Abstract: Drawing from a qualitative methodology, this study intricately examines the determinants of well-being within the framework of work and non-work domains. Through four detailed case studies, we unravel how individuals' experiences within their professional roles, embedded in various organizational settings, influence their well-being. Central to our analysis is the understanding that individual perceptions of well-being, while navigating work and non-work domains, are intimately intertwined with larger social structures, historical trajectories, and material conditions. The insights derived from these cases illuminate the intricate relationship between personal agency, societal norms, organizational influences, and well-being. Key findings highlight the significance of role flexibility, life stage influences, and specific life circumstances (e.g., single parenthood, spiritual engagement) as determinants of well-being. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted determinants of well-being, this research offers valuable insights for organizational practices, policy-making, and individual well-being strategies.

Keywords: work-nonwork domain, Role Strain Theory, Job Demand-Resources Model, well-being

I. INTRODUCTION

Over centuries, women have been heralded for their profound resilience and multifaceted roles. Serving as the bedrock of societies, they’ve donned hats of caregivers, professionals, nurturers, and so much more. While modern times have seen a growing acknowledgment of their invaluable contributions, the path to complete and balanced recognition remains under construction. This trajectory faced a significant test with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis underscored women's unparalleled adaptability but concurrently highlighted the amplified pressures they grapple with, especially as their manifold responsibilities converge within home boundaries.

Recent academic explorations shed light on the psychological toll of managing extensive responsibilities across myriad roles. This challenge was accentuated for women amidst the pandemic’s chaos (Xue & McMunn, 2021; Carli, 2020). Historically distinct territories of work and personal life have begun to meld, leading to an intricate dance of responsibilities (Kabanoff, 1980). Though models like the Role Strain Theory and the Job-Demand Resources Model provide a scaffold to understand these shifts (Weer et al., 201 as cited in Vatharkar and Aggarwal-Gupta, 2020; Demerouti et al., 2001), a comprehensive perspective, especially through the prism of gender, is still sought after.

Traditionally, societal and cultural narratives have framed women's roles, both in the corridors of professional establishments and within the walls of homes. Despite the commendable surge in women's professional engagements, societal mores, especially those surrounding motherhood, continue to exert pressures (Couch et al., 2021). The pandemic’s turbulence further amplified this narrative, casting a spotlight on women juggling unpaid responsibilities (United Nations, 2020) while adapting to the demands of remote work settings (Şentürk et al., 2021).

This dynamic scenario has naturally captured academic curiosity. Although considerable ground has been covered, there remain uncharted territories surrounding the nuanced challenges women face and their implications for well-being. This manuscript endeavors to traverse these nuances, weaving through the fabric of work-life balance literature in the pandemic’s shadow, with a pronounced focus on the gendered intricacies affecting women's well-being. Rooted in the foundational tenets of the Job-Demand Resources Model, the research aspires to decode the evolving relationship between work and personal life, spotlighting the mosaic of women's experiences.

The pivot to remote work, instigated by the pandemic, unveiled a myriad of experiences for women. This change, while introducing elements of flexibility, also muddled the demarcations separating work from personal life. This scenario calls for a renewed understanding of 'work' and 'nonwork', urging us to question and reshape established
norms. In this context, a critical assessment of gendered dimensions, deeply embedded in age-old societal frameworks, becomes paramount.

Guided by this context, the research aspires to: 1) describe the experiences of select women in a remote or hybrid work setup and 2) identify the factors and influences within the work-nonwork domain that emerge from these experiences and their impact on well-being.

Through this exploration, the research hopes to enrich the overarching dialogue around gender, work dynamics, and well-being, laying down insights that might steer future policymaking and interventions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Understanding the Interplay of Work-Nonwork Domains

Historically, the worlds of work and nonwork have been treated as distinct entities. However, recent events, most notably the global pandemic, have highlighted the intricacies of their interplay, suggesting that these realms aren’t as separate as we once believed. This isn’t a novel observation; scholars like Greenhaus & Parasuraman (1987) hinted at this overlap decades ago, but the recent pandemic brought this reality to the forefront for many.

In today's interconnected world, work commitments often spill into personal time and vice versa. These ever-blurring lines between professional and personal lives have piqued the interest of scholars, leading to robust discussions on work-family conflict. The insights provided by the Role Strain Theory and the JD-R Model, especially the perspectives of Bakker & Demerouti (2007), have been enlightening in navigating these nuanced waters.

The pandemic, with its many challenges and changes, intensified these overlaps, especially for women. With homes transformed into makeshift offices, the lines between personal and professional spaces started to blur, signaling a pressing need to revisit and reshape our conventional frameworks of understanding these domains (Xue & McMunn, 2021; Carli, 2020).

Historically, during the industrial era, societal norms and values privileged activities that bore direct economic returns, as observed by Kabanoff (1980). However, as societal dynamics evolved and a diverse array of individuals entered the workforce, the once clear-cut boundaries between 'work' and 'nonwork' began to blur. This shift brought with it its own set of challenges, with professionals reporting feelings of burnout, job strain, and stress, concerns that became central to the academic discourse (Babatunde, 2013).

Our attempts to decode and understand these challenges have been informed by a range of theoretical models. The discussion around 'workload,' a term that resonates with individuals across professions, has been particularly vibrant (Murphy, 1995). Seminal works by thought leaders like Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1987) further deepened our understanding, drawing attention to the potential conflicts arising when personal and professional roles intersect and sometimes clash.

Adding another layer to this discourse, the Stress Process Model posits that our reactions to stressors might be more about our individual perceptions and coping mechanisms than the stressors themselves (Pearlin, 1981, as referenced by Sorensen et al., 2020). It's a fascinating perspective, suggesting that two individuals might perceive the same stressor differently based on their personal contexts.

With this evolving narrative, it's evident that as the boundaries between work and personal life become more fluid, our academic pursuits must adapt, weaving together insights from historical research with our current lived experiences to paint a more comprehensive picture.

B. Ambiguities and Gendered Perspectives of the Work-Nonwork Domains

Understanding the work and nonwork domains is made even more intricate when viewed through the lens of gender. Despite extensive research, achieving a clear, universally accepted definition of these domains remains a challenge. Noted scholars, Geurts and Demerouti (2002), and more contemporary voices like Prakash (2018) have shed light on this ambiguity. While 'nonwork' has often been narrowly equated with family roles, such a perspective inadvertently sidelines other essential aspects of life such as personal growth, social engagements, hobbies, and community involvement. Gender dynamics, especially in the context of the pandemic, further complicate this landscape, necessitating a broader and more inclusive academic lens.
The evolution of remote work, facilitated by technological advancements, has added a fresh dimension to this discourse. While the concept of remote work has roots in the 1980s, its significance has surged in recent times, especially with the increasing emphasis on work-life balance and the unprecedented changes ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic (Waters, 2022; Ha, 2022). This transition, albeit beneficial in many ways, wasn't without its challenges. The pandemic-induced shift to remote work, often unplanned and abrupt, forced many to juggle professional and personal responsibilities within the same space, intensifying feelings of stress and burnout (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021).

Research on the impact of remote work on work-nonwork conflict offers a mixed bag of insights. While some studies, like those by Ray and Pana-Cryan (2021) have highlighted the potential benefits of flexible schedules, others, such as Allen et al. (2015), have presented a more cautious perspective. Moreover, the pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the gender disparities in experiencing these conflicts. Women, in particular, have reported heightened stress levels, compounded by societal expectations and an unequal distribution of unpaid work (Şentürk et al., 2021; UN Women, 2020)

As remote work is projected to remain integral in the post-pandemic world, there's an imperative need for an integrated understanding of work and nonwork domains, reflecting the fluidity of modern life (Irawanto et al., 2021).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Role Strain Theory

The intricate relationship between work and nonwork stressors, especially the conflict arising from simultaneous role demands, has been a topic of interest (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1987). This conflict is rooted in the idea that the family role can hinder one's work role, drawing inspiration from the role strain theory. This theory posits that conflict and stress arise from an individual's limited capacity to perform multiple roles (Weer et al., 2010, as cited in Vatharkar and Aggarwal-Gupta, 2020).

The role strain theory categorizes work-family conflicts into three main types: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflicts revolve around the literal ticking clock - where the hours dedicated to one role can impede the other. Strain-based conflicts, on the other hand, are more emotional, encompassing feelings like anxiety and sadness. Lastly, behavior-based conflicts arise when the expectations from one domain (like maintaining professionalism at work) clash with those from another (showing empathy at home, for example) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2002).

It's intriguing to note that earlier studies largely focused on how work seeped into family life, causing friction. However, Gutek et al. (1991) turned the tables, suggesting that sometimes family roles might spill over into our work lives, leading to family-work conflict. Yet, the predominance of work-family conflict in research literature remains undisputed (Geurts & Demerouti, 2002).

B. Job Demand-Resources Model

The JD-R model, introduced by Demerouti et al. (2001), expanded on the Demand Control- Model (DCM) by emphasizing a broader set of job demands and resources. Initially formulated to explain burnout, the JD-R model underscores that every job has inherent demands and resources affecting burnout levels.

Here, "job demands" encapsulate aspects requiring sustained effort, leading to potential physiological and psychological costs. "Job resources,” in contrast, include aspects that aid in achieving work goals, reducing job demands, or fostering personal growth (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) expanded the model, arguing that factors like autonomy and support might not be the only available resources. For instance, autonomy plays a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of job demands on work-related stress.

Recent developments in the JD-R model have led to a more comprehensive understanding, now encompassing eight propositions touching various facets of employee well-being (Bakker, & Demerouti, 2016).

The JD-R theory is robust, but like all theories, it's not without its critiques. Schaufeli & Taris (2013) pointed out its limitations in explaining the mechanics behind job characteristics leading to psychological outcomes. While
Bakker and Demerouti (2016) recognized this critique, they optimistically proposed it as a ground for further research expansion, particularly around personal resources and demands.

The concept of “personal demands” was vividly introduced by Barbier et al. (2013). They eloquently described it as the self-imposed expectations employees have about their performance. These demands don’t just emerge from external factors but also from within, akin to the concept of personal resources in the JD-R theory. These personal resources are essentially our beliefs about our control over our surroundings and have been likened to job resources in their role in motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016).

Barbier et al. (2013) drew from Hall and Lawler (1970) and Mackay and Cooper (1987) to conceptualize personal demands. They suggested that personal demands, under the goal-setting theory, could be related to work engagement. They further proposed personal demands as “internal challenge stressors,” linking them to the JD-R theory’s concepts of hindrance and challenge job demands, thereby driving motivation.

Zeijen et al. (2021) expanded Barbier’s perspective. They argued that personal demands could lead not only to motivation but also to health impairment. They defined personal demands as aspects of oneself that force disproportionate effort, potentially leading to psychological or physical costs. This dual nature of personal demands, both motivational and health-impairing, parallels the dual process in the JD-R model, making the theory appealing for examining the work-nonwork interface.

Recent research within the JD-R framework has also spotlighted the nuanced interplay between professional and personal lives. Bernhardt et al. (2021) unveiled the pandemic's gendered impacts on work-family conflict, emphasizing the heightened strain on mothers. Van der Lippe & Lippényi (2018) weighed the pros and cons of remote work, suggesting that without organizational support, it might increase work-family tensions. Mache et al. (2017) highlighted the pivotal role of individual resources among medical professionals, while McVicar (2016) stressed the balance of job demands and resources in understanding nurses’ job stress. Meanwhile, Opie & Henn (2013) showcased how personality traits could significantly influence work-family dynamics. Together, these studies offer a rich tapestry of insights into the intricate dance between work and nonwork domains.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Our research adopts a qualitative multi-case study approach, tailored for its explorative inquiries. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, qualitative research is apt when seeking in-depth understanding of complex phenomena. This is further endorsed by Marshall and Rossman (1999), emphasizing the necessity to comprehend the deeper sentiments, beliefs, and values behind human actions.

The methodology is grounded in the frameworks of Yin (2018) and Eisenhardt (1989), with multiple case studies offering a depth of compelling evidence. Our purposive sampling strategy, based on the “selection-to-difference” technique, captures a diverse cohort of female participants, all mothers, spanning various industries, roles, and backgrounds. The emphasis is on industries like education and IT, known for their elevated stress levels, as highlighted by Gluschkoff et al. (2016) and Ramadoss & E. Lape (2014).

Data collection is orchestrated through Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series process, enabling a structured yet profound exploration of participants’ personal and professional experiences. This method promotes introspection, aiming to extract rich and meaningful insights from their past experiences.

Following verbatim transcription of interviews, a combined deductive and inductive coding approach was employed. The coding was anchored in the study’s theoretical perspectives, and the definitions included:

- Work domain: Defined as paid employment (Charmes, 2019).
- Nonwork domain: Encompassing aspects outside work, like family, social circle, hobbies, community involvement, and unpaid work (Prakash, 2018; Charmes, 2019).
- Hybrid/Remote work: Work executed at home through information technology (Chiru, 2017).
- Well-being: A multi-faceted concept reflecting an individual's mental, physical, and social health, gauged by job and life satisfaction (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Su et al., 2014).

The data underwent thematic analysis, emphasizing pattern identification and deep insight extraction.
V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Case Descriptions

Case 01, a 41-year-old computer science expert, rejoined her former company just as the pandemic was unfolding after a 10-year break centered around family. Originally returning for a training-oriented role, the challenges of the pandemic led her to diversify her roles within the company. Outside of work, she remains the bedrock of her family, nurturing her prodigious 14-year-old daughter and maintaining strong familial ties. Occasionally, she lends her expertise to educational volunteer initiatives.

Case 02, at 42, transitioned from a bustling corporate environment in healthcare to the academic realm, a shift influenced by the pandemic's uncertainties and potential health risks for her asthmatic family. With roots in IT, her roles have morphed from technical tasks to a more human-centric approach. Now a faculty member at two colleges, she also plays the roles of a mother, wife, and doctoral student, nearing the completion of her academic pursuit.

Case 03, aged 49, navigates the academic sphere with vigor, transitioning from part-time roles to a full-time faculty position. Initially hesitant due to the added commitments associated with a full-time role, she later found solace in her decision amidst the pandemic's financial uncertainties. As a single mother, she's been a guiding force for her 22-year-old son, who's on the threshold of college graduation.

Case 04, with nearly a quarter-century of experience in her company, has a career narrative that began in the late '90s, took a brief hiatus for maternity, and then saw her re-immers in her professional world. Currently, she handles diverse roles within the company. She is married and along with her spouse and 9-year-old daughter, leans on their extended household for support. Beyond her corporate life, she's an ardent advocate for individuals with special needs and holds a board position in a foundation dedicated to their cause.

B. Key Themes

Role Flexibility. Role flexibility emerges as a central theme in the work-nonwork domain experiences of the women in this study. This adaptability, inherent in their professional roles, serves as a double-edged sword; while it grants them the capacity to effectively navigate challenges, it simultaneously demands a heightened versatility in balancing diverse responsibilities. The dynamic nature of their work-life experiences is rooted in this very adaptability.

This thematic narrative of role flexibility is particularly evident in situations where women, such as in Cases 1 and 4, hold significant managerial roles. While the inherent responsibilities of such positions bring along a hefty workload, they also bestow invaluable job resources upon these women. The JD-R model, in its conventional form, views roles and their associated responsibilities as mere job demands, potential sources of work stress (Demerouti et al., 2001). However, delving into these women’s experience, we observe a nuanced reality. Their role in the organization and its inherent responsibilities, while demanding, also emerge as invaluable job resources. This duality arises from the autonomy she holds and her ability to leverage resources, such as engaging in open dialogues with leadership.

Existing literature often linearly maps the relationship between job demands, resources, and their outcomes, suggesting, for instance, that high job demands combined with low job resources lead to increased stress (McVicar, 2016) or work-family conflict (Mache et al., 2017). Yet, these relationships are far from static. Grace's experience exemplifies this dynamism: her multiple roles are perceived as demanding when tasks overlap, but these same roles morph into resources when she leverages them for leadership interactions or task delegation.

The JD-R model, in its current form, may not sufficiently encompass these shifting dynamics, potentially limiting its predictive accuracy regarding job stress, burnout, and motivation. As we delve deeper into the subsequent discussions, the importance of subjective appraisal in understanding these nuanced experiences becomes evident, suggesting a need for a more flexible and dynamic application of the JD-R model.

Role Duality. Role Duality underscores the dual nature of roles within the work-nonwork domain, where a single role can simultaneously be a source of demands and also offer resources and fulfillment. For the individuals in this study, this meant traversing a professional landscape laden with challenges but also opportunities, leading to intricate work-life experiences. Interestingly, despite evident high-stress levels from role overload, there wasn't a pronounced dip in job satisfaction, work-life balance, or overall life contentment. Two factors could elucidate
Firstly, the individuals' coping mechanisms might play a pivotal role. Many exhibited keen self-awareness and adopted proactive strategies to maintain their well-being, highlighting their resilience and agency in managing work-life intersections without sacrificing satisfaction.

Secondly, the intrinsic fulfillment derived from their roles could be a factor. The satisfaction might stem from personal growth, achievements, or a sense of purpose in their work, potentially counterbalancing the stress from role overload. Their active social engagements also seemed to bolster this sense of fulfillment, suggesting that well-being is a holistic experience, extending beyond just work and family.

**Life Stage Influence.** The intersection of life stage, familial support, and past experiences plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals negotiate the delicate balance between work and nonwork domains. The evolving priorities, responsibilities, and resources inherent in different life stages deeply influence their engagement in both professional and personal spheres.

Case 4 serves as a salient example. Spanning over two decades in a professional setting, this individual navigated challenges by leveraging her unique background and experiences. Early on, even when positioned amidst peers from a more specialized field, she showcased remarkable resilience. Such adaptability, honed over years, not only became a cornerstone of her professional journey but also shaped her personal worldview. These historical challenges gave rise to a heightened sense of determination, empowering her to traverse and adapt through multifaceted trials.

When observing emerging professionals, she discerned a contrasting approach to challenges, marking a potential generational shift in resilience. This observation led her to adopt a mentoring role, aiming to pass down the tenacity and experiences she has accrued.

Societal norms, especially those relating to familial roles, often act as guiding frameworks. Yet, in the face of such norms, this individual demonstrated agency, making informed decisions about re-entering the workforce post-family commitments. This choice underscores the dynamic interplay between personal aspirations and professional commitments. Encouragingly, mentor figures, epitomizing the harmony between professional success and familial roles, further reinforced her approach.

Moreover, her journey is marked by personal challenges, like significant life decisions that sometimes ran counter to familial expectations. Yet, her intrinsic resilience shone through, allowing her to transmute potential stressors into assets. This adaptability underscores the nuanced equilibrium she upholds between her work and nonwork experiences.

**Single parenthood.** Single parenthood stands out as a critical contextual factor, deeply influencing how individuals navigate between their work and nonwork lives. This unique role, marked by the simultaneous demands of being the main caregiver and provider, introduces heightened challenges and complexities to balancing both spheres. Through the lens of Case 3, we gain insights into the intricate journey of a single mother, marked by both professional hurdles and personal fortitude.

Societal norms and gender expectations further intensify the challenges inherent to single motherhood. Despite prevailing societal pressures and expectations tied to traditional roles, the individual in Case 3 showcases remarkable resilience and adaptability. Her life choices, spanning career decisions to personal priorities, are influenced not only by her personal aspirations but also significantly by her role as a single parent. The commitment to ensure her child's well-being, occasionally at the expense of professional pursuits, underscores the profound influence of single parenthood. Moreover, her acute self-awareness and proactive approach to address potential stressors highlight her active role in managing this dynamic. Her conceptualization of well-being, deeply anchored to her child's welfare, encapsulates the profound effect of single parenthood on shaping experiences across work and nonwork domains and one's overarching sense of well-being.

**Spirituality.** In the intricate web of work and personal life, spirituality emerges as a pivotal theme, deeply influencing individuals' experiences and perceptions. Rooted in a sense of purpose and existential meaning, spirituality often acts as a powerful buffer for these women, offering solace and a perspective that can diminish perceived work stress. In the context of this study, spirituality is not a peripheral factor but a central tenet that
significantly shapes how these women engage with and perceive their work. As the interviews unfolded, the recurrent theme of spirituality surfaced as a serendipitous revelation, casting a profound impact on the narratives of all participants, even though it wasn't initially considered as a selection criterion.

A closer look at the data reveals intriguing patterns. While one might expect consistent negative outcomes due to job demands, areas like work-life balance and family satisfaction showcase anomalies. Such observations might be indicative of the participants' robust strategies to harmonize their work and personal domains, further underscoring their resilience and adaptability.

In this milieu, well-being transcends mere absence of distress or dissatisfaction. It encompasses a rich tapestry of meaningful, fulfilling experiences in both work and nonwork realms. This holistic sense of well-being, as the data suggests, is significantly influenced by individual resilience, adaptability, and a profound spiritual connection. Despite the demanding contours of their roles, these women navigate their challenges with grace, transmuting potential stressors into catalysts for personal and professional evolution.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of women's experiences in remote and hybrid work setups has illuminated the intricate interplay between personal agency, societal norms, organizational influences, and overall well-being. The emergent themes of Role Flexibility, Role Duality, Life Stage Influence, Single Parenthood, and Spirituality provide a comprehensive lens through which the multifaceted nature of navigating the work-nonwork domain can be understood.

Role Flexibility, as a theme, emphasizes the importance of adaptability in professional roles. This flexibility reveals the significance of personal agency in determining how one responds to professional challenges and leverages opportunities. Role Duality, on the other hand, offers insights into the dual nature of roles, suggesting that a role can be both demanding and rewarding, contingent on individual interpretation and societal contexts.

The Life Stage Influence theme underscores the weight of personal histories and experiences in shaping professional and personal trajectories. It demonstrates how societal expectations and norms, combined with individual life stages, profoundly shape priorities, responsibilities, and decisions. The theme of Single Parenthood magnifies the complexities faced by individuals, showcasing their resilience and adaptability in navigating the nuanced challenges amplified by societal norms and expectations.

Spirituality emerges as a central theme, emphasizing the intrinsic connection between personal beliefs, meaning-making, and well-being. This theme serves as a testament to the holistic nature of well-being, emphasizing that fulfillment is a multi-dimensional construct, deeply influenced by personal, societal, and spiritual facets.

In addressing the research objectives, this study vividly paints the experiences of selected women in remote or hybrid work setups. It emphasizes the dynamic relationship between personal agency, societal norms, and organizational influences in shaping these experiences. The findings from this study illuminate a nuanced understanding of well-being as a multifaceted construct, deeply rooted in the confluence of personal agency, societal norms, organizational structures, and spiritual connections. The participants demonstrated a remarkable blend of resilience and adaptability, shaped by their individual choices, societal expectations, and the support or constraints of their organizational environments. Furthermore, their spiritual beliefs offered an anchoring sense of purpose, acting as a sanctuary amidst challenges. This intricate interplay suggests that well-being is a dynamic equilibrium, where individual empowerment, societal influences, professional contexts, and spiritual grounding coalesce, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches to fostering environments where individuals not only survive but truly thrive.

LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The qualitative nature of this case study, while providing rich insights into the intricate relationship between personal agency, societal norms, organizational structures, and spirituality, also comes with inherent limitations. The findings are deeply rooted in the context of the selected participants and may not be generalizable to broader populations. However, the depth of understanding achieved offers unique value, capturing nuances often overlooked in quantitative approaches.
The study underscores the need for organizations to embrace a more holistic understanding of well-being. Theoretical frameworks should evolve to incorporate the dynamic interplay of personal agency, societal expectations, organizational influences, and spiritual connections. From a practical standpoint, organizations should prioritize creating flexible work environments that account for role adaptability and offer support, especially to segments like single parents. Furthermore, as the findings highlight the profound influence of spirituality on well-being, organizations could benefit from initiatives promoting spiritual well-being. This could range from spaces for reflection and meditation to workshops addressing societal norms, fostering a more inclusive and understanding work environment. Embracing these insights can pave the way for a work culture that not only enhances productivity but also nurtures the holistic well-being of its members.

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