



PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS INFLUENCE ON YOUTHS' RISKY BEHAVIOURS IN UDI EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU

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Abstract

The study investigated the perception of parents on the influence of their socio-economic status on youths' risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone, Enugu State. Three specific objectives were formulated to guide the study, which include identifying the influence of parents' level of education, income and occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours. Accordingly, three research questions were posed in line with specific objectives and three hypotheses were tested. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised 4,557 parents of Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in sixty (60) public secondary schools in Udi Education Zone. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 314 respondents. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts; two from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation of the Department of Computer and Mathematics Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. A total of 305 copies out of 314 copies of the instrument correctly filled and returned were used for the study. The return rate of the instrument distributed was 95.8 percent. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The data analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The result revealed that parental level of education, occupation and income influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. The study also showed that male and female parents did not differ significantly in their opinions on the influence of parental level of education, occupation and income on youths involvement in risky behaviours. It was recommended among others that educated parents should be mindful of their actions that are capable of making their children to engage in risky behaviours. Irrespective of their educational pursuit, these parents should try as much as possible to avoid leaving their primary responsibility of nurturing their children on the hands of nannies/house helps. School administrators should develop and implement socio-economic programmes and equip students with skills that would enhance their socio-economic self-reliance.

Introduction

Socio-economic status (SES) plays a significant role in shaping individuals' behaviours, attitudes, and life outcomes. Parents' perception of their own socio-economic status can influence the way they guide, support, and interact with their children, particularly during youth, a stage where young people are more vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviours. In Enugu State, particularly in Udi Education Zone, where socio-economic disparities are pronounced, this perception becomes even more crucial in understanding youths' decision-making processes and behavioural tendencies. In recent years, Udi Education Zone has experienced rapid economic changes, urbanization, and globalization, which have perhaps reshaped traditional



family structures and parental roles. Parents' perceptions of their socio-economic standing can significantly impact their expectations, parenting styles, and communication with their children. When parents irrespective of their gender perceive their socio-economic status positively, they may exhibit higher confidence in their ability to provide guidance and support, fostering a nurturing environment that encourages positive behaviours in their children (Abiodun & Sodeinde, 2022). Conversely, a negative perception of socio-economic status can lead to feelings of inadequacy, which might influence parents' ability to engage effectively with their youths.

Research indicates that both male and female parents who experience economic difficulties are more likely to adopt authoritarian parenting styles, characterized by less emotional support and open communication (Omisore, Oyerinde, Ifeoluwa & Farinloye, 2024). This can hinder youths' ability to navigate peer pressures and make informed decisions, potentially leading to an increase in risky behaviours. Additionally, parental perceptions of socio-economic status may shape the resources available to youths, including educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and social networks, which are vital for positive development. Thus, this study explores these male and female parents perception of their socio-economic status on youths' risky behaviours.

Youth is a critical period of human life because it is characterized by rapid physical, sexual growth and changes in behaviour. Torubeli and Ajikere (2024) defined youth as a period of life between childhood and adulthood, typically characterized by growth, energy and development. In Udi Education Zone, youth is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, starting from around 14-16 up to 18-30 years of age. However, the tremendous psychomotor, cognitive and affective changes experienced by youths pose great challenges to them. These challenges, most times, push the youths into involvement in risky behaviours that threaten their great roles as future hope of the society.

Risky behaviours are actions or choices that can potentially lead to negative consequences, harm or danger. According to Torubeli and Ajikere (2024), youth risky behaviours can sometimes lead to fortune when they are calculated and thoughtfully executed. Taking risks often involves stepping out of comfort zones and embracing uncertainty, which sometimes open doors to unique opportunities and rewards. Eyam, Sunday and Ekpeyond (2021) defined youth risky behaviours are those behaviours that can have adverse effects on the overall well-being of a youth or that might prevent them from future successes and development. According to Opeyemi, Unadike and Joshua (2021), youth risky behaviours are behaviours that cause immediate physical injury as well as behaviours with cumulative negative effects. Opeyemi, et al, listed risky behaviours to include unhealthy dieting, physical violence, substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, reckless driving with poor adherence to traffic rules, cultism and any action on one's part that may result in a bad



consequence. Torubeli and Ajikere (2024) observed that youths exhibition of risky behaviours is influenced by the socio-economic status of their parents

Socio-economic status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's/family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. Ajemitolu (2023) posited that parental socio-economic status is parental societal and financial condition, position or standing relative to that of others. Ajemitolu (2023) went on to list the indices of socio economic status as, educational attainment level, profession, income level and behaviour. Abiodun and Sodeinde (2022) stated that social status of parents is a reflection of their economic status; therefore, parental socio-economic status is based on parental level of education, income, attitude, occupation and societal values in the community. This study focused on parents' level of education, income and occupation.

Parents' level of education may influence the behaviours of their children. The educational levels of parents determine their status and level of influence on their children (Eyam, Sunday & Ekpeyond, 2021)). Eyam, et al (2021) further stated that children from well-educated parents tend to possess high moral standard. On the contrary, Folorunsho, Ajayi and Abdulrazaq (2024) noted that children from well-educated parents tend to be more exposed to anti-social behaviours due to poor parental upbringing. Folorunsho, et al further stated that most educated parents in pursuit of higher degrees, tend to leave their primary responsibility of nurturing their children in the hands of nannies/house helps; thereby, maintaining that children from less educated parents (who are always there with them) tend to behave well more than their counterparts, however, these assertions (to the best of the researchers knowledge) have not been verified in the area of the study, hence, the need for this study.

Parental income is another status that may influence the behaviours of their children. Adegbenro (2023) observed that very low income parents hardly eat a square meal per day, let alone sustaining the welfare of their children. This according to him, amounts to much exposure of their children to risky behaviours. Amede and Shola (2023) posited that there is a correlation between socio-economic status of parents and risky behaviours. Amede and Shola (2023) stated that the highest percentage of criminals come from poor families. Conversely, Adegbenro (2023) posited that parents with high income always perceive themselves as financially stable, thereby exhibiting confidence in their ability to provide for their children's needs, including education, healthcare, and extracurricular activities. In addition to parental income is parental occupation.

Parental occupation refers to the job or profession held by a child's parent or guardian. Parental occupation seems to have a great influence on youth behaviours. Parents engaged in stable, well-paying jobs often have the ability to supervise and



nurture their children more closely (Ajemitolu, 2023). They may also provide structured activities, reducing the chances of engagement in risky behaviours. However, those in unstable or demanding occupations, especially jobs that require frequent travel or long hours, may struggle with monitoring their children's activities, increasing their exposure to negative influences (Aluko, Daramola & Omodehin, 2024).

Despite these established connections, there is limited research focusing specifically on how parents perceive the influence of their own socio-economic status on their children's engagement in risky behaviours. Understanding parents' perceptions is crucial, as it shapes their approach to guidance, discipline, and support, ultimately impacting youth outcomes. This study, therefore, seeks to explore parents' perceptions of how their socio-economic status affects the likelihood of risky behaviours among youths in Udi Education zone, Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

In Enugu State, particularly in Udi Education Zone, the rising prevalence of risky behaviours among youths, such as substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, early sexual activity, and violent crimes has become a major societal concern. Evidence abound all through the dailies, media and personal observation that recently, an increasing number of youth are committing violent crimes such as unsafe sexual behaviours, rape, bullying, substance misuse and abuse. Moreover, one of the factors that can be attributed to these risky behaviours is parental influence. Parents' perceptions of their socio-economic standing often influence their parenting styles, priorities, and the environment they create for their children. Families with lower socio-economic status often face financial hardship, which may lead to inadequate supervision, poor living conditions, and limited access to education or extracurricular activities. This lack of structure increases the likelihood of youth engaging in delinquent behaviours or seeking escape through substance abuse or other risky activities. Conversely, in families with higher socio-economic status, parents may push their children to conform to societal expectations or maintain a certain image. This pressure could lead youths to engage in risky behaviours like substance use, excessive partying, or reckless spending as a way of coping or rebelling.

Udi Education Zone seems to be experiencing a marked youths' involvement in risky behaviours. For instance, there were reported cases of notable accomplishments by the youths in various professions, such as law, education, engineering and medicine. Conversely, there were reported cases of rape among students in the area while five youths lost their lives as a result of drug abuse from January 2022 to September 2023 (Enyiazu, 2024). The researchers are worried because if this situation is not averted, it may likely result to increase in the rate of morbidity and mortality among the youths.



Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of parental socio-economic status on youth risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone, Enugu state. Specifically, the study attempted to determine the:

1. influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.
2. influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.
3. influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone?
2. What is the influence of parents' level of income on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone?
3. What is the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female parents on how parents' level of education influences youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female parents on how parents' income level influences youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.

H₀₃: Significant difference does not exist in the mean responses of male and female parents on how parents' occupation influence youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. Descriptive survey research design as method used to gather information about a specific population or phenomenon by observing and describing its characteristics without manipulating variables. Its primary goal is to describe the current state of affairs rather than establish cause-and effect relationships (Omisore, et al, 2024). The study was conducted in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State. The population for the study comprised 4,557 parents of Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in sixty (60) public secondary schools in Udi Education Zone (31 from Ezeagu LGA and 29 from Udi LGA). The population of students in Ezeagu is 1,973 and Udi L.G.A is 2584. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. First, purposive sampling technique was used to draw two schools from each of the local government areas. Each of the schools has



two SS2 classes. Hence, the two schools selected from Ezeagu LGA have a total of 4 SS2 classes made up of 336 students, whereas the two schools selected from Udi LGA have 4 SS2 classes made up of 292 students. Thereafter, stratified proportionate random sampling was adopted. In each stratum (Local Government), 50% of the students were sampled to obtain a sample size 168 and 146 from Ezeagu and Udi LGAs respectively, making a total of 314 students. This approach ensures a fair representation of the students. The choice of 50 percent is in line with Torubeli and Ajikere (2024) who noted that to ensure that each subgroup is adequately represented in the sample, which helps to reduce bias and increase the precision of the estimates in a study, fifty percent of the population should be sampled. All the schools are co-educational. Hence, by gender, the sample is made up of 203 female and 111 male students. The parents of these students were used in place of the students since their parents are the respondents to this study.

Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Section A was used to elicit information on the demographic variables such as gender, location and age. Section B contains three parts: 1, 2 and 3. Part 1 contained 7 items on parents' level of education. Part 2 contained 7 items of parents' income level. Part 3 contained 7 items on parents' occupation. The questionnaire used four point response scales with response option namely; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively assigned to it as numerical values. The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts; two from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education and one from the Measurement and Evaluation unit of the Department of Computer and Mathematics Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. A total of 305 copies out of 314 copies of the instrument correctly filled and returned were used for the study. The return rate of the instrument distributed was 95.8 percent. The data collected were analysed using mean with standard deviation and t-test. The mean with standard deviations was used in answering the research questions. The response option of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) were weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The decision rule for answering the research questions was that any mean which was 2.50 and above was regarded as Agree and items with mean less than 2.50 was regarded as Disagree. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. When the calculated p-value was greater or equal to the critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected. But when the calculated p-value was less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was not rejected.



Results

Research Question 1

What is the influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean with Standard Deviation of the Respondents on the influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviors

S/N	Influence of parents' level of education	Male Parents			Female Parents		
		\bar{X}	SD	RMKS	\bar{X}	SD	RMKS
1	Parents who are educated guide their wards against getting involved in cultism	3.22	0.99	A	3.00	1.06	A
2	Educated parents enlighten their children in the dangers of substance misuse and abuse	3.03	1.01	A	3.00	0.96	A
3	Children from educated parents are more exposed to sexual immorality	3.12	0.99	A	2.95	0.98	A
4	Parents who are educated teach their wards good morals at home	2.96	0.83	A	2.95	0.98	A
5	Children from educated parents are more exposed to pornography	2.83	0.73	A	2.82	0.87	A
6	Children from educated parents are more involved in social media friendship	3.33	0.95	A	3.60	0.88	A
7	Children from educated parents are more exposed to indecent dressing/nudity	3.29	0.82	A	3.30	0.78	A
Cluster means and standard deviation		3.11	0.90	A	3.09	0.93	A

The results in table 1 show that the respondents were generally of the view that parents' level of education influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. This is evidenced by the cluster mean scores of 3.11 and 3.09. The overall standard deviation of 0.90 and 0.93 indicated that the respondents had consensus opinion on the issues.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female parents on the influence of parental level of education on youths' risky behaviours in Udi education zone.

**Table 2: The t-test analysis of mean responses of the respondents on the influence of parents' level of education on youths' risky behaviour**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Male Parents	111	3.11	0.90				Ho not rejected
Female Parents	194	3.09	0.93	303	0.22	0.65	

Data analyzed in table 2 show that the identified items on influence of parents' level of education had their p-value of 0.65 which was greater than 0.05 at 303 degree of freedom. The researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that male and female parents had uniform opinions on the influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education zone?

Table 3: Mean responses with standard deviation of the respondents on the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours.

S/N	Influence of parents' Income level	Male Parents			Female Parents		
		\bar{X}	SD	RMKS	\bar{X}	SD	RMKS
1	Children from high-income parents have poor adherence to rules (at family school, society)	3.44	0.71	A	3.76	0.69	A
2	Parents with higher income may be more likely to provide their children with access to technology, which can increase the risk of engaging in risky online behaviours	3.66	0.86	A	3.78	0.80	A
3	Children from high-income parents are more involved in arms bearing	3.70	0.52	A	3.67	0.62	A
4	Children from low-income parents are more involved in stealing/armed robbery	3.80	0.40	A	3.70	0.56	A
5	Children from low-income parents are more involved in prostitution	3.58	0.67	A	3.40	0.96	A



S/N	Influence of parents' Income level	Male Parents			Female Parents		
		\bar{X}	SD	RMKS	\bar{X}	SD	RMKS
6	Children from low-income parents are more involved in unhealthy dieting	3.64	0.61	A	3.40	0.96	A
7	Wealthier families may impose high expectations, leading to stress-related risky behaviors	3.65	0.55	A	3.57	0.67	A
	Cluster means and standard deviation	3.64	0.61	A	3.61	0.75	A

The data analyzed in Table 3 revealed a cluster mean scores of 3.64 and 3.61. This implies that the respondents were in complete agreement that parents' income level influences youths' involvement in risky behaviours. The cluster standard deviation of 0.61 and 0.75 revealed that the respondents have consensus opinion on the issues.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female parents on the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone.

Table 4: t-test analysis of mean responses with standard deviation of the respondents on the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Male Parents	111	3.64	0.61				Ho not rejected
Female Parents	194	3.61	0.75	303	0.31	0.84	

The results in table 4 show that the identified items on parental income level had their p-value of 0.84 at 303 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld. This indicated that female parents did not differ significantly in their opinion on the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours.

**Research Question 3**

What is the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education zone?

Table 5: Mean responses with standard deviation of the respondents on influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours

S/N	Influence of parents' occupation	Male Parents			Female Parents		
		\bar{X}	SD	RMKS	\bar{X}	SD	RMKS
1	Parents on prestigious occupation encourages their children to indecent dressing	3.80	0.60	A	3.47	0.87	A
2	Parents who engage in hawking expose their children to loitering and truancy	3.58	0.71	A	3.60	0.92	A
3	Parents who engage in beer parlour business expose their children to alcoholism	3.77	0.80	A	3.55	0.84	A
4	Some occupations do not give parents time to attend to their children basic needs	3.70	0.64	A	3.55	0.84	A
5	Parents in certain occupations may have social networks that expose their children to peers who engage in risky behaviors	3.93	0.67	A	3.60	0.92	A
6	Parents on poor occupation find it difficult to feed their children and thereby exposing them to unhealthy dieting	3.38	1.02	A	3.67	0.82	A
7	Some occupations of parents expose children to high risk of substance abuse	3.83	0.68	A	3.62	0.87	A
	Cluster means and standard deviation	3.71	0.73	A	3.58	0.87	A

Data presented in table 5 revealed that the respondents generally agreed that parents' occupation influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education zone as indicated in the cluster mean scores of 3.71 and 3.58. Also, the cluster standard deviation of 0.73 and 0.87 indicated that the respondents were consistent in their opinions.

Hypothesis 3

Significant difference does not exist in the mean responses of male and female parents on the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education zone.

**Table 6: the t-test result of comparison between the opinions of male and female parents on the influence of parents' occupation on youths involvement in risky behaviours**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Decision
Male Parents	111	3.71	0.73				Ho not rejected
Female Parents	194	3.58	0.87	303	0.11	0.52	

The results in table 6 revealed that the identified items on occupation had their p-value of 0.52 which were greater than 0.05 level of significance at 303 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld. This implies that male and female parents have uniform opinions on the influence parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviour.

Discussion of the findings

Evidence from analysis of research question one revealed that parents' level of education influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. The corresponding hypothesis showed that male and female parents had uniform opinions on the influence of parents' level of education on youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. The results showed that parents who are educated guide their wards against getting involved in cultism, enlighten their children on the dangers of substance abuse and also teach their wards good morals at home. This finding is in line with that of Eyam, Sunday and Ekpeyond (2021) who stated that children from well-educated parents tend to possess high moral standard. Similarly, Folorunsho, Ajayi and Abdulrazaq (2024) noted that children from illiterate families may learn little or nothing from home that can help them develop high moral standards. The findings from the study further revealed that children from educated parents are more exposed to sexual immorality, pornography and indecent dressing. This is in agreement with that of Folorunsho, Ajayi and Abdulrazaq (2024) noted that children from well-educated parents tend to be more exposed to anti-social behaviours due to poor parental upbringing.

Data analysed with regard to research question two revealed that parental income level influences youths' involvement in risky behaviours. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that female parents did not differ significantly in their opinion on the influence of parents' income level on youths' involvement in risky behaviours. The results revealed that the respondents considered parents' income level as contributory factor to youths' involvement in risky behaviours. This finding collaborates with Adegbeno (2023) who observed that parental income level to a great extent determines children's attitude and their adjustment to life. According to the Adegbeno (2023), a family that can scarcely provide for the basic needs of the family which include food, shelter and clothing will hardly motivate and encourage high moral standard of their children. Instead, they will pressurize their children to



seek job opportunities to support the family thereby exposing some of them to risky behaviours especially the female ones. The study further revealed that children from high-income parents have poor adherence to rules, high-income parents encourage their children to excessive play, children from high income parents are more involved in arm bearing and are more involved in indecent dressing/nudity. This is in conformity with Amede and Shola (2023) who posited that children from high income parents are more susceptible to risky behaviours such as arm bearing, indecent dressing, running away from home to avoid being controlled by adults and alcohol abuse.

In addition, data analyzed with regard to research question three revealed that parents' occupation influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi Education zone. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that male and female parents have uniform opinions on the influence of parents' occupation on youths' involvement in risky behaviour. The result revealed parents with poor occupation find it difficult to feed their children and thereby expose them to unhealthy lifestyle. This finding is *in tandem* with that of Ajemitolu (2023) who asserted that students from low socio-economic parents are more delinquent than those from high socio-economic status. The implication of this finding is that youths' involvement in risky behaviours is determined mostly by financial position of youth's parents. In other words, youth exhibit risky behaviours when their parents cannot meet their financial needs. The study further revealed that parents on prestigious occupation encourage their children to indecent dressing and other risky behaviours. This finding collaborates with that of Aluko, Daramola and Omodehin (2024) who reported that only children from high socio-economic status parents engaged in risky behaviours such as indecent dressing and substance abuse. Supporting this finding, Omisore, et al (2024) posited that children from parents with adequate income, good occupation are likely to engage in risky behaviours.

Conclusions

Based on the findings made, the following conclusions were drawn. Parents' level of education, income and occupation influenced youths' involvement in risky behaviours in Udi education zone. The study also showed that male and female parents did not differ significantly in their opinions on the influence of parents' level of education, income and occupation on youths involvement in risky behaviours.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, therefore, the following recommendations were made.

1. Educated parents should be mindful of their actions that are capable of making their children to engage in risky behaviours. Educated parents irrespective of their educational pursuit should try as much as possible to avoid leaving their primary responsibility of nurturing their children in the hands of nannies/house helps.



2. Government should organize parental involvement programmes such as workshops and seminars for parents that aim to educate them about the impact of parents' level of income and occupation on their children. The goal is to promote understanding and encourage positive parental practices that support responsible and informed decision-making.
3. Counselling psychologists should be deployed to secondary schools for early identification of personal social issues among students. This will go a long way in reducing cases of risky behaviours among youths.

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