Abstract

Despite the number of studies conducted on the concept of spirituality in the workplace, the benefits of workplace spirituality within organizations and the associated effects to outcome and performance level, there have been very few research attempts focusing on the religious aspects of spirituality. As such, the present study aims to improve employees’ performance by introducing the construct of Islamic spirituality in the workplace and explore its contribution to the overall development of modern organizations. This study proposes a theoretical framework of Islamic spirituality within the workplace and looks at the effect of Islamic spirituality to predictive employee behavior, with particular emphasis on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). This research concludes with a call for researchers to empirically examine the link between Islamic spirituality, organizational commitment, OCB, and job performance. This contribution to the body of existing literature aims to strengthen empirical research on the relationship between these constructs.

Key words: Islamic spirituality, Spirituality in the Workplace, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Behavior Citizenship

Introduction

Organizational behavioral science has been a focal point for at least three decades. We are now in the new millennium and there are still significant human resource problems encountered by organizations and industries. Human resource researchers are still exploring and grappling with employee-related problems, which decrease performance level and reduce organizational performance (Achour 2012). In these decades, managers were preoccupied with restructuring their organizations to improve employee's performance and enhance productivity to meet the competitive challenges in their international markets, and satisfy the quality expectations of their customers (Luthans 2005). Today, corporate organizations continuously spend billions of dollars to enhance employee work performance, and enable employees to attain the organizational objectives and targets. It is widely recognized, employee work attitude and service performance are key factors to attain business goals, achieve peak performance and establish a competitive advantage (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006).

A number of studies support the claim that; workplace spirituality exercises a significant impact on personal attitudes and plays a major role in overcoming the problems that many organizations face, such as organizational commitment, poor work performance and lack of job satisfaction (Ahmadi, Nami, & Barvarz, 2014; Gupta, Kumar, and Singh, 2014; Emmons, 1999). The emergence of spirituality in the workplace was introduced by Greenleaf (1991) in his essay “The servant as Leader.” Since then, the topic of spirituality in the workplace has become very popular, studied by many prominent scholars, included in many management books and recognized by many popular journals (Gupta et al., 2014). Although, the importance of spirituality in the workplace is recognized more readily today, it is however, still in its formative stages of
research, which is the reason why there is no widely accepted definition of spirituality at work.

The practice of spirituality already exists in the business sector. For instance, corporations like IBM and Microsoft introduced several training programmes and workshops including spiritual lecture sessions, as previously, employees’ felt a lack of spirituality (Gupta et al., 2014). Rego and Pina e Cunha (2008) mentioned that when an employee feels involved in a rich spiritual organizational climate, they become more effectively attached to their organizations, experience a sense of loyalty and act in a more engaged and collaborative manner. Thus, an employee develops a psychological attachment to the organization and becomes more committed and productive within their organization. Moreover, several studies have been conducted on the concept of spirituality in the workplace, and the benefits of workplace spirituality on an organization’s outcomes and performance levels. These studies proved that companies who respect spirituality in the workplace tend to exemplify commitment and productivity amongst employees (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Gupta et al., 2014; Harrington, Preziosi, & Gooden, 2001; Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, & Siegel, 2003; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Furthermore, spirituality improves and sustains human wellbeing, which leads to satisfaction, harmony between staff and as a consequence, tends to exemplify OCB (organizational citizenship behavior) (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Miles, Borman, Spector, & Fox, 2002). According to Pawar (2009), workplace spirituality is considered as a great precursor for organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which improves human wholeness, and subsequently enhances organizational performance.

Despite the number of studies that have been conducted on the concept of spirituality in workplace, and the benefits of workplace spirituality on personal attitude, behavior, organizational outcome and performance level (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Harrington et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2003; Milliman et al., 2003), seldom has research been attempted from a religious perspective (Kamil, Ali Hussain, & Sulaiman, 2011). It is important to note that most of these studies have been addressed from a western value system, which may not necessarily be congruent with the very religious nature of Islamic spirituality (Kamil et al., 2011). Fernando (2005) as seen in Tsafe and Abd Rahman (2014) claimed that the practice of workplace spirituality in the non-Christian and non-western setting remained unaddressed and sparse. Therefore, this research aims to propose a theoretical framework of spirituality from the Islamic management perspective, enrich the understanding of the Islamic spirituality in the workplace phenomenon and define its contribution to the overall development within a modern organization.

Literature Review

According to Markow and Klenke (2005) there are more than seventy definitions of spirituality. However, most of these definitions acknowledge that spirituality at work involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work and deeper values. Karakas (2009) stated that “spirituality” comes from the Latin word “spiritus” or “spiritualis” that means breathing, breath, air, or wind (Merriam-Webster). Spirit is also defined as “an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms” (Merriam-Webster). Mitroff and Denton (1999) define spirituality in the workplace as the desire to find one’s ultimate purpose in life, develop a strong connection between either coworkers or other people associated with their work, and have consistency between one’s core belief and the values of their organization. In addition, spirituality has been also defined as; “the relationship of the human person to something or someone who transcends themselves” (Bullis, 1996, p. 2), “devotion to the immaterial part of humanity and nature” (Barker, 1995, p. 363), “the human search for purpose and meaning of life experiences” (Sheridan & Hemert, 1999, p. 129), “a relationship to force greater than oneself” (Netting, Thibault, & Ellor, 1990), “the essence of the individual” (Carroll, 1997, p. 27), “one’s basic nature” (Carroll, 1998, p. 2), “the unique inner search for fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery” (Delbecq, 1999, p. 345), “…the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 137). In these definitions, spirituality can be viewed as a multifaceted and elusive concept and it is difficult to clearly define a common definition of spirituality in the workplace (Karakas, 2009). In other words, this review of literature determines that there is no single agreed-upon definition of the term spirituality amongst those who conduct research in this field. However, the common ground between these different definitions is that spirituality is about living in connection with others and a supreme power (Tischler, Biberman, & Mckeege, 2002). Summarizing the aspects of preceding definitions, the following definition has been formed: Spirituality in the workplace can be described as; the effort to find one’s ultimate purpose and meaning of life, that should allow individuals to align their beliefs and values with the values of their organization, through developing a strong relationship with one another in their workplace, and experience with the supreme power.

Islamic Spirituality

Islam sees spirituality as the linking of actions to the fundamental purpose of life. For instance, a Muslim’s purpose of life is to worship Allah (Qur’an, 51:56). Spirituality connects the actions of an individual to the purpose of their life (Adnan Khan, 2009). Nasr (1987) defines Islamic spirituality as the presence of a relationship with God that affects the individual’s self-worth, sense of meaning, and connectedness with others and nature. The relational quality of spirituality is understood to be a core theme of Islam that comprises beliefs, rituals, daily-living behaviors, and knowledge. Similarly, adherence to the set of Islamic rituals and codes results in an individual’s striving to become closer to God and find personal worth and actualization (Khodayarifard et al., 2013). Moshen (2007) defines Islamic spirituality as a concept that is embodied in piety (taqwa). The concept of taqwa has been interpreted in many ways. According to Al-sharawi (2004), Taqwa means to avoid Allah’s punishment by doing what he commands and keep away from doing what he prohibits. Moshen (2007) and Kamil et al. (2011) categorized Taqwa into two components, that is, spirituality and

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Organisational commitment

Organizational commitment is one of the most widely examined variables in the literature. This broad interest is perhaps owing to the effect of organizational commitment on attitudes and behaviors such as; intention to leave, turnover, organizational citizenship behaviors, attitudes towards organizational changes and maintaining a high level of performance in an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996, 2000; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

The concept of organizational commitment has been defined in many ways. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual’s identification and involvement within an organization. Organizational commitment is the extent to which the employee’s goals and values are in alignment with the organization’s values and norms (Mowday et al., 1979; Sanders III, Hopkins, & Geroy, 2005). According to Bielby (1992) commitment is “an attachment that is initiated and sustained by the extent to which an individual’s identification with a role, behavior, value, or institution is considered to be central among alternatives as a source of identity” (p. 284). Organizational commitment is an individual’s psychological attachment to an organization that decreases the likelihood that the employees will leave the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Meyer and Allen (1991) developed one of the most-cited measurement models of organizational commitment. This model has been conceptualized into three general components: Affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) stated that the component of commitment is different from one to another and the key differences were in the mind-set presumed to characterize the commitment.
Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is considered as one of the most widely studied topics in organizational behavior research (Kim, 2011; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). According to Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997), organizational behavior citizenship has become more widespread among scholars and managers which stems from the belief that these behaviors enhance and boost organizational effectiveness. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) advocated that OCB significantly correlates to employee performance and organizational effectiveness. Vigoda and Golembiewski (2001) noted that OCB is considered an important aspect for developing service quality, general outcomes in public organizations, effectiveness, fairness, and thus creates a healthy organization climate.

According to Organ who is considered to be the first scholar who attempted to measure the construct of OCB and contributed to the literature, OCB effectively attributes financial and human resources, as well as effectiveness in an organization. OCB is also defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3). In other words, OCB includes volunteering for tasks, going above and beyond the call of duty, adherence of rules and procedures of the organization, maintaining and developing a positive attitude, making sacrifices, and helping co-workers.

Scholars have used many terms to describe organizational citizenship behavior such as contextual performance (Motowildo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997), prosocial organizational behavior, organizational spontaneity, and extra-role behavior (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). Motowild et al. (1997) noted that contextual performance behaviors are not part of the employee's job description, and not financially rewarded. Contextual behaviors involve self-discipline, persistence, and willingness to exert effort and go beyond the call of duty (Van Scotter, Motowild, & Cross, 2000). Despite the fact that OCB can improve organization performance and effectiveness, the formal organizational reward system does not recognize the behavior (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). In fact, accumulated occurrences of displayed OCB are usually assumed to benefit the performance of organizations (Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

### Relationships among Constructs

As mentioned above, workplace spirituality values have emerged as a new perspective to enhance individuals in various ways, including ethical choices, strategic decision-making, and enhancing employee performance and effectiveness. This section reviews the previous studies on the relationship between spirituality in workplace, organizational commitment, and OCB.

### Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment

Despite the mushrooming research on organizational commitment predictors and antecedents, the role of spirituality in the workplace on organizational commitment has yet to be determined. The research relating to spirituality in the workplace is now starting to move from a conceptual phase to an empirical phase (Gupta et al., 2014). A number of studies investigate the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee satisfaction, organizational performance, and organizational commitment (Asmos and Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003; and Tischler et al., 2002). Gupta et al. (2014) explored the impact of spirituality in the workplace and organizational commitment of employees. Their findings suggest that employees seem to display and develop higher and stronger effective and normative commitment compared to continuance commitment when they feel a stronger presence of spirituality in the organization. In addition, when employees experience a sense of community with their colleagues and feel engaged in spiritual organizational climates, they become more effectively attached to their organizations, experience sense of loyalty, and act in a more engaged and collaborative manner. Thus, employees develop psychological attachment to the organizations and become more committed and productive to their organization. Milliman et al. (2003) explored the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee work attitude. The study found that the spirituality dimensions of: meaningful work (t-value= 4.86, p < .001); sense of community (t-value= 4.36, p < .001); and alignment of values (t-value= 5.83, p < .001) were significant and positively related to the organizational commitment of the individuals. The study indicates that the high level of spirituality in the workplace practiced by employees will lead to a positive impact on employee work attitudes and ultimately the effectiveness of the organization.

Another interesting study by Mat Desa and Koh Pin Pin (2011) examined the impact of workplace spirituality on affective commitment. The study shows that employees who possess the sense of enjoyment and joy at work will naturally be affective and committed to the organization. Moreover, the authors suggest that organization and employers should pay extra attention to their employee’s spiritual feelings, and encourage them to engage in the corporate activities such as corporate social responsibilities and green projects that will enhance and develop their inner life and sense of community. In the same way, Chawla & Guda (2010) examined the relationship between spirituality in the workplace, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and a propensity to leave. The result alluded to a positive association between workplace spirituality, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Suleiman, Ismail, Nor, & Long (2012) examined the impact of workplace spirituality on academicians’ organizational commitment particularly normative commitment. The study reported that all the five dimensions of spirituality in the workplace were found significantly and were positively associated with normative commitment. Therefore, academicians who practice and value spirituality in their workplace, are more likely to exhibit positive normative commitment. Gupta et al. (2014) examined the effect of workplace spirituality on job satisfaction. The result showed a positive relationship between all the dimensions.
of spirituality in the workplace and job satisfaction. Pawar (2009a) investigated the influence of workplace spirituality and individual spirituality on three work attitudes; namely, job satisfaction, job commitment, and job involvement. His findings show a significant positive correlation between spirituality in the workplace and the three work attitudes, whereas an insignificant relationship was found between individual spirituality and work attitudes.

### Spirituality and OCB

The concept of OCB has recently received significant attention among researchers and is recommended for further examination (Milliman et al. 2003). Amongst the earliest researchers who have studied the association between workplace spirituality and OCB is (Tepper, 2003). In his work, he proposes spirituality in workplace as an antecedent to employees’ OCB. He pointed out that spiritual employees, who have greater meaning and purpose in their work tend to perform and exemplify frequent acts of OCB. Kazemipour and Mohd Amin (2012) stated that one of the dimensions of spirituality, which is connectedness and interaction between employees and their co-workers at work, increases employee’s sympathy, eventually strengthens relationships and improves behavior amongst employees. They add that practicing emotional and physical spirituality within the workplace helped employees to build a good and strong relationship with co-workers and they experienced a sense of alignment between their values and organization's values and norms, which sequentially stimulated them to enjoy their work and find fulfillment. In addition, workplace spirituality is considered as a greater precursor of organizational citizenship behavior, which improves human wholeness (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), encourages employees to be happy (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), and subsequently makes employees perform extra role behavior and enhance organizational performance (Pawar, 2009; Rego & Pin Cunha, 2008). Besides that, employees who help colleagues and members of an organization are respectful to others and lean towards displaying more acts of OCB (Avey et al., 2008). Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, (2010) investigated the relationship between religion and OCB as well as the relationship between one’s religious beliefs and practice, stress and burnout, and meaningful job attitudes. They found a significant positive correlation among spiritual well-being and OCB (r = .29, P< 0.01).

Another relevant study conducted by Kazemipour and Mohd Amin (2012) surveyed 305 nurses to examine the relationships between workplace spirituality, OCB, and affective commitment. This study explores whether affective commitment plays a role of mediating between workplace spirituality and OCB. The study found that there is a significant and positive influence of workplace spirituality on OCB (r = .401, p < .001), and affective commitment (r = .593, p < .001). This indicates that nurses who had spirituality in their workplace tend to perform more acts of OCB and felt greater emotional attachment to their organizations (Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012). The study also found that affective commitment was a partial mediator between workplace spirituality and OCB. Nasurdin, Nejati, and Mei (2013) examined the effects of workplace spirituality dimensions on OCB and the role of gender as a moderator between the two variables. The study reported that only one form of workplace spirituality (meaningful work) has positive relationships with all dimensions of OCB. Nasurdin et al. (2013) indicates that when employees possess a deep sense of meaning and purpose in their work, and have a sense of community, display connectedness with others, have alignment with their personal values and their organization values, they are bound to become more satisfied, more creative, which increases honesty and trust; these employees are more committed to their organizations, and will ultimately enhance and develop organizational performance.

Another interesting study conducted by (Kamil, 2011) attempts to enrich the understanding of organizational citizenship behavior from an Islamic Perspective (OCBIP) and the role of Islamic spirituality and Islamic social responsibility as antecedent of (OCBIP). Kamil (2011) hypothesized that spirituality affects employees’ performance of OCBIP. The findings show that there is no relationship between IS and OCBIP and the path coefficient was found to be insignificant indicating that Islamic spirituality is not a determinant of OCBIP. Kamil (2011) concluded that employees, who have a high level of Islamic spirituality without possessing good manners, might not necessarily exhibit OCBIP within the workplace. Besides, he suggests and encourages researchers to examine the impact of several contextual variables with the constructs of Islamic spirituality and OCB.

### Proposed Theoretical Framework and Development of Hypothesis

From this literature review, it is clear that Spirituality in the workplace has been an area of interest of many researchers (Amin Mohamed,Wisneski, Askar, & Syed, 2004; Garcia?Zamor, 2003; Kamil et al., 2011; Karakas, 2009; Kutcher et al., 2010; Mat Desa & Koh Pin Pin, 2011; Milliman et al., 2003; Nasurdin et al., 2013; Osman?Gani et al., 2013; Pawar, 2009; Rego & Pin Cunha, 2008; Tepper, 2003; Tsafe & Abd Rahman, 2014). These researchers recommend further insight into the area of spirituality in the workplace and propose examination of different factors that are related to spirituality in the workplace. For instance, (Karakas, 2009; Osman?Gani et al., 2013; Pawar, 2009) suggests that the inclusion and the integration of additional variables such as spirituality will lead to improve productivity and support organizational performance. Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) noted that more empirical studies are needed to examine the association between spirituality and work outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. Garcia?Zamor (2003) recommends focusing on new organizational culture (workplace spirituality) in which employees feel happier and have a sense of belonging to a work community. Fernado (2005) as seen in Tsafe and Abd Rahman (2014) claimed that studies on spirituality in the workplace in the non-Christian and non-western setting remained undressed and sparse; and further insight should be consider in this area.

Therefore, despite the widespread acknowledgment and the impressive amount of literature on the importance and value of spirituality in the workplace; limited research examines the
influence of Islamic spirituality on organizational commitment, OCB, and ultimately job performance. To elaborate, most of this previous research has been addressed from a western value system, which may not necessarily be familiar with the Islamic perspective of spirituality (Pio, 2010). Moreover, other factors impacting employee’s behavior particularly organizational commitment and OCB have been studied before and similar outcomes are expected to be attained. Thus, the present study attempts at improving employees’ performance by introducing the construct of Islamic spirituality in the workplace phenomena and explore its contribution to the overall development of modern organizations. Kamil et al. (2011) suggests researchers to examine the impact of several contextual variables with the construct of Islamic spirituality. Furthermore, this study focuses on Islamic spirituality as a concept that distinguishes the Qur’anic spirituality from the other spiritual concepts. According to Kamil et al. (2011) Islamic spirituality as presented in the Qur’an consists of certain salient spiritual aspects associated with pious people. These include; belief in Allah (Iman bil-lah); observance of rituals (Ibadat) which comprise prayer (Salat), fasting (Saum), charity (Zakat), and pilgrimage (Haj); Remembrance of Allah (Dhikrullah), and Repentance/Forgivingness. Osman-Gani et al. (2013) noted that prayer which is one of the rituals, constitutes an integral component of spirituality and has been positively associated with spirituality in business movement. Moreover, performing regular rituals such as prayers at the workplace can be beneficial and influential in solving life problems (Achour et al., 2014), enhancing social relationships (Al-Khalifah, 1994), and promoting a bond of brotherhood and unity among worshipers (Kamil et al., 2011). In the same way, remembrance of Allah at the workplace is set to strengthen the bond with Allah (Kmail et al., 2011), and to help Muslims to overcome life’s problems such as pressure of work, anxiety, and stress (Achour et al. 2014). Therefore, observance of rituals such as prayers, Remembrance of Allah and practicing forgiveness at the workplace are assumed to increase joy and satisfaction among employees at work, as a result, influencing them to be more loyal, dedicated and effective within their organization.

In addition to the above-mentioned arguments, Islam considers job performance, tasks, and activities as integral to satisfying God and seeking his pleasure. In fact, Achour et al. (2014) stated that doing a job in a perfect way is considered as an act of worship (Ibadat); and has two critical criterions, which are set for the acceptance of this as a good deed: The first one pertains to the very sincere intention of the doer; whilst the other relates to the quality and perfection of the work. Moreover, work performance and tasks require Muslim employees to exemplify devotion to Islamic and ethical values such as sincerity, honesty, precision, and conscientiousness (Achour et al., 2014). In the same way, Seddik (1996) mentioned that to adhere to the spiritual values, which include Islamic ethics, such as; good manners, sincerity, satisfaction, contentment, modesty, as well as the preservation of human dignity and pride, will lead to an increase in the love displayed amongst the people and provide support to them. As a consequence, the feeling of being respected and loved by others might lead to an experience of joy at work and influence employees to be more committed, productive, and effective within their organization.

Furthermore, Islam encourages individuals to be excellent with any act, deed or work they perform, and called this Ihsan “excellence and perfection”. Ihsan as mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him is; “to worship God as if you are seeing him; and although you do not see Him, He sees you”2. Osman-Gani et al. (2013) mentioned; “believing that one is always monitored by God (Ihsan) has a better impact than just performing ritual activities of religion” (p. 367). Therefore, the feeling of being watched by God might inspire employees to do their job in a perfect manner and motivate them to go above and beyond the call of duty. Therefore, it is assumed that observance of rituals, Remembrance of Allah within workplace, and following Islamic values and principles such as Ihsan “excellence and perfection” will lead to high levels of organizational commitment and ultimately greater displays of OCB and consequently increase productivity amongst employees.

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Based on this above theoretical rationale, the following hypothesis could be proposed:

**H1:** The more spiritual the workplace, the greater is the organizational commitment and OCB of the individual.

**H1a:** The more belief in Allah of the employee, the greater is the employee’s commitment and OCB

**H1b:** The more religious rituals at the workplace, the greater is the employee’s commitment and OCB

**H1c:** The more remembrance of Allah at the workplace, the greater is the employee’s commitment and OCB

**H1d:** The more forgiving the employee, the greater is the employee’s commitment and OCB

**Conclusion**

The present study was an attempt to primarily propose a theoretical framework that defines and explains the concept of spirituality within the workplace from Islamic management perspective. Although a number of studies have been conducted on the concept of spirituality in the workplace and the benefits of workplace spirituality on organizations’ outcome and performance level (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Harrington et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2003; Milliman et al., 2003), very few studies have been attempted from the religion perspective, whereby the four components of Islamic spirituality are considered. In other words, most of this previous research has been addressed from a western value system, which may not necessarily be familiar with the Islamic perspective of spirituality. As a consequence, this research endeavours to study spirituality from the Islamic management perspective and proposes a model to enrich the understanding of the Islamic spirituality in the workplace phenomenon and its contribution to the overall development of modern organizations, with particular emphasis on organizational commitment and OCB.

2. Hadith narrated by Muslim.
This study calls researchers to build on our study and empirically examine the link between Islamic spirituality, organizational commitment, OCB, and job performance. This study will extend and contribute to the existing body of literature and strengthen the empirical research on the relationship between these constructs.

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