondly; among those unhappy with their marriage, those who divorce or separate see improvements in psychological well-being, especially if they remarry, compared to those who remain married to the same person. Thirdly; psychological well-being declines in the first year or two following the end of the marriage and then improves to previous levels. And eventually; women experience greater improvements in psychological well-being from leaving an unhappy marriage than do men. They found strong and consistent support only for the first hypothesis.

Cohen, Geron and Farchi (2010) investigated marital quality of enduring marriages of 51 Israeli couples married for at least 40 years. Three types of enduring marriages were found: vitalized, satisfactory, and conflictual. Vitalized marriages were characterized by high scores on both the intrinsic (e.g., mutual acceptance, communication, conflict resolution) and extrinsic (e.g., financial management, relations with relatives and friends) aspects of marriage. Satisfactory marriages were characterized by lower scores on the intrinsic aspects of marriage. Satisfactory marriages were characterized by difficulties in both aspects.

Lee and Oh (2012) examined marital satisfaction among adults with disabilities in South Korea using 507 women and 521 men. The study revealed that happy marriage depends household income, aid to housework and quality of family relations. Furthermore the study revealed interesting gender differences. For female respondents, structural factors that are household income, housework, quality of family relations, and younger age at marriage were significant. For male respondents, structural factors that are their health, activities, and quality of life were significant.

Tutarel Kışlak and Göztepe (2012) searched the relation among demographic variables, expressed emotion, depression, empathy, and the marital adjustment. In accordance with that aim, Marital Adjustment Scale, Level of Expressed Emotion Scale, Beck Depression Inventory and Empathetic Tendency Scale were applied to 102 women and 65 men. Level of Expressed Emotion Scale's Emotional Response Subscale was determined as the variable, predicting marital adjustment. It was found out that the scores of Tolerance/Expectance and Emotional Reaction Subscales, as well as the scores of Depression differed between two groups with a high and low level of marital adjustment. The significance of findings on expressed emotion of married couples increases, since the research was not conducted by using a clinical sample.

Liu and Stainback (2013) investigated role of gender at marriage. Findings were consistent with social desirability theory.

Rauer and Volling (2013) utilized observational and self-report data from 57 happily married couples to explore assumptions regarding marital happiness.

Suggesting that happily married couples are not a homogeneous group, cluster analyses revealed the existence of three types of couples based on their observed behaviors in a problem solving task: mutually engaged couples, mutually supportive couples, and wife compensation couples. Although couples in all three clusters were equally happy with and committed to their marriages, these clusters were differentially associated with spouses' evaluations of their marriage. Spouses in the mutually supportive cluster reported greater intimacy and maintenance and less conflict and ambivalence, although this was more consistently the case in comparison to the wife compensation cluster, as opposed to the mutually engaged cluster.

Carr, Freedman, Cornman and Schwarz (2014) examined the relationship between happy marriage and happy life. For this purpose, they analyzed men and women in their later lives. They found that gender has no significant effect on marital satisfaction while life satisfaction is related with marital satisfaction.

Elmslie and Tebaldi (2014) investigated the determinants of marital happiness. They found that while infidelity has similar effects for both sexes, women have a detectable preference for a traditional division of labour within the household. In addition, social class, religion, age, children and income have differential effects between men and women. In particular, they found diminishing returns from household income for women and satiation for men.

Yalçın (2014) examined the relationship between marital harmony and sociodemographic characteristics of women. She found that marital satisfaction has a significant relationship with age while it's not related with family type and number of children.

Following this literature, we use MPQ and examine the reliability and validity of DAS, which measures full marriage harmony, for Adana. The study also focuses on determining important demographic characteristics affecting marital satisfaction, which is again measured with MPQ. As far as authors' knowledge, this is the first study exploring MPQ for Adana.

## **2. Instruments and Data**

### **2.1. Instruments**

The marriage quality is affected by concepts such as marriage satisfaction, marriage harmony and marriage happiness. Due to expressions of these components, MPQ is a common measure to assess the marriage quality. MPQ focuses in particular on four dimensions described below.

The first dimension is the overall full marriage harmony. Douglass and Douglass (1995) recommend using either the 15-item Marital Adjustment Test by Locke and Wallace (1959) or the 32-item DAS by Spanier (1976) to measure full marriage harmony. Due to cultural differences, we use 27-items out of 32 of DAS, which are measured on a 5 or 6 point Likert scale. For these items, higher scores represent better full marriage harmony.

The second dimension is the number and relative frequency of specific marital conflicts. The most common method of assessing these conflicts is by simply asking to specify their marital problems. This 6 point Likert scale consist of one question, which

is “how often do you fall into disagreement with your partner in your marriage” developed by Schumm et al (1986). The lower the score the better the respondent’s marital conflicts. In addition to this question, for respondents who come through dissidence at times, subjects cause dissidences are being asked.

The third dimension is the divorce risk. Douglass and Douglass (1995) recommend using the Marital Status Inventory (MSI) by Weiss and Cerreto (1980) for evaluating divorce risk. MSI is a self-report questionnaire that assesses the likelihood of marriage dissolution. Original MSI consists of 14 true/false questions that explore thoughts and behaviors which represent progressive steps toward divorce. The inventory is based on the idea that marriage dissolution is often represented by a series of discrete acts. The questions represent a continuum with occasional thoughts about divorce on one end and filing for divorce on the other. The items are answered with regard to the marriage at this point in time. Again due to cultural differences, we use 12 questions out of original 14.

Finally, a fourth dimension is a subjective evaluation of the individual’s marital satisfaction and marital instability. A frequently used method of obtaining such information is to ask respondents to rate their overall marital satisfaction on a scale that typically ranges from very unhappy to very happy. In this study, we use the scale developed Glenn (1991), Heaton and Albrecht (1991), Sutor (1991). Respondents marked the ruler given in Figure 1 according to their marital satisfaction when all factors in their marriage are considered.

**Figure 1. Marital satisfaction scale**



## 2.2. Data

We conduct a pilot study on 100 married people living in Adana. According to feedbacks of respondents, the original questionnaire is modified and its final form is obtained. Then the questionnaire is applied on 319 married people living in four large counties in Adana. These counties and their populations are given below.

- Seyhan : 771 947
- Yüreğir : 421 455
- Çukurova : 346 505
- Sarıçam : 138 139

The population of Adana is 2 149 260 while these four counties account 78.08% of Adana’s total population. Number of respondents of each county is computed proportional to county populations given above. We also account the gender distribution so that the gender distribution of selected samples for each county is same as the original distribution of the county.

### 3. Findings

We provide the findings of the study in this section. Table 1 summarizes demographic characteristics of 319 participants. According to Table 1, 53.3% of participants are female and 46.7% are male. The total marriage duration of participants is grouped into 10 years of intervals and a great majority of participants has a marriage duration between 11 and 20 years (%31), which is followed by 0 to 10 years (%23.5). According to Table 1, approximately half of the participants have 2 or fewer children while 43.3% have between 3 and 5 children. Around 30% of participants have an age between 31 and 40, which is followed by the age group between 41 and 50 (26.6%). When we examine the monthly household income, we observe that 37% of participants have an income between 1,001 and 2,000 TL, which is followed by 801 and 1,000 TL (32%).

**Table.1 Frequency distribution of demographic characteristics**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	170	53.3
Male	149	46.7
<b>Total Marriage Duration (years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0-10	75	23.5
11-20	99	31.0
21-30	61	19.1
31-40	61	19.1
41-51	23	7.2
<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0-2	156	48.9
3-5	138	43.3
6-10	25	7.8
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<=30	52	16.3
31-40	95	29.8
41-50	85	26.6
51-60	51	16.0
>=61	36	11.3
<b>Household Income (Monthly, TL)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No answer	12	3.8
<=800	48	15.0
801-1000	102	32.0
1001-2000	118	37.0
>=2001	39	12.2

After summarized the demographics, we applied factor analysis and computed Cronbach's alpha to DAS to examine its validity and reliability in Adana. As it's mentioned before, DAS is used to assess full marriage harmony. During the pilot study, we found that 5 of the 32 items of DAS are not meaningful to Turkish society because of some differences arises from traditional, cultural, and living conditions. Eventually, we use 27 terms of DAS in this study. We check the assumptions of factor analysis by investigating correlation matrix, Kaiser, Meyer, Olkin (KMO) criteria, Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA), and Bartlett's test of sphericity. After examining these criteria, we found that the data is suitable for factor analysis. We report some of these criteria, along with the eigenvalues and proportion of explained variance extracted with principal components analysis and rotated with Varimax in Table 2. Rotated factor loadings are not reported here to save space but they are available from authors upon request.

**Table 2. Factor analysis for DAS**

Component	Eigenvalue	Proportion of Explained Variance (%)	Cumulative Proportion of Explained Variance (%)
1	5.554	20.571	20.571
2	2.910	10.779	31.350
3	2.859	10.589	41.939
4	2.641	9.783	51.722
5	1.966	7.283	59.005
6	1.786	6.616	65.621
KMO = 0.931			
Bartlett's test of sphericity: $\chi^2 = 4705.74$ , p-value = 0.000			

According to Table 2, the cumulative proportion of variance explained by the six components is 65.621%. The first principal component accounts 20.571% of the total variance. When we examine the rotated factor loadings, we observe that the first component is highly loaded on items which are about full marriage harmony, such as controlling family budget, assessment leisure, showing love each other, relationships with friends, idea of life, relationships with relative, common goals, spending time together, taking important decisions and decisions about children. Therefore, this component is named as "*General Harmony*".

The second principal component explains 10.779% of the total variance. According to rotated factor loadings, this component is related with items like sharing spouse's secrets with each other, frequency of showing love to each other. Hence, it is named as "*Trust*".

The third principal component accounts 10.589% percent of total variance and it is highly loaded on items like frequency of regret from their marriage and worried thoughts about their relationships' future. According to this, we call this factor as "*Questioning the Marriage*".

The fourth principal component has a variance explanation percentage of 9.783%. When we examine rotated factor loadings, we observe that this component is related with the items like sharing ideas, able to make something together, common carrier plans and it is named as “*Sharing*”.

The fifth principal component accounts 7.283% of the total variance and is related with the items like leaving home after an argument, the frequency of considering divorce and it is named “*Conflicts*”.

The last principal component accounts 6.616% of the total variance and it is related with the items about religious subjects and commitment to traditions. Therefore, it is named “*Conservatism*”.

Once we obtain components, we compute the reliability coefficients of each component along with the reliability of the general scale. These statistics are reported in Table 3. According to Table 3, the reliability of components varies between 0.654 and 0.913, while the reliability of DAS scale is 0.891. According to factor and reliability analysis, we found that DAS scale is valid and reliable for people living in Adana.

**Table 3. Reliability analysis for DAS and its components**

Component	Cronbach's alpha
General Harmony (10 items)	0.913
Trust (4 items)	0.761
Questioning the Marriage (4 items)	0.835
Sharing (4 items)	0.789
Conflicts (3 items)	0.654
Conservatism (2 items)	0.658
DAS (The complete scale – 27 items)	0.891

Second important sub-title of MPQ is the marriage conflicts and it measures the frequency and source of differences of opinion in the marriage. The frequency of dissidences and their sources are reported in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. According to Table 4, most of the participants (39.2%) report that they never fall into disagreement with their spouse while this is followed by seldom (%31.7), and rarely (%13.8).

**Table 4. Frequency of dissidences with spouse**

Respond	Frequency	Percent
Never	125	39.2
Almost never	4	1.3
Rarely	44	13.8
Seldom	101	31.7
Often	28	8.8
Always	17	5.3

Among 319 respondents, 194 report that they have some disagreement with their spouses at times. The sources of disagreements along with the frequency of dissidences reported in Table 5.

**Table 5. The source of dissidences according to the frequency of dissidence**

Source	Frequency				
	Almost never	Rarely	Seldom	Often	Always
Partner's family	0 (0.0%)	7 (15.9%)	19 (18.8%)	4 (14.3%)	5 (29.4%)
Partner's friends	0 (0.0%)	4 (9.1%)	7 (6.9%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (11.8%)
Children	3 (75%)	18 (40.9%)	41 (40.6%)	5 (17.9%)	4 (23.5%)
Investment and Purchasing Decisions	1 (25%)	10 (22.7%)	20 (19.8%)	10 (35.7%)	5 (29.4%)
Every Subject	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4%)	7 (25%)	4 (23.5%)
Financial	0 (0.0%)	3 (6.8%)	4 (4%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (5.9%)
Other*	0 (0.0%)	5 (11.4%)	7 (6.9%)	3 (10.7%)	2 (11.8%)

\* My partner is stubborn, selfish, jealous, irrelevant, and he/she doesn't allow me to work, and interferes my political view, TV programs I watch, and my pleasures.

Third important sub-title of MPQ is the divorce risk. For this part, 12 expressions about the divorce are asked to participants and their responds are coded "0" for false and "1" for true. Then we find the total score of each participant and summarize them in Table 6. Note that the divorce risk of a participant increases with the divorce score. It's seen from Table 6 that the divorce score of participants are generally around zero.

**Table 6. Divorce risk of participants**

Divorce Score	Frequency	Percent
0	285	89.3
1	6	1.9
2	4	1.3
3	6	1.9
4	2	0.6
5	9	2.8
6	5	1.6
10	1	0.3
12	1	0.3

Finally, we investigate the marital satisfaction of participants. This is measured with the last item of MPQ. Marital satisfaction scores are between 0 and 20, while 0 represents a very unhappy marriage and 20 represents a very happy marriage. Then we test the mean differences of marital satisfaction for demographic characteristics like gender, number of children, total marriage duration, age, and household income with ANOVA or t-tests. Results are reported in Table 7.

**Table 7. ANOVA and t-tests for marital satisfaction**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Test statistic (p value)</b>	
Female	13.31	2.417 (0.016*)	
Male	14.73		
<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Test statistic (p value)</b>	<b>Post hoc test</b>
0-2	14.33	2.414 (0.091)	-
3-5	13.96		
6-10	11.80		
<b>Total Marriage Duration (Years)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Test statistic (p value)</b>	<b>Post hoc test</b>
0-10 (1)	15.39	2.950 (0.020*)	(1) > (3) (1) > (4) (2) > (3)
11-20 (2)	14.13		
21-30 (3)	12.38		
31-40 (4)	13.41		
41-51 (5)	14.39		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Test statistic (p value)</b>	<b>Post hoc test</b>
<=30	15.13	1.403 (0.233)	-
31-40	14.29		
41-50	13.67		
51-60	12.78		
>=61	13.83		
<b>Monthly Household Income (TL)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Test statistic (p value)</b>	<b>Post hoc test</b>
<=800 TL (1)	12.13	2.863 (0.037*)	(1) < (2)
801-1000 TL (2)	14.73		
1001-2000 TL (3)	14.06		
>=2001 TL (4)	14.74		

\*: Significant difference at 5% significance level.

According to Table 7, we found that number of children and age has no significant effect on marital satisfaction at 5% significance level. However, gender, total marriage duration, and monthly household income have a significant effect on marital satisfaction at 5% significance level.

When we analyze the findings for gender, we found that males have higher satisfaction than females at 5% significance level. Results for the total marriage years suggest that in general, as the total marriage duration increases, the marital satisfaction decreases. For the household income, we found that marital satisfaction average of the group whose income is less than 800 TL is significantly lower than the 801 – 1000 TL group.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore Marital Problems Questionnaire (MPQ) and examine the reliability and validity of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), which measures full marriage harmony, for Adana. The study also focused on determining important demographic characteristics affecting marital satisfaction, which is again measured with MPQ. For this purpose, a sample of 319 residents that are married and living in Adana was used. Factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficient revealed that DAS is valid and reliable for Adana. Using ANOVA and t-tests, we found significant differences for marital satisfaction according to gender, total marriage duration, and household income while number of children and age has no significant effect on marital satisfaction.

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