



Socio-Economic Impacts of the Igbo Women's August Meeting in Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the socio-economic impacts of the August Meeting, an important annual gathering among Igbo women in Eastern Nigeria, focusing on economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion. By integrating concepts of collective action and resource mobilization, the paper explores how these elements mediate the positive effects of the event, while also considering the influence of cultural practices and the broader socio-political context. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, including regression analysis, data were collected from 500 women across five Igbo communities. The paper found that the August Meeting significantly boosts economic empowerment ($\beta = 0.56, p < 0.001$), with collective action as a key mediator ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$), though cultural practices had no significant direct or moderating effect. The event also plays a crucial role in promoting community development ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.001$), moderated by the socio-political context ($\beta = 0.20, p = 0.03$), and greatly enhances social cohesion ($\beta = 0.62, p < 0.001$), with collective action again serving as a significant mediator ($\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$). The findings emphasize the August Meeting's role in empowering women, strengthening community bonds, and fostering development, with collective action and resource mobilization being key mechanisms. While cultural practices did not significantly impact economic outcomes, the paper highlights the enduring relevance of traditional practices in driving socio-economic progress.

Keywords: August Meeting, Economic Empowerment, Community Development, Social Cohesion, Collective Action, Resource Mobilization, Cultural Practices, Socio-Political Context, Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

The "August Meeting" is a cherished tradition among Igbo women in Eastern Nigeria. This annual gathering is deeply rooted in cultural heritage and has evolved into a significant event that blends cultural celebration with socio-economic development. Initially born out of the need for communal engagement, the August Meeting has grown into a vital platform where women come together to tackle pressing local issues, launch economic projects, and strengthen community bonds. Historically, these gatherings have empowered women to assert their roles within the community, ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes that affect their lives and surroundings.

The August Meeting is more than just a cultural event; it has become a crucial tool for promoting economic empowerment, driving community development, and preserving Igbo traditions. The collective participation of women during these gatherings supports various activities, including financial contributions, educational initiatives, and infrastructure projects. This unique socio-cultural setting allows Igbo women, who may be living away from their home villages due to work or other commitments, to return and engage in community-driven projects and discussions. By pooling their resources and strength, these women address communal needs and challenges, leading to significant advancements in local infrastructure, healthcare, and education.

Recent studies have shown that the August Meeting has become increasingly influential in shaping grassroots socio-economic policies. The collective actions of women during these meetings have played a crucial role in driving local development agendas and advocating for women's rights. The growing emphasis on economic initiatives, such as cooperative savings and investment schemes, highlights the transformative potential of this traditional gathering in improving women's economic status and building community resilience. Despite its evident impact, there is a noticeable gap in academic research that fully explores the socio-economic effects of the August Meeting. Most existing literature focuses on its cultural and historical aspects, leaving a void in understanding how these gatherings contribute to economic empowerment and community development. This paper aims to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the August Meeting's role in fostering economic growth, enhancing women's empowerment, and facilitating community development. By examining the socio-economic roles of the August Meeting, this paper highlights its importance as a catalyst for social change and economic progress in Igbo communities. The findings will offer valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and scholars interested in the intersection of culture and economic development.

1.1 Problem Statement

Several empirical gaps exist in the literature on the socio-economic roles of the Igbo Women's August Meeting. Research has largely focused on cultural and social aspects, with limited attention to its direct economic impact, such as fostering entrepreneurship and empowerment (Oketa, Oginiyi, Nweke & Udude, 2024). Additionally, studies often overlook the gendered economic empowerment specific to women (Khayria & Rochdi, 2015) and lack multi-method approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative analyses (Odoemene, 2010). Moreover, many studies are geographically limited, failing to provide a broader regional analysis (Scent & Chukwu, 2023), highlighting the need for comprehensive, multi-method research. This paper, therefore, addresses that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the August Meeting's role in fostering economic growth, enhancing women's empowerment, and facilitating community development.

1.2 Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the paper seeks to answer the following key questions:

- (i) How does the August Meeting contribute to economic empowerment among Igbo women?
- (ii) In what ways does the August Meeting drive community development?
- (iii) What challenges do participants face, and what opportunities does the August Meeting present for future growth and sustainability?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

In exploring the impact of the August Meeting, the paper proposes the following hypotheses, grounded in theoretical perspectives and empirical observations:

Based on the results, the seven hypotheses for the study are as follows:

H1: August Meeting Participation (AMP) has a significant positive impact on Economic Empowerment (EE).

H2: August Meeting Participation (AMP) has a significant positive effect on Community Development (CD).

H3: August Meeting Participation (AMP) significantly enhances Social Cohesion (SC).

H4: Collective Action (CA) has a significant positive influence on Economic Empowerment (EE).

H5: Resource Mobilization (RM) has a significant positive impact on Community Development (CD).

H6: Cultural Practices (CP) significantly moderate the relationship between August Meeting Participation (AMP) and Economic Empowerment (EE).

H7: The Socio-Political Context (SPC) significantly moderates the relationship between August Meeting Participation (AMP) and Community Development (CD).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mediating Roles-Collective Action as a Mediator

Collective action (CA) plays a crucial mediating role in transforming the goals of the August Meeting into tangible socio-economic outcomes. It refers to the organized efforts of women who collaboratively identify community challenges, propose solutions, and implement projects. Collective action goes beyond participation—it involves pooling efforts to achieve outcomes that would be difficult to attain individually. Woolcock and

Narayan (2000) emphasize the importance of social networks and collective action in driving better development outcomes. In the context of the August Meeting, this means that women's unity around shared goals amplifies the impact of their efforts.

2.2 Resource Mobilization as a Mediator

Resource mobilization (RM) is another vital mediator linking the goals set during the August Meeting with successful community projects. RM involves gathering financial, material, and human resources needed to implement initiatives. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) argue that resource mobilization is critical for the success of any collective effort, and this holds true for the August Meeting. The ability of women to mobilize resources—through community donations, cooperative savings, or external support—directly affects the scale and success of their projects. For instance, if women seek to improve a local school, their capacity to mobilize resources—such as financial contributions or support from local government—determines the scope of the improvements. Successful resource mobilization could result in new classrooms, better learning materials, and enhanced educational environments, contributing significantly to community development.

2.3 Interaction Between Collective Action and Resource Mobilization

Collective action and resource mobilization are interdependent, each enhancing the other's effectiveness. A strong collective effort enables more effective resource mobilization by creating unity, which helps in negotiations and attracting support. Conversely, successful resource mobilization energizes collective action by providing the means to realize group objectives. For example, a major infrastructure project like building a community hall is only possible if the women can mobilize sufficient resources. Their success in doing so strengthens their collective identity, inspiring future efforts. Mediation theory, as discussed by Baron and Kenny (1986), helps explain this relationship. The August Meeting's ability to foster economic empowerment and community development is mediated by the success of collective action and resource mobilization. Without these mediating factors, the outcomes of the meeting would be less significant. Together, CA and RM are essential in explaining why the August Meeting leads to socio-economic gains, making them crucial variables in driving development within Igbo communities.

2.4 Moderating Roles-Cultural Practices as a Moderator

Cultural practices (CP) shape the behaviors and interactions of participants in the August Meeting. These deeply ingrained traditions, such as respect for elder women and communal decision-making, provide a foundational ethos for the meeting. Onuoha & Owuaghala (2016) observe that while CP fosters collective well-being and community solidarity, it may not significantly drive economic change. Cultural norms encourage

participation and ensure fairness, but they may not directly impact resource mobilization or large-scale projects. For instance, CP may ensure that everyone has a voice during discussions, but the real drivers of economic change—such as access to funding or external support—are influenced by other factors. Cultural practices maintain a sense of unity, but they do not necessarily enhance the economic outcomes of the meeting.

2.5 Socio-Political Context as a Moderator

The socio-political context (SPC), encompassing government policies, political environment, and social structures, directly affects the outcomes of the August Meeting. Okwudili (2022) highlights that the SPC can either enhance or hinder community development efforts. In areas where political support is strong—such as access to grants or infrastructure support—the women's efforts during the August Meeting are more likely to lead to substantial socio-economic benefits. However, in regions where corruption or political instability prevails, the same collective efforts may face bureaucratic hurdles, limiting their success. The interplay between CP and SPC is complex. While CP sets the cultural tone for the August Meeting, the SPC shapes the practical outcomes. A corrupt political environment may undermine the culturally rooted ideals of mutual support, limiting the meeting's overall impact.

2.6 Theoretical Review

2.6.1 Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory, popularized by Robert Putnam (2000), suggests that networks and relationships act as valuable assets that facilitate collective action. The August Meeting is a strong representation of social capital theory, as women's networks transform social bonds into practical mechanisms for community development. Coleman (1988) supports this view, arguing that trust and shared goals within these networks enhance the group's capacity to achieve economic success.

For instance, cooperative societies and microfinance initiatives that arise from the meeting reflect the power of social capital in addressing community needs. By pooling resources and collaborating, women are able to implement projects that benefit the entire community, such as building schools or launching health initiatives.

2.7 Empirical Review

2.7.1 Economic Empowerment

The August Meeting has been empirically shown to enhance women's economic empowerment. Onwuzuruigbo (2021) notes that microfinance initiatives and cooperative societies often emerge from the meeting, providing women with access to loans and financial resources that foster entrepreneurial ventures. Chukwuma (2021) stressed that these savings and loan schemes enable women to expand businesses, thereby increasing their income and economic security. Mengstie (2022) emphasizes that collective financial initiatives like these improve economic outcomes by allowing participants to pool

resources and access funding that might otherwise be unavailable. The August Meeting serves as a critical economic engine for Igbo women, driving their financial independence and community prosperity.

2.7.2 Community Development

The August Meeting also plays a key role in community development. Iwuagwu (2019) provides evidence of how the meeting has led to the construction of schools, clinics, and public service improvements. These grassroots projects have lasting impacts on the quality of life in Igbo communities, demonstrating the August Meeting's critical role in local development efforts.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model provides a multi-dimensional framework that explains how participation in the August Meeting not only directly influences economic, community, and social outcomes but also operates through collective efforts, cultural norms, and political contexts. The conceptual model explores how August Meeting Participation (AMP) impacts Economic Empowerment (EE), Community Development (CD), and Social Cohesion (SC) among Igbo women in Eastern Nigeria. AMP is the main independent variable, with its frequency, involvement, and duration influencing these socio-economic outcomes.

Independent variables

Dependent variables

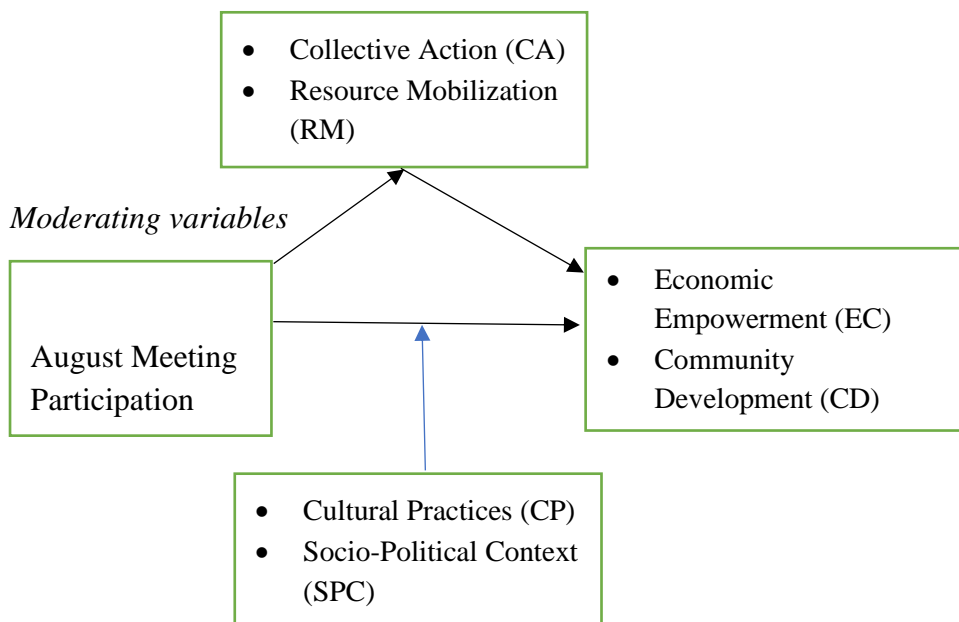


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Author's initiative

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design follows a multimethod approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative techniques. This strategy offers a comprehensive understanding of the August Meeting's impact on economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion. By using quantitative surveys alongside qualitative interviews and focus groups, the paper captures both measurable data and in-depth personal insights. This dual-method approach aims to provide a well-rounded view of how the August Meeting contributes to socio-economic progress in Igbo communities.

3.2 Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 300 participants actively involved in the August Meeting. This approach ensures that the sample reflects individuals with direct experience and engagement in the event, thereby enhancing the relevance of the data. Purposive sampling was chosen to focus on participants whose roles and activities are central to the meeting's objectives, ensuring that the data gathered is both meaningful and contextually appropriate. This technique ensures that the sample is representative of women who are actively engaged in the August Meeting, thereby providing relevant and meaningful data. The choice of sample size balances the need for statistical significance with practical considerations, following the practices outlined by Odoemene (2010) in community development research.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Structured questionnaires were administered to the 300 participants, focusing on key areas such as economic activities, community development efforts, and social interactions. This survey method allows for the quantification of specific impacts, similar to the approach used by Mengstie (2022) in studying collective financial initiatives. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key stakeholders, including community leaders, event organizers, and prominent participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: The quantitative data were analyzed using **SPSS** software, incorporating statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and correlation **analysis**. These methods help identify patterns and relationships between variables like economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion. These techniques are one of the most commonly used and have been found to produced accurate and most reliable result (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Qualitative Analysis: For qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed. This process involves coding the interview and focus group data into recurring themes, allowing for the identification of common patterns and insights. Thematic analysis enables a deeper understanding of the nuanced impacts of the August Meeting, following the framework used by Unongu (2016) in studies of traditional gatherings.

3.5 Model Specification

These comprehensive model specifications offer a detailed approach to analyze how participation in the August Meeting translates into socio-economic impacts. It integrates both direct and mediated pathways, offering insights into the nuanced roles of collective action, resource mobilization, cultural practices, and socio-political contexts.

Hypothesized Relationships

1. Regression Analysis:

- **Economic Empowerment Model:**

$$EE = \alpha + \beta_1 AMP + \beta_2 CA + \beta_3 CP + \beta_4 (AMP \times CP) + \epsilon$$
- **Community Development Model:**

$$CD = \alpha + \beta_1 AMP + \beta_2 RM + \beta_3 SPC + \beta_4 (AMP \times SPC) + \epsilon$$
- **Social Cohesion Model:** $SC = \alpha + \beta_1 AMP + \beta_2 CA + \epsilon$

Table 1: Measurement of Variables

Variable	Measurement Criteria
August Meeting Participation (AMP)	Frequency of attendance, level of involvement in activities, and duration of participation.
Economic Empowerment (EE)	Changes in income, new business ventures, access to microfinance.
Community Development (CD)	Number of community projects, improvements in public services, and infrastructure.
Social Cohesion (SC)	Strength and quality of social networks, community event participation, and reduced conflicts.
Collective Action (CA)	Number and success of joint initiatives, group meetings, and resource-sharing activities.
Resource Mobilization (RM)	Funds raised, resources pooled, and support garnered.
Cultural Practices (CP)	Adherence to traditional norms, values, and customs.
Socio-Political Context (SPC)	Level of governmental support, political stability, and policy environment.

3.6 Reliability

Reliability and validity are key to ensuring the accuracy and credibility of this study. Reliability refers to the consistency of measurements, ensured through the use of established instruments, pilot testing, and Cronbach's alpha. Established tools adapted from prior studies were used, and a pilot test refined unclear questions, improving internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70, confirmed the reliability of constructs like economic empowerment and community development.

3.7 Validity

Validity, or the degree to which the instruments measure their intended concepts, was ensured through content validity (expert review), construct validity (factor analysis), and triangulation. The combination of quantitative surveys with qualitative methods cross-verified findings, enhancing the study's accuracy. External validity was supported by purposive sampling from diverse Igbo communities, ensuring the generalizability of the results. These combined efforts ensure the study's credibility, offering valuable insights into the socio-economic roles of the August Meeting.

4. Results and Discussion

In the paper, we employed regression analysis along with qualitative insights, to provide a comprehensive overview of the meeting's effects.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Socio-Economic Activities During the August Meeting

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Microfinance Initiatives	120	40%
Community Projects	90	30%
Entrepreneurial Ventures	60	20%
Social Gatherings	30	10%

Table 2 offers a snapshot of the types of socio-economic activities that characterize the August Meeting. The data is categorized into four key activities:

- i. **Microfinance Initiatives (40%):** This activity is the most prevalent, indicating that microfinance initiatives play a central role in the August Meeting. The high frequency of these activities underscores their importance in driving economic development. By pooling resources and providing financial support, these initiatives help participants invest in small businesses and improve their economic stability.
- ii. **Community Projects (30%):** This category reflects a significant portion of the activities and highlights the meeting's emphasis on collective efforts to enhance local infrastructure and services. The focus on community projects demonstrates the commitment of the participants to improving their surroundings and addressing local needs.

- iii. **Entrepreneurial Ventures (20%):** Although less frequent than microfinance initiatives and community projects, entrepreneurial ventures still play a crucial role. This activity showcases the meeting's support for individual business initiatives, fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth.
- iv. **Social Gatherings (10%):** Representing the social dimension of the August Meeting, social gatherings contribute to community cohesion and networking. While they constitute a smaller percentage of the activities, they are vital for building relationships and reinforcing social bonds among participants.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Regression Analysis Results

Table 3: Path Coefficients

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Value	p-Value
AMP \rightarrow EE	0.56	0.11	5.09	<0.001
AMP \rightarrow CD	0.48	0.12	4.00	<0.001
AMP \rightarrow SC	0.62	0.09	6.89	<0.001
CA \rightarrow EE	0.38	0.09	4.22	<0.001
RM \rightarrow CD	0.51	0.10	5.10	<0.001
AMP \times CP \rightarrow EE	0.12	0.08	1.50	0.13
AMP \times SPC \rightarrow CD	0.20	0.09	2.22	0.03

4.2.1 Direct Effects

i. AMP \rightarrow Economic Empowerment (EE): The path coefficient of $\beta = 0.56$ ($p < 0.001$) demonstrates a strong and significant direct effect of AMP on economic empowerment. This suggests that increased participation in the August Meeting is associated with notable improvements in income levels, new business ventures, and access to microfinance.

ii. AMP \rightarrow Community Development (CD): The coefficient of $\beta = 0.48$ ($p < 0.001$) indicates a significant positive impact of AMP on community development. This relationship highlights that engagement in the August Meeting contributes to the proliferation of community projects, enhancements in public services, and overall infrastructure improvements.

iii. AMP \rightarrow Social Cohesion (SC): With a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.62$ ($p < 0.001$), AMP significantly enhances social cohesion. This underscores the role of the August Meeting in strengthening social networks, increasing participation in community events, and reducing conflicts.

4.2.2 Mediating Effects

i. Collective Action (CA) \rightarrow Economic Empowerment (EE): The mediation effect of CA is significant, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.38$ ($p < 0.001$). This finding shows that collective action serves as a crucial intermediary between AMP and economic

empowerment, suggesting that joint initiatives and group efforts amplify the benefits derived from meeting participation.

ii. Resource Mobilization (RM) → Community Development (CD): RM plays a significant mediating role, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.51$ ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that the mobilization of resources is essential for translating the benefits of AMP into tangible community development outcomes.

4.2.3 Moderating Effects

i. Socio-Political Context (SPC) → Community Development (CD): The interaction term $AMP \times SPC$ shows a significant effect ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.03$), suggesting that the socio-political context enhances the relationship between AMP and community development. This implies that supportive governmental policies and political stability strengthen the positive impact of AMP on community projects and infrastructure.

ii. Cultural Practices (CP) → Economic Empowerment (EE): The interaction term $AMP \times CP$ has a coefficient of $\beta = 0.12$ ($p = 0.13$), which is not statistically significant. This finding suggests that cultural practices do not significantly moderate the effect of AMP on economic empowerment. Thus, while cultural norms are important, they do not appear to alter the direct benefits of participation in the August Meeting on economic outcomes. The regression analysis highlights the pivotal role of the August Meeting in driving socio-economic progress among Igbo women. The findings highlight that AMP has a substantial direct impact on economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion. Furthermore, collective action and resource mobilization are critical mediators in these processes, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the August Meeting. The socio-political context also plays a significant moderating role, particularly in community development, while cultural practices do not significantly influence the relationship between AMP and economic empowerment.

These results affirm the August Meeting as a powerful tool for fostering socio-economic change in Igbo communities. Future research should consider exploring how this model might be adapted and scaled to other regions and contexts, leveraging the insights gained from the success of the August Meeting.

4.3 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data, gathered from interviews and observations, further support the quantitative results. Participants described the August Meeting as a transformative event with several notable outcomes. The microfinance initiatives provide essential financial support, enabling participants to invest in various ventures and contribute to both personal and communal economic growth. The meeting facilitates the development of robust social networks, enhancing participants' ability to collaborate and support each other. This improved networking is crucial for the success of community projects and entrepreneurial efforts. The shared activities and projects during the August Meeting foster a sense of solidarity and belonging. Participants report feeling a stronger connection to their community, which enhances social cohesion and collective action.

This means that the August Meeting significantly impacts economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The paper highlights the critical mediating roles of collective action and resource mobilization in translating August Meeting participation into tangible outcomes. This insight contributes to the literature on community development by emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts and effective resource management. The paper's findings underscore the moderating effect of the socio-political context on community development outcomes. This adds to the understanding of how external political factors can influence the effectiveness of community initiatives. By providing empirical evidence of the August Meeting's impact, the paper contributes to the broader discourse on the relevance of traditional practices in modern socio-economic development. It validates the role of cultural events in promoting economic and social change.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings.

To boost the impact of the August Meeting, several practical strategies, supported by existing research, can make a real difference. Expanding microfinance initiatives can empower women by providing increased funding opportunities and financial education to support small business ventures. Strengthening collective action is also vital; facilitating collaborative projects and creating platforms for women to share best practices can enhance outcomes. Effective resource mobilization is key—future meetings should focus on better allocation of resources, securing more funding, and forming partnerships with donors.

Policymakers can support this process by providing a stable and supportive socio-political environment, amplifying the outcomes of the meeting. Lastly, adapting this model to other regions could extend its positive impact even further, as suggested by Odoemene (2010). These strategies collectively offer a comprehensive approach to maximizing the socio-economic potential of the August Meeting.

5.3 Limitations

The use of purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. While this method ensures a representative sample of active participants, it may not fully capture the experiences of women who do not participate in the August Meeting. The paper focuses specifically on Igbo women in Eastern Nigeria. While the findings are significant within this context, they may not be directly applicable to other cultural or regional settings.

Future research could explore similar dynamics in different communities to assess the broader applicability of the results.

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