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**JAPAIISM AMONG NIGERIAN EXPERTS: A DOOM IN THE FUTURE OF THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Barnabas Ekiegini Izege**

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria

Email: [barnabas.izege@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:barnabas.izege@unidel.edu.ng)

**Abstract**

The migration of skilled Nigerian experts, also known as brain drain, has become a significant challenge facing the Nigerian public service. The future of any nation depends largely on the educated and skilled individuals, they are responsible for the development of the nation and are the greatest resources the nation can ever boast about, not oil, agriculture, gross domestic profit etc. This phenomenon has led to a depletion of the country's human capital, undermining the delivery of public services and hindering economic development. It is the people that develop the nation and not just the availability of natural resources, Nigeria is a typical example because in spite of the available human and natural resources the nation still remains in a quagmire due to corruption and looting of public funds. This problem is further complicated by the scourge of the migration of Nigerians to developed nations, which has led to brain drain in many aspects of our life as a nation. The magnitude of the migration of experts and talented citizens threaten to constitute a clog in the overall development of Nigeria. National growth and development cannot be realized when there is a high level of migration of experts from Nigeria. The paper shall further expose the causes of this endemic movement of Nigerians on the basis of corruption which has led to an increase in unemployment and cruel economic state. The paper further examined the consequences, and solutions to brain drain among Nigeria experts. The national development cannot be achieved if this growing trend of migration of competent Nigerians overseas is not curtailed the Nigerian public service shall be a doom in the future.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, culture, beliefs, practices, human dignity, human rights, Nigeria.

**Introduction**

Nigeria has been faced with the problems of migration and brain drain for several years, with the attendant economic and development consequences.<sup>1</sup> A good number of her citizens continue to migrate out of the country unabated. The migration of skilled Nigerian experts, also known as brain drain, has become a significant challenge facing the Nigerian public service.

What makes it worrisome is the quantum of highly educated and skilled professionals that have found haven in advanced economies; the situation normally referred to as brain drain. Brain drain is the migration of people who possess some technical skills and expertise as well as professionals in various fields of endeavour (doctors, nurses, engineers, technologists, university lecturers, engineers, computer scientists, business managers, etc) to countries rather than their own for better conditions of services and where they feel their utilities can be improved. This phenomenon has led to a depletion of the country's human capital, undermining the delivery of public services and hindering economic development.<sup>2</sup> Available evidence has shown that apart from South Africa, the destination countries of most migrants from Nigeria are in the North America and Europe while few are found in some Asian countries.<sup>3</sup> Evidence suggests that the number of Nigerian emigrants outweighs her immigrants going by the negative net migration data (-300000) of the country as at 2017.<sup>4</sup> Literature has also shown that Nigerian doctors that are practising outside her shore outnumber those in the country, with many of them trained in Nigeria why the country currently experiences acute shortage of medical practitioners. Reports have it that about 17 million Nigerians live overseas. This is capable of impacting negatively on sustainable development of the country. Brain drain is a global problem, but its impact is more severe in developing countries like Nigeria, where the loss of skilled experts can have devastating consequences for the public service and economic.<sup>5</sup>

### **Conceptual Framework: Definition of Brain Drain**

The conceptual model of brain drain suggests that brain drain is driven by a complex interplay of factors, including economic, social, political, and environmental factors. The model also suggests that brain drain has significant consequences for the country of origin, including the loss of human capital and expertise, reduced economic growth, and decreased competitiveness. The Cambridge Dictionary,<sup>6</sup> defined Brain Drain as "the situation in which large numbers of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another country where pay and conditions are better." Furthermore, Nadja,<sup>7</sup> explains that "Brain Drain is the preponderance of the migration of highly skilled and educated persons from poor, developing and less industrialized countries to richer, more developed ones". Brain drain can also be said to be the situation whereby a country loses those who are highly educated and talented workers in specific fields to other nations. Brain drain is largely seen as a problem, for the reason that competent persons leave their country and exercise their expertise to boost the economy of other nations. Their home country is left to suffer, because most of those who remain don't have the ability to make a difference or because their contributions are insignificant. Meanwhile, migration is the movement of people from one place to another. Migration can be international or local. The former means the movement from one country to another while the latter implies the movement within a country from one city to another. The following reasons are considered as the causes of migration, economic, social, political or environmental.

The term, brain drain, is also known as human capital flight. It means large scale movement or migration of top flight manpower from various developing countries (predominantly African countries including Nigeria) to more developed countries notably United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Holland, Newzeland and Australia. As earlier stated, the chief reason for this movement is the quest for better opportunities. With particular reference to the University system, Utile,<sup>8</sup> conceptualizes brain drain as "the mass exodus of highly trained and well experienced academics from countries with poor conditions of service to those with better work conditions in search of greener pasture". Brain drain is common amongst such skilled personnel as medical doctors, pharmacists, nurses,

medical laboratory scientists, industrial chemists and pilots. Others are computer scientists, engineers, university lecturers, researchers' technologists and lawyers. The term "brain drain" originally referred to technological workers leaving a nation. But nowadays its application or meaning has widened to include the migration of educated and professional people from one country, economic sector or field for another usually for better remuneration and/or living conditions (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2010). Brain drain is usually considered an economic cost on the part of the releasing countries. This is because migrants usually take with them the fraction of value of their training sponsored by governments or other organizations. It could be likened to capital flight which refers to the same movement of financial capital. The converse of brain drain is brain gain. Thus, whilst developing countries from which trained personnel are migrating are suffering from brain drain, developed nations are experiencing brain gain. Basically, brain drain entails the transfer of knowledge, experience, skill and expertise from one region, country or geographic location to another.

Brain drain has grown in scale due to recent developments in modern electronic information technology, the widening of gap between the South and the North and spread of corporate globalization, an increasing political instability, civil wars and social and religious strife in many Southern and African countries, of which Nigeria is one. Another term closely related to brain drain is brain waste. This is a situation whereby foreign nationals or workers are often hired to do jobs for which they are over qualified. For instance, there are many Nigerian doctors and European scientists working as taxi drivers in some large United States of American cities like New York, Chicago, Texas, Michigan, Washington, etc. The obvious implication of this scenario is that Nigeria is being deprived of valuable contributions of this highly skilled manpower who are grossly underutilized in the USA. Brain drain refers to the emigration of highly educated and skilled individuals from one country to another.<sup>9</sup> It can be categorized into internal brain drain, international brain drain, temporary brain drain, and permanent brain drain.<sup>10</sup> Brain drain is driven by push factors, such as low salaries and poor working conditions, and pull factors, such as better economic opportunities and improved working conditions.<sup>11</sup>

### **Causes of Brain Drain among Nigerian Experts**

The pertinent and worrisome question is: why have Nigerian intellectuals and professionals left or contemplating seriously leaving the country? A variety of reasons account for the migration of a large chunk of Nigeria's best brains from the country to other parts of the globe (especially the West). Previous and recent studies have revealed that a key driver of intellectual and professional exodus from Nigeria is the harsh economic condition under which most intellectuals and professionals work. Next is the desire to go to countries that could pay for and utilize their competitive skills.<sup>12</sup> Since the start of the new millennium, there has been a significant increase in the migration of highly educated and talented Nigerians to Europe, the Americas and Asia. It is significant and detrimental because while Nigeria lags in development the receiving end which is a developed nation enjoys more of the fruits of our labours. Nigeria has had her citizens in many parts of the world and they are doing so many amazing things in different fields of human endeavour's. The consequences of migration are brain drain whereby those who are endowed academically and gifted to bring about development in the nation are away. Migration has become a bane to the development of Nigeria, a lot of her young citizens are excelling in various fields overseas.

The proportion at which Nigerians who are professional in their fields leave their fatherland to practice their expertise in foreign lands in the last two decades has worsened the brain drain issue. The migration of specialists out of the Nigeria to other countries of the world where economic certainty and good standard of living is guaranteed is a pest to the development of Nigeria while host nations enjoy the fruits of the nations that have trained the individual without paying the cost of educating them, Nigeria languish in development. Adeyemi et al.,<sup>13</sup> states that “this development is being seen as a problem, due to the fact that the most competent and highly skilled labour travelled out of their countries to contribute their quota to the development of other nations while leaving their countries underdeveloped”. At this point, it is pertinent to look into some causes of brain drain and migration in Nigeria.

**High Level of Unemployment:** Unemployment is one of the main reasons why Nigerians depart overseas for greener pastures, getting most jobs in Nigeria is not based on merit but they depend on how connected the person seeking the job is to those in top positions. To get a job one has to know someone who knows someone, and those who have no connection find it difficult to be employed regardless of their quality of education and grades. Also, most employers believe that Nigerian graduates are unemployable because of the state of the educational institutions, particularly public schools. Education is constantly promoted and encouraged, but then there is limited opportunity for employment. Also, Akusoba,<sup>14</sup> states the obvious truth is that “many Nigerian graduates are unemployable because of the deplorable state of Nigeria universities. Most employers prefer to employ graduates with foreign certificates in place of those with local certificates because they think that Nigeria education lacks quality”. Many of our graduates are uneducated flaunting certificates which they cannot defend. Another factor responsible for lack of jobs in Nigeria is the rapid growth in population and an inadequate supply of jobs, there is massive shortage of employment opportunities, funds meant for building industries are syphoned into private pockets, this also creates unemployment. Furthermore, the advent of oil has been a bane and led to low level of diversification of the economy, the absence of white-collar jobs and less level of creativity, many Nigerians are only concerned about graduating from the University and getting a white-collar job. Hence, many university graduates are without work, some have spent months and years in search of jobs, and failure to secure one force them to migrate to foreign nations in search of work, meanwhile, so many are forced to school outside and return home for work having earned a foreign certificate or some go having earned the certificate get a better job package.

**Poor Educational Sector:** So many of our public educational institutions lack the basic infrastructure and facilities which has led to the migration of some of our undergraduates to foreign universities for studies and who do not come back to help in the rebuilding of the nation, they become accustomed to their newfound society and this spells doom for Nigeria. Also, the constant strikes organised by the Academic Staff Union of Universities has affected the duration students are supposed to spend in tertiary institutions, it is common to find some undergraduates spending up to six or more years for a course duration that is supposed to last for four years. These strikes are not in any way beneficial to the students or for the infrastructural development of the institution, rather, they are sometimes driven towards a selfish motif of the lecturers.

Also, our educational sector has been affected by corruption, to the level that most examinations conduction are not free of malpractices, malpractice to some extent has even become a regular practice. Therefore, these irregularities in our universities often prompt some of our young ones to migrate to other countries to study.

**Economic Reason:** The fluctuating nature of the Nigerian economy has led to many migrating overseas in search for greener pasture. Poverty is no doubt on the increase in Nigeria, many Nigerians live below a dollar daily, and making Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development Vol. 2 No 1, 2019. ISSN: 2630-7073(Online) 2640-7065(Print) 7 A Publication of Association for the Promotion of African Studies 7 ends meet becomes difficult for an average Nigerian and leads to the migration of many youths across the Mediterranean borders in search of greener pastures where some have met their untimely death. Also, the poor economic condition in Nigeria has resulted to Brain Drain, whereby a skilled worker leaves Nigeria for another country in search for better economic conditions in order to secure a better job, increase standard of living, get a better salary package etc.

**Corruption:** Chinua Achebe stated that “Nigerians are corrupt because the system they live under today makes corruption easy and profitable”.<sup>15</sup> Little wonder the former British Prime Minister stated that Nigerians are fantastically corrupt. The dominance of corruption in Nigeria has persistently call for serious worry and attention. “A corrupt free environment gives room for investment and efforts to increase the pie other than merely fighting over its distribution and thus promote growth. To this end, good governance and low level of corruption accelerate the process of development.”<sup>16</sup>

**Insecurity:** Taft and Haken,<sup>17</sup> states that Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, which began in 1999 with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo has been fraught with security challenges, including spikes in communal and sectarian violence in the Middle Belt, militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta, and insurgency in the Northeast. Coupled with the threats and widespread of the Fulani Herdsmen in various nook and cranny of the country as well as the poor level of our security forces has also contributed to the growth of these violence and insecurity. Most importantly, unresponsive attitude of the government to bring to an end the recurrent issues of violence have forced many Nigerians to flee the nation in search of security in other countries.

### **Consequences of Brain Drain among Nigerian Experts**

The brain drain of Nigerian experts in public service has severe consequences for the country’s development. This phenomenon has led to a depletion of skilled professionals in the public sector, undermining the delivery of essential services and hindering economic growth. The phenomenon has caused and continues to cause incalculable damage to the country. Its effects on Nigeria are legion and multifarious. Some of the consequences are discussed below:-

**Economic Consequences:** The economic consequences of brain drain among Nigerian experts in public service are far-reaching.

### **Reduced Productivity**

The emigration of skilled professionals leads to reduced productivity in various sectors of the economy.<sup>18</sup> This reduction in productivity can have a ripple effect leading to decreased economic output and growth.

### **Decreased Economic Growth**

Brain drain can lead to decreased economic growth, as the country is deprived of the skills and expertise needed to drive economic development.<sup>19</sup> This can result in reduced economic opportunities, increased poverty, and decreased living standards.

### **Increased Dependence on Foreign Aid**

The brain drain of Nigerian experts in public service can lead to increased dependence on foreign aid.<sup>20</sup> This can undermine the country's sovereignty and autonomy as well as perpetuate a culture of dependency.

**Social Consequences:** This social consequence of brain drain among Nigerian experts in public service are significant.

### **Reduced Access to Public Service**

The emigration of skilled professionals can lead to reduced access to public services, including healthcare, education and infrastructure.<sup>21</sup> This can exacerbate social inequalities and undermine human development.

### **Decreased Quality of Public Services**

The brain drain of Nigerian experts in public service can lead to decreased quality of public services.<sup>22</sup> This can result in inadequate service delivery, decreased public trust, and increased social unrest.

### **Increased Brain Drain of Remaining Professionals**

The emigration of skilled professionals can lead to increased brain drain of remaining professionals.<sup>23</sup> This can create a vicious cycle, where the remaining professionals are overworked, demotivated, and more likely to emigrate.

**Political Consequences:** The political consequences of brain drain among Nigerian Experts in public service are far-reaching.

### **Decreased Government Capacity**

The emigration skilled professionals can lead to decreased government capacity, undermining the ability of the government to deliver essential services and implement policies.<sup>24</sup>

### **Increased Corruption**

The brain drain of Nigerian experts in public service can lead to increased corruption, as unqualified and inexperienced individuals are appointed to key positions.<sup>25</sup>

### **Decreased Public Trust**

The emigration of skilled professionals can lead to decreased public trust in government, undermining the legitimacy and accountability of public institutions.<sup>26</sup>



### **Solutions to Brain Drain among Nigerian Experts**

In view of the deleterious effects of brain drain on Nigeria's economy, it is hereby suggested that urgent steps should be taken towards curbing the menace. Below are some of the ways out.

- i. **Proper Funding of Tertiary Education in Nigeria:** Funds are very critical to tertiary education in Nigeria. Without adequate finance, tertiary education can hardly function properly. In this study, we shall use the university system for our analysis. This is because of its pivotal role in the whole gamut of Nigerian tertiary education. University education has over the years witnessed inadequate funding. As Odekunle,<sup>27</sup> succinctly notes, Nigerian universities have been grossly underfunded which resulted in the loss of great deal of valuable manpower to overseas countries. Also, according to Saint et al,<sup>28</sup> the university system in Nigeria has not had the financial wherewithal necessary to maintain educational quality even in the midst of significant population explosion. Worse still, Olukoya,<sup>29</sup> has painted a grimmer picture with the assertion that Nigerian universities have become "glorified secondary schools", due to overcrowded classrooms, with students sitting on the floor during lectures, lack of books in libraries, ill-equipped laboratories that cannot conduct experiments, and the menace of brain drain. It therefore entails that for the universities to execute their mandate satisfactorily they should be properly funded. In this regard, Mgbekem,<sup>30</sup> aptly opines that "there is the dire need for efficient funding of the university system through increased budgetary provision". This is necessary for the maintenance of dilapidated or decaying infrastructure, procurement of new equipment, relevant books and journals, chemicals and other vital learning inputs.
- ii. **Provision of Conducive Working Environment:** Based on the premise that unsatisfactory working environment, owing largely to dilapidated and obsolete facilities, was and is still partly responsible for human capital flight in Nigeria, it is suggested that urgent and massive overhaul of facilities especially in the universities, hospitals and research centres be undertaken. In the view of Ekundayo et al,<sup>31</sup> apart from the physical working environment, there is also the compelling need to make the psycho-social environment conducive. In this regard, there should be proper appreciation and recognition for intellectual and professional worth. Also, the Nigerian government should address and review all the various policies that have triggered the migration stream of intellectuals from universities, and other professionals like doctors, pharmacists, nurses, engineers, etc, from the country. For instance, the hitherto frequent harassment, arrest and dismissal from service of leaders of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which was common during the military era should not be allowed to re-occur.
- iii. **Upward Review of the Pay Package for Academics and Professionals based on their Qualifications** Incontrovertibly, there exists a strong correlation between motivation via enhanced remuneration and employee performance.<sup>32</sup> However, the research has revealed that there has been a general lack of motivation amongst Nigerian lecturers and professionals like medical doctors, pharmacists, nurses, lawyers, medical laboratory scientists, etc, due chiefly to poor wages. For instance, available statistics from ASUU Secretariat Abuja indicates that until recently, Nigerian lecturers constituted one of the least paid workers in the country. For example, whilst the annual salaries of some public sector (Oil and iron and steel) workers as at 1997 were N600,000 and N400,000 respectively, that of university academic staff was N54,000.<sup>33</sup>

### **Case Study of Brain Drain among Nigerian Experts**

In 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there was an international shortfall of 4.3 million medical workers. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which has 24% of the world's disease population but only 3% of its health workers, suffers the most from this shortage.<sup>34</sup> Although, the brain drain affects all African nations in varying degrees,<sup>35</sup> countries in SSA are worst hit, for instance, as of 2017, the doctor-to-patient ratio was about two doctors per 10,000 people.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, the analysis of the World Bank open-source data shows that higher-income countries have 3.3 physicians per 1000 people. Thus, the statistics indicate that low-income countries in SSA have shortfalls of health professionals, and the prevailing brain drain will worsen the doctor patient ratio. Nigeria serves as a notable example of the challenges faced by many SSA nations. The growing population of Nigeria and its implications for healthcare have already been explored from different vantage points. For example, Omoleke & Taleat,<sup>37</sup> examine how recent challenges in the Nigerian health industry have increased the death rate or made the health sector inefficient and unaffordable for many Nigerians.<sup>38</sup> Omoleke and Taleat,<sup>39</sup> identified five problems in the Nigerian healthcare system: underpayment, obsolete infrastructure, inadequate medical facilities, and low fund allocation. As a matter of fact, the medical sector receives too little funding to make a difference, Nigeria's healthcare allocation is merely 4% of the annual budget.<sup>40</sup> All these studies highlight the lack of medical professionals: In a country with a population of more than 200 million and 35,000 doctors, Nigeria's doctor-to-population ratio stands at 1:5000, lower than doctor-to-patient ratio of 1:600 recommended by the WHO.<sup>41</sup> In 2023, when Nigeria's population hit 218 million, there were only 24,000 licensed doctors.<sup>42</sup> A significant contributing factor to this low ratio in the most populous African nation is the widespread migration of healthcare professionals.

The pull factors for migration of Nigerian medical professionals include higher salaries, more supportive work environments, opportunities for professional development, advanced healthcare infrastructure, access to research, and well established professional networks, which not only promote career growth but also enhance social recognition.<sup>43</sup> As a result of these pull and push factors, as of November 2021, over 8,000 licensed Nigerian doctors had relocated to the United Kingdom, and by mid-2022, an additional 700 had left to practice internationally.<sup>44</sup> From 2016 to 2018 alone, nearly 9,000 Nigerian medical professionals moved to the UK, US, and Canada, with the demand for healthcare staff in these industrialized nations further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>45</sup> Licensing in these countries is a relatively straight forward processes: In the UK, a preferred destination due to its established Nigerian communities, competitive salaries, and robust healthcare system, Nigerian doctors must meet English language proficiency standards, pass UK Nursing and Midwifery Council qualification verifications, succeed in a computer-based examination, and cover registration costs. The US and Canada have similar requirements involving transcript reviews and licensing exams.<sup>46</sup>

The drain of expertise in Nigeria's healthcare sector leads to further challenges, such as shortages in rural healthcare, burnout, and lower presenteeism.<sup>47</sup> Anetoh & Onwudinjo,<sup>48</sup> and Okafor & Chimereze,<sup>49</sup> observed that migration results in more people needing health care, healthcare disparities, a lack of expertise and resources, negative effects on the economy, and public health concerns. Although, doctor migration may affect home and destination economies,<sup>50</sup> losing qualified physicians in the home country may limit healthcare services, increase the workload for remaining healthcare professionals, and raise healthcare costs as governments may need to hire more costly temporary employees or recruits.<sup>51</sup> However, in the destination countries, talented physicians may address holes in the healthcare system and enhance treatment at the expense of their home nations.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the migration of Nigerian



doctors to industrialized nations deprives the country of crucial healthcare expertise that could mentor future medical professionals and influence healthcare policies. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe public health crisis that endangered human lives and heightened the inability of the government to invest in healthcare. During the pandemic, the national health systems could not handle effectively the increased demand of vulnerable people and patients who require admission into critical care unit to treat COVID-19.<sup>53</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the dire situation of the healthcare system, ultimately leading to the 2023 Anti-Brain Drain Bill. The Anti Brain Drain Bill In 2023, House of Representatives Member Ganiyu Abiodun Johnson, belonging to the ruling All Progressives Congress party, introduced a law called the "Medical and Dental Practitioners Act Amendment Bill" in response to the worrisome trend of brain drain in the health sector. This bill mandates graduates in the medical and dental fields to serve in Nigeria for five years post-graduation before obtaining a license. The bill in its essence compels health workers to contribute to their home country's healthcare system before considering emigration.<sup>54</sup> The bill successfully passed the second reading in the House of Representatives, marking it as an interim measure to address the escalating migration trend. Sule,<sup>55</sup> asserted that the House of Representatives proposed the Medical Brain Drain Bill as a quick fix for this trend. The bill has generated varying comments from government officials, health experts, and the public. While fielding questions from journalists, former Minister of Labour Chris Ngige argued that the bill is unworkable due to the human rights infringement on the doctors, despite its good intentions.<sup>56</sup> Members of the Opposition in Parliament criticized that the bill infringes on medical doctors' rights, but the former Speaker of the House, Femi Gbajabiamila pointed to Sect. 45 of the 1999 constitution which allows the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to suspend certain rights due under specific conditions.<sup>57</sup> The bill sparked significant controversy and backlash among healthcare professionals and the public. Innocent Orji, the president of the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors, expressed disapproval of the bill. Orji,<sup>58</sup> highlighted the government's failure to address critical issues such as poor compensation, job insecurity, stagnant wages, and currency exchange rates, which, he argued, justified medical workers' reluctance to remain and practice in Nigeria. Healthcare professionals abroad strongly opposed the bill, viewing it as a violation of their rights, particularly considering the government's track record of not fulfilling promises regarding the welfare of Nigerians.<sup>59</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, unless concerted efforts by all well-meaning Nigerians especially those in government in tackling the problems of Brain Drain and migration. The brain drain of Nigerian experts in public service has severe consequences for country's development. We shall remain the giant or Lion of Africa that cannot roar and blossom into rapid development that will propel us into belonging to the comity of developed nations. This study has been able to prove that multiplicity of factors account for the large-scale migration of skilled and intellectual manpower from Nigeria to overseas countries. Also, it has been able to x-ray the effects of brain drain on Nigeria. Based on the evidence provided above it is clear that the negative consequences of brain drain in Nigeria public service far outweigh the gains. To address this challenge, the Nigerian government must implement policies and strategies that promote working conditions, increasing salaries, and providing opportunities for career advancement.

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