Proceedings of the International Conference on Nursing and Health Sciences, Volume 5 No 1, January - June 2024
e-ISSN 2774 – 5104, Global Health Science Group
http://jurnal.globalhealthsciencegroup.com/index.php/PICNHS

THE EFFECT OF EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING ON STUNTING TODDLERS: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Toddlers, defined as children under five in the early stages of development, experience rapid growth but are vulnerable to nutritional problems such as stunting. Stunting is characterized by a child's height being shorter than the normal standard for their age, resulting from long-term undernutrition, recurrent infectious diseases, and inappropriate feeding practices. Exclusive breastfeeding is an important measure to prevent stunting, as breast milk provides the complete micronutrients and macronutrients necessary for optimal growth and development. Objective: The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of exclusive breastfeeding on stunting in toddlers. Method: The research design employed a scoping review approach, following the PRISMA-ScR flowchart. Articles were identified through searches on Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and the DOAJ database using keywords such as "effect" AND "giving" AND "exclusive breastfeeding" OR "stunted toddlers". The initial search yielded 821 articles, with six articles meeting the inclusion criteria for the final analysis. Result: The study found a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding (p-value=0.003) and the incidence of stunting in toddlers. Specifically, 75.9% of stunted toddlers and 67.2% of toddlers had not received exclusive breastfeeding. Conclusion: Exclusive breastfeeding affects the stunting in toddlers.

Keywords: exclusive breastfeeding; stunting; toddlers

INTRODUCTION

Toddlers are children who are under five years old, typically categorized within the age range of 0 to 59 months (Laila et al., 2023). This period is particularly significant in the process of child growth, serving as the foundation for subsequent developmental stages. Growth in toddlers is often referred to as the "golden age," a term critical because at this age children growth and development works optimally (Harshindy & Rahardjo, 2022). The first 1000 days of life are especially important, as they have long-term and recurring impacts throughout the child's life cycle (Mutika & Syamsul, 2018). Chronic malnutrition during this period can affect cognitive skills, lower future income (Headey et al., 2018), reduce productivity, and increase susceptibility to diseases in adulthood due to metabolic disorders such as hypertension and diabetes (Umiyah & Hamidiyah, 2021).

One of the major nutritional issues faced globally, particularly in developing countries, is stunting (Mutika & Syamsul, 2018).Stunting is a chronic malnutrition problem caused by prolonged undernutrition due to inadequate feeding practices that fail to meet nutritional needs (Louis et al., 2022). Stunted toddlers are at risk of decreased intelligence, productivity, and achievement as they grow older (Panigoro et al., 2023). Stunting is defined as a condition where a toddler's length or height is more than two standard deviations below the median child growth standard (Beal et al.,

2018). The stunting rate in Indonesia remains high, at 21.6%, according to the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2023). Exclusive breastfeeding is one of the proposed solutions to address the stunting problem in Indonesia (Dina et al., 2023). Exclusive breastfeeding involves feeding newborns only breast milk until the age of six months, without any additional food or drink, except for medicine and vitamins (Harshindy & Rahardjo, 2022). Breast milk can function as a developmental, regulatory, or energy substance (Dina et al., 2023).

Stunting must be taken seriously as a health problem that has a significant impact on toddlers. Continuous undernutrition from the prenatal period to toddlers, coupled with the lack of exclusive breastfeeding, is one of the causes of stunting in toddlers. Breast milk is essential for a baby's growth, to providing their nutritional needs (Verawati, 2019; (Dina et al., 2023). Exclusive breastfeeding meets the nutritional needs of toddlers and has been proven to help children receive adequate nutrition, thereby reducing the likelihood of stunting. The goal of promoting exclusive breastfeeding is to ensure that Indonesian children grow and develop optimally, reaching their full potential in terms of emotional, social, and physical abilities, and preparing them to learn, innovate, and compete in various fields (Hizriyani, 2021). The importance of exclusive breastfeeding for infants includes providing comprehensive nutrients (contains essential fats, carbohydrates, calories, proteins, and vitamins), enhancing physical resilience, promoting stable mental and emotional intelligence, supporting spiritual maturity, and fostering proper social development, it is easily digested and absorbed, and protects against infectious diseases and allergies due to the presence of antibodies.

Furthermore, exclusive breastfeeding supports cognitive development and neurological stimulation, improves health and well-being, and enhances the quality of life (Dina et al., 2023). Exclusive breastfeeding is a crucial measure to prevent stunting, as breast milk provides the complete micronutrients and macronutrients required for optimal growth and development (Mufdillah, 2017). This study aims to determine the effect of exclusive breastfeeding on stunting in toddlers.17 was 179,468 per year. In contrast, the number of pregnant women per year reached 180,570 in 2018 (Dinas Kesehatan Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, 2019). In 2016, according to information, 15,200 pregnant women visited the Bone District Health Office. According to Mustar M., in 2020, there were 15,113 visits by pregnant women in 2017 and 14,911 visits by pregnant women in 2018. Judging from the profile of the Bulukumba District Health Office in 2014, the information of pregnant women visits was 7,774 individuals (102.7%), while the number of pregnant women was 6,437 individuals (89.1%). Given this information, where local wellbeing is fundamentally crucial in the improvement of worldwide and community wellbeing, especially for maternal wellbeing, this should be visible from various strategies around the world, particularly maternal medical issues, which are still a reasonable improvement goal as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (Bulukumba District Health Office Profile, 2021)

According to World Health Organization data, SEZ affects 35-75% of pregnant women worldwide. A key indicator of general wellbeing is maternal mortality. According to WHO data in 2018, the mortality rate in developing countries increased from 5-10 per 100,000 live births to 750-1,000 per 100,000 live births (Winkjosastro, 2018). Women of childbearing age (WUS) who suffer from Chronic Energy Deficiency (CHD), especially those whose upper arm is less than 23.5 cm, experience hunger more often. According to Basic Health Research, the incidence of SEZ among women of childbearing age aged 15 - 49 years has a risk of 24.8% (Riskesdas, 2018). The

nutritional status of pregnant women is an indicator of the health status of a community. Malnutrition is a cause of chronic energy deficiency (CED). SEZ affects women of childbearing age (WUS), especially those with arm circumferences less than 23.5 cm. The 2013 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) found that 24.2% of adult women of childbearing age between the ages of 15 and 49 years had IBD, and 20.8% were underweight. In 2018, the prevalence of IBD dropped to 14.5% in non-pregnant women and 17.3% in adult pregnant women (National CEC = 31.8%).

According to the 2017 Nutritional Status Monitoring (NMSM) findings, adult women aged 15 to 19 years had the highest association of SEZ across all age ranges, with 33.5% of pregnant women and 36.3% of non-pregnant women being related. The distribution of SEZ among pregnant women is 16.87%, and non-pregnant women is 17.72%, which places it above the normal population of 34.59% in the South Sulawesi region. Conversely, the prevalence of SEZ among non-pregnant women in Bulukumba Regency is still higher than the general rate of 17.46 percent. Welfare Research and Development Agency, 2018). The persistent energy deficiency that occurs in women of childbearing age is a result of backhanded factors, such as weather and direct factors from individuals supported by the use of supplements on a case-by-case basis, supplements stored in the body are utilized to overcome problems. If the current situation continues indefinitely, the stored supplements are used as a source of energy and will be depleted so that it will cause a decrease in the tissues in the body (Afriansyah, A, 2018).

However, this absence of information about pregnant women can be considered in various issues about food prohibition/restraint or actions (patient behavior). Fauzia's exploration of pregnancy legends found that information comes from two parts, first from today's wellbeing as meetings or proposals from specialists and labor assistants. Meanwhile, conventional information is believing in different limitations and suggestions during pregnancy. This is influenced by the growing information and data from the society at large that is coming in step by step. However, conventional information is partially abandoned by the local environment because there is a comfortable connection in the local social environment, so the tendencies covering the local home will affect their mentality and behavior. (Pasaribu, et al, 2018) Indonesian women's unique experiences with untouched food cannot be separated from the strong cultural focus on men. This study uses narrative accounts to show that women are more likely than men to be given the power to frame, modify, and manipulate food in social settings. It also shows how some dietary restrictions are enforced, which differs from health education.

Women, especially those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, may not consume the types of high-protein foods necessary for their health. Women suffering from food deficiencies that could jeopardize their health result from the initial approach of restricting food intake. Government support and education disrupts women's awareness of the urgency of the situation. According to Saptandari (2012), many things are related to the use of beliefs, prohibitions, delusions, and embargoes that prevent people from utilizing the food available to them in food, nutrition, and welfare studies. Many cultures are believed to be irrational and hereditary to control themselves and their families to avoid danger. For this reason, abstinence, prohibition, or taboos are made, which is nothing but a moral attitude to protect oneself from bad things that might happen. Food restrictions are related to the need to share food assets. Truly influencing such tendencies or mentalities is not difficult, given that these perspectives have been ingrained since adolescence. Many legends are not worth accepting because they do not make sense, but many of them are

plausible and learned. The belief in the presence of an outside force controlling life caused as many people as could be expected to know how to control themselves and their families to stay away from harm. Thus, bans, prohibitions, or restrictions were made, which were simply ethical dispositions to guard themselves against bad things that might happen (Kartikowati, 2014).

According to Humaeni (2015), it is easier for women to believe in the rejection of modesty, not entirely in that mindset, but instead in the understanding contained in the statements of the guardians, especially mothers. From youth, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, women are always forced by obstacles. Among the periods of life, pregnant women are the most restless and have restrictions, as this is related to the condition of the undeveloped organism in the body. One of the food taboos that often feature in Indonesian culture today is dietary restrictions, especially the prohibition of eating certain types of food due to the lack of risk or taboos for people who eat them. In this danger, a great and heavenly power may have the choice to fight against those who ignore it (Susanto, 2019). Based on medical record information obtained at the Kajang Health Center, Bulukumba Regency, where the number of pregnant women increased from 315 in 2020 decreased to 310 recalled until September 2021. The number of pregnant women facing SEZ in 2022 and above was as many as 101 people and decreased in September 2023 to as many as 101 people, 84 people. (Puskesmas Kajang 2023)

Based on medical record information obtained at Puskesmas Herlang, Bulukumba Regency, the number of pregnant women who rose from 283 every year in 2020 has decreased to 228 since September 2021. With the number of pregnant women facing SEZ in September. 2021 and above from 36 individuals. (Herbal Health Center 2021). Based on medical record information obtained at Puskesmas Batang, Bulukumba Regency, the number of pregnant women increased from 197 in 2022 to 156 in 2023. The number of pregnant women facing SEZ increased from 30 in 2022 and decreased by 21 people in 2023 (Puskesmas Batang, 2023). Based on information obtained by the Village Midwife of Puskesmas Batang Bulukumba Regency, the community still believes in food taboos during pregnancy, one of which is the prohibition of consuming meat because the child is afraid of excess fat and affects the delivery process, squid - stingray squid, and tight fruit such as bananas because it is feared that the child born can experience conjoined twins. Based on the description above, this study was conducted to determine the effect of taboo food culture on the nutritional status of pregnant women in the community in Bulukumba Regency.

METHOD

The research was designed using the scoping review method, which follows the Arksey and O'Malley framework (Herman et al., 2023). This method consists of five stages: identification of research questions, article identification, article selection, data extraction, and summarizing and reporting results. The scoping review was organized based on PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews) (Tricco et al., 2018).

a. Identification of Research Questions

The framework used to develop the focus of the review and formulate the research questions was the PEOS (Population, Exposure, Outcome, Study Design) framework. This framework is commonly used in qualitative inquiries but can also be employed to identify questions and develop research when conducting a scoping review.

Table 1.
PEOS Framework

P (Population)	E (Exposure)	O (Outcome)	S (Study Design)
Toddlers	Stunting	Exclusive breastfeeding	All articles related to exclusive breastfeeding in stunted toddlers

Based on the framework, the research question can be formulated as follows: Does exclusive breastfeeding affect stunting in toddlers?

b. Articles Identification

This study utilized databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, Science Direct, and DOAJ to identify relevant articles. The next step was to find articles that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for this review were as follows: articles published between 2014 and 2024 in English or Indonesian, original research articles in journal publications or conference proceedings related to the effect of exclusive breastfeeding on stunted toddlers. The exclusion criteria included review articles, textbox content, articles requiring payment, and articles with samples of children over five years old. The database search keywords were: "effect" AND "giving" AND "exclusive breastfeeding" OR "stunted toddlers". A total of 821 articles were collected, and after screening full-text articles for eligibility, six articles met the inclusion criteria.

c. Articles Selection

To achieve more pertinent results aligned with the desired outcome, the prism flowchart method is employed. This approach enhances the comprehensiveness of reporting. The figure below illustrates the prism flowchart utilized in the scoping review.

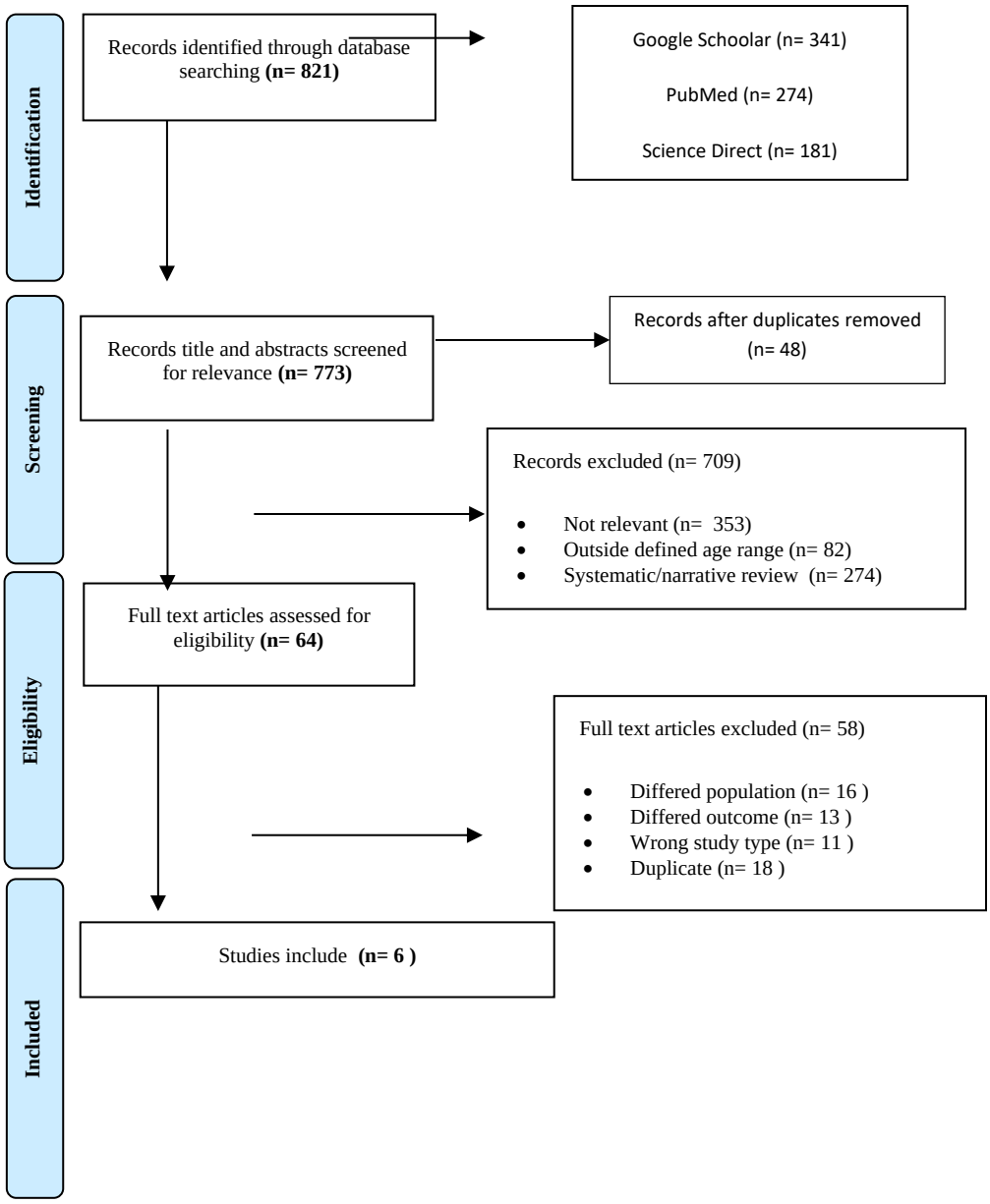

Figure 1. Prisma-ScR Flow Chart

d. Data Extraction

Data were gathered from journals that met the research criteria. The researcher synthesized information about the study's design, sample characteristics, results, and limitations of the study. Furthermore, the synthesized results were summarized in a table that included the author's name, year, title, design, duration, participants, and outcomes as reported in the article. The data extraction can be seen in Table 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Articles Characteristic

According to Figure 1, the flow chart diagram displayed the findings of a scoping review of the effect of exclusive breastfeeding on stunted children. Initially, a keyword search generated 821 articles, divided as follows: 341 from Google Scholar, 274 from PubMed, 181 from Science Direct, and 25 from DOAJ. Subsequently, 48 duplicate articles were removed, leaving 773 articles for relevance screening. 709 items were judged irrelevant based on their titles and abstracts. The remaining 64 publications were assessed for eligibility, and six studies were included because they matched the research objectives and inclusion criteria. These six publications were published between 2020 and 2023, and all were conducted in Indonesia. Synthesized Results and Characteristics of Included Studies listed in Table 2 below .

Table 2.
Synthesized Results and Characteristics of Included Studies

Reference	Title	Research Design	Duration of Research	Participants	Outcome
(Rahayu et al., 2023)	The Effect of Exclusive Breastfeeding on the Incident of Stunting in Toddlers in Tanjung Wangi Village, Cicalengka	analytical observational with case control research design	6 month	98 samples consisted of 49 treatment groups and 49 control groups (2-5 years)	Researchers concluded that there is a significant influence between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in children aged 2-5 years in Tanjung Wangi Village.
(Putri & Lake, 2020)	The Effect of Exclusive Breastfeeding on Stunting Incidents in Haekto Village, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province	Cross-sectional design	4 month	58 toddler respondent	There is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence stunting in Haekto Village, TTU Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province.
(Hadi et al., 2021)	Exclusive Breastfeeding Protects Young Children from Stunting in a Low-Income Population: A Study from Eastern Indonesia	Cross-sectional	10 month	408 toddlers aged 6 – 24 month	Exclusive breastfeeding may protect low-income children against stunting. Health promotion to improve caregiver motivation to exclusively breastfeed is critical in the present setting and beyond.
(Umiyah & Hamidiyah, 2020)	Exclusive Breastfeeding with Stunting	Cross-sectional	The research was conducted for 10 months in 2020	The sample in the study was 274 toddlers in (0 – 59 month)	The results showed that exclusive breastfeeding was associated with the incidence of stunting in toddlers in the Banyuputih Community Health Center.

(Sahdani et al., 2021)	Association Between Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice, Taburia Supplementation, and Stunting Prevalence Among Children Aged 24–60 Months in Sidotopo Wetan, Surabaya	The statistical analysis employed was the chi-square test	6 month	The samples size was 141 children aged 24–60 month	Based on these results, it can be concluded that the prevention of stunting can be overcome by maximizing exclusive breastfeeding practice and complementary foods, also the allocation of taburia.
(Setyowati et al., 2022)	Exclusive Breastfeeding as an Effort to Prevent Stunting in Toddlers	This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method in describing the research analysis	exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and continued until the age of 2 years	under five years	Exclusive breastfeeding from an early age has been proven to prevent or reduce the risk of stunting in toddlers because breast milk contains sufficient micro and macronutrients such as colostrum to provide immunity to infants.

Forms of Exclusive Breastfeeding

Based on 6 articles that discuss the effect of exclusive breastfeeding on stunted toddlers, 2 articles concluded that there is a significant effect between exclusive breastfeeding and the stunting of toddlers aged 0–5 years (Umiyah & Hamidiyah, 2020; Setyowati et al., 2022). Two articles concluded that toddlers aged 2–5 months have a significant connection between exclusive breastfeeding history and the incidence of stunting (Rahayu et al., 2023; Sahdani et al., 2021). One article concluded that toddlers aged 6–24 months have a significant effect on exclusive breastfeeding (Hadi et al., 2021), and one article concluded that there is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers (Putri & Lake, 2020).

Toddlers Characteristic

There were 971 children under five in the scoping review sample. The majority of respondents were children under five who were accompanied by their parents.

This research indicated that the impact of exclusive breastfeeding is more pronounced in cross-sectional studies compared to case-control groups and statistical analyses. According on the research result to a scoping review conducted by Rahayu et al. (2023), which covered a research period of 6 months, it was concluded that there is a significant association between exclusive breastfeeding and the occurrence of stunting among children aged 2-5 years in Tanjung Wangi Village. Putri and Lake (2020) similarly found a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding (p-value=0.003) and stunting among toddlers, with stunting rates of 75.9% and 67.2% of toddlers not receiving exclusive breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding mitigate the risk of stunting, highlighting the importance of educating and supporting to mothers in providing exclusive breastfeeding to toddlers. Other research explains that exclusive breastfeeding is correlated with stunting and provides a protective factor against malnutrition (Nurjazuli et al., 2023)

Research by Hadi et al. (2021)on exclusively breastfed stunted toddlers aged 6 to 24 months with a study period of 10-month period indicated that exclusive breastfeeding can prevent stunting, particularly among toddlers from low-income families. Thus, health promotion efforts encouraging caregivers to prioritize exclusive breastfeeding are crucial. Children exclusively breastfed tend to experience faster growth compared to non-exclusively breastfed children. Breast milk, being tailored to meet toddlers' nutritional needs and offering protection against various illnesses, stands out as the optimal food choice for toddlers. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of a child's life (Pratama & Irwandi, 2021). Exclusive breastfeeding plays a pivotal role in preventing stunting by optimizing child growth and development during the first thousand days of life (Dina et al., 2023). Umiyah and Hamidiyah (2020) found a significant correlation (p-value=0.025) between exclusive breastfeeding and stunting among stunted toddlers aged 0-59 months over a 10-month research period revealed, underscoring the need to focus on both breastfeeding duration and quality. Quality exclusive breastfeeding starts with ensuring adequate nutritional intake for breastfeeding mothers and can significantly contribute to stunting prevention.

Research by Sahdani et al. (2021) on toddlers aged 24-60 months over a 6-month research period revealed a significant correlation between exclusive breastfeeding history and stunting incidence. Exclusive breastfeeding is acknowledged as the simplest method to fulfil infants' nutritional requirements. Its benefits, including ensuring adequate nutritional intake and bolstering natural immunity, are well-documented in reducing the risk of stunting among children (Hizriyani, 2021). According to Setyowati et al. (2022**)** toddlers under five derived dual benefits from exclusive breastfeeding: enhanced natural immunity and optimal physical and intellectual development. Exclusive breastfeeding has been shown to prevent or mitigate the risk of stunting in toddlers due to breast milk's provision of essential micro and macronutrients, such as colostrum, which supports immunity. Complete nutrition and bioactive compounds in breast milk can help children avoid disease and increase body resistance. Strong body immunity can help children's growth and development and reduce the danger of disease, reducing risk factors for stunting in children (Taufiqoh et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study indicated a significant relationship (p-value=0.003) between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers. Specifically, 75.9% of stunted toddlers and 67.2% of toddlers had not received exclusive breastfeeding.

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