



Examining the influence of workplace ostracism and incivility on entrepreneurial intentions: probing the mediating role of Knowledge hiding

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Abstract

Upon the premises of social exchange theory (SET) and theory of planned behavior (TPB), this study aimed at hypothesizing and examining a mediation model that investigated the underlying mechanism through which Workplace Ostracism (WO) and workplace incivility (WI) effects on individuals' Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI). The hypothesized relationships were studied using responses from 275 employees from the FMCG sector of Pakistan through a probability sampling technique. For data analysis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS and PLS-SEM were employed. The study revealed that Workplace Ostracism and incivility have a significant relationship with individuals' Entrepreneurial intentions (EI) through the mediating role of knowledge hiding. The study's conclusion includes a discussion of the findings, as well as their limitations and potential future paths for research.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism (WO), Workplace Incivility (WI), knowledge Hiding (KH), Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI), Telecommunication Sector, Mediation Mechanism

1 Introduction

Ostracism and incivility in the workplace can demoralize and negatively impact productivity and innovation. There has been some preliminary discussion and debate about it in the literature. As Williams (2001) described, ostracism is a pervasive and potent social phenomenon that fosters a sense of social isolation and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation (Chen et al., 2020). It's a growing problem because many workers blame themselves (Ferris et al., 2008). According to a survey of

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more than 1300 workers, 71% of employees felt social exclusion (O'Reilly & Banki, [2016](#)). The workplace ostracism effect on victims and their employers can be devastating. Adverse health consequences and workers' sense of self-worth might result when workers feel isolated (Scott et al., [2015](#)). There is an increase in organizational costs due to ostracism since it leads to workplace deviance (Ferris et al., [2008](#)), higher rates of employee attrition (Ren et al., [2013](#)), and employees' engaging in intentionally damaging behavior (Hafeez et al., [2023](#)). There is still a need for additional research into how social exclusion in the workplace affects workers' personal lives and mental health (Samma et al., [2020](#)). The problems posed by ostracism and incivility can cause some employees to resign while others are emotionally strong enough to persevere. Employees who make the connection between ostracism and their employment prospects are less likely to accept offers from companies where they feel they will be ignored or excluded. Workplace turnover directly results from this discrimination (Haq, [2014](#)). This study makes the presumption that former employees may have entrepreneurial aspirations and go on to start their businesses after leaving their previous ones (Manninen et al., [2024](#)). Many studies discussed the entrepreneurial intention of college students or established entrepreneurs (Sansone et al., [2021](#); Zaremohzzabieh et al., [2019](#)), but this research is a novice to work on the entrepreneurial intentions of those employees who are victims of workplace ostracism.

Moreover, the entrepreneurial preferences of employees are influenced by knowledge hiding (Ishaq & Attar, [2019](#)) which is a product of workplace ostracism (Islam et al., [2021](#)). The objective is to examine whether workplace ostracism and incivility affect individual entrepreneurial intentions, with knowledge hiding functioning as an intervening variable. Although many studies have been done on ostracism and knowledge hiding concerning organizational culture and employee productivity, minimal work has been done on entrepreneurial intentions. This study aims to give insight into new factors that lead to entrepreneurial intentions. This study aims to fill in a loophole in the existing research by explaining the association involving ostracism, incivility, and the entrepreneurial intentions of workers, which has not been examined in previous studies. This research will also add value to the literature, stating that ostracism undoubtedly results in negative outcomes, but employees may also be motivated for new business ventures. The findings of this research are beneficial for practitioners and organization management in developing such an environment and culture in their organization, leading to employee creativity and an approach toward entrepreneurial intentions.

2 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical background

The assumption of planned behavior and the social exchange theory are the foundation for this investigation. This research aims to underwrite how social exchange theory and the theory of planned behavior might be incorporated into one another (Taheri & Fazeli, [2023](#)). The primary assumption of social exchange theory (SET) is that people's behavior depends on exchange relationships with their surrounding people. Under social exchange theory, physical and non-physical things can be exchanged, creating in-group and out-group situations (Fatima et al., [2021](#)). According to Blau ([1968](#)), employees who feel ostracized fall into the out-group category, where nothing is exchanged. In the exchange of relationships, a specific amount of knowledge hiding is understood as a cultural norm. It can be explained that the exchange of things occurs in the reciprocity principle of SET (Zhang et al., [2024](#)). Positive reciprocity assumes that individuals ought not to harm others, while disruptive reciprocity states that people intend to or do punish those who hurt them (Fatima et al., [2021](#)). An employee feels hurt when he feels himself being ostracized at the workplace. In return, he will be less cooperative, reduce workplace interactions, and limit his communication and sharing of valuable information with others who ostracized him (Burmeister et al., [2021](#)). This exercise by victims of ostracized workplaces promotes knowledge hiding (Fatima et al., [2021](#)). As Ajzen (1991) stated, the planned behavior theory "anticipates the

intent of an individual to perform a particular behavior at a designated time and location." TPB assumes that there are some behavioral intentions behind every individual behavior. Intention leads to actual behavior. The foundation of this theory is that people engage in a particular behavior after making a logical and reasoned decision after evaluating available information. As discussed by Ajzen's (1991) theory, behavioral intentions are formed by three things, i.e., motives, subjective standards, and observed control behaviors. Attitudes towards behavior encounter an individual's sentiments (positive or negative) about the behavior of his interest and consider the outcomes (favorable or adverse) of undertaking a specific conduct (Brison & Caesens, 2024). Subjective norms state how valued others will think about performing an act. It includes social norms and the environment in which behavior will be served. Perceived control behavior is the degree to which an actor thinks how easy and challenging the behavior to be performed is. People with more confidence and resources will have more perceived control behavior (Lee & Kozar, 2005).

This research employs social exchange theory to show that ostracized and hurt employees will hide valuable knowledge and information in return and intend to leave the organization or build entrepreneurial intentions with the support of TPB to deal with ostracism. Some reasons or antecedents can lead to entrepreneurial choices like job burnout and stress (Duan et al., 2020). Many existing studies revealed that workplace ostracism results in anti-social outcomes like burnout (Qian et al., 2017). Employees may feel exhausted by working in an ostracized environment, leading to emotional exhaustion and less involvement. Studies show job burnout results in employee dissatisfaction and high turnover rates (Cheo, 2017). Demotivated employees try to compensate themselves and opt for self-employment options, which generates entrepreneurial intentions (Duan et al., 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize that workplace ostracism and incivility can be factors that can lead to entrepreneurial intentions in employees.

2.2 Entrepreneurial intentions

Eisenman (2013), the Godfather of entrepreneurship, defined it as "the seeking of a prospect besides resources governed." Entrepreneurship is pursuing new opportunities and expanding programs with current resources (Yikilmaz et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship significantly contributes to developing a state's economy and society (Eisinger, 1988). Entrepreneurship engagement significantly influences the economic growth of both emerging and developed nations. According to Moriano et al., (2012), the entrepreneurial purpose is the concept. It can be marked as "the level of thinking that accompanies the action and focuses primarily on entrepreneurial activities," such as creating a new venture or embracing entrepreneurship as a career path. Entrepreneurial intentions are integral to pursuing actual entrepreneurship behavior (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). According to Lakovleva et al. (2011), planning is the first and foremost step in entrepreneurship for setting up a business. Intentions lead to behaviors; thus, entrepreneurial intention leads to entrepreneurial behaviors. Some previous studies found self-efficacy, the tendency to innovate, new technologies, and new business ventures are motivational and psychological factors linked with entrepreneurial behavior (Linen, 2008; Chen, 1998). According to Quan (2012), intentions can be divided into two types related to entrepreneurship: deliberate, in which entrepreneurial behavior to start a new venture, and impulsive, which is intentions for unplanned and unrecognized control of a business's resources.

2.3 Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism is when employees feel excluded and negated by another personnel Ferris et al. (2008). Workplace ostracism has many different types. One form of ostracism is "language-based ostracism," Which emerges whenever several individuals engage in a language difficult for another person to comprehend (Khan & Saeed, 2024). The second form of ostracism is social ostracism, and it alludes to situations where somebody has the impression that they are being disregarded or shunned by any other person or company (Robinson et al., 2013). Ostracism can be

purposeful, in which people hurt others intentionally. It may be non-purposeful, in which actors do not intentionally harm others but exhibit behavior that may hurt surrounding people (Anjum et al., 2019). Employees who feel ostracized may experience the pain of being ignored, which decreases their motivation and affects their attitudes (Li & Zhang, 2019). Ostracism may result in less well-being and low self-esteem at an individual level (Anjum et al., 2019) and high staff turnover at the organizational level (Chang et al., 2019). Ostracism may also result in job stress, apprehension, and depression (Yang and Wei, 2018). Hence, based on this, we proposed the following hypothesis

H1: Workplace Ostracism (WO) has a relationship with Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)

H2: Workplace Ostracism (WO) has a relationship with Knowledge Hiding (KH)

2.4 Workplace Incivility

Andersson and Pearsons (1999) defined workplace incivility as " "low-concentration behavior involving certain intentions that are ambiguous in nature to devalue the employee who is chosen, and this becomes covered in a violation of workplace antics and principles that serve as vital for shared dignity (Hua et al., 2023)." This definition includes rude and crude acts because they go against the ethical principles upheld by an institution and show a lack of concern for other parties. To further elucidate this wide-ranging topic, consider the following: when lower-level employees, such as interns or assistants, engage in hostile and violent verbal or nonverbal behavior toward others (physical harm is not included), this is known as workplace aggression (Tepper & Shaw 2001). Practitioners frequently identify workplace incivility as a significant component or symptom of workplace deviation (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). According to Porath and Pearson (2010), 96% to 99% of respondents had seen incivility occur on minor matters at work, and 71% have experienced uncivilized behavior in the workplace in the last five years. Several authors have referenced. Investigators have noted that workplace incivility is a leading indicator of workplace deviation because it increases the likelihood of poor organizational fit and conflicts (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). To determine whether workplace incivility influences employees' willingness to take risks and pursue new opportunities, this study is willing to explore the mediating role of knowledge hiding with entrepreneurial intentions (Singh et al., 2024). Hence, based on this, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Workplace Incivility (WI) has a relationship with Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)

H4: Workplace Incivility (WI) has a relationship with Knowledge Hiding (KH)

2.5 Knowledge hiding

According to Connelly et al. (2012), Knowledge hiding constitutes "a deliberate effort by an individual to conceal or withhold information which another person has requested." Knowledge hiding can occur on different levels, i.e., among supervisors (Butt, 2019), team members, and co-workers (Babik et al., 2019; Singh, 2019). Many scholars have differentiated knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding (Connelly et al., 2012; Bari et al., 2019). Knowledge hiding is done intentionally, and it has a broader scope. Doing it is not a unitary concept but has multiple dimensions (Connelly et al., 2012). Knowledge hiding can be classified into three main dimensions: Acted like blindness, deceptive cover, and rationalized concealing. When a person provides an explanation or justification for not disclosing information needed and blames it on a third party, they are indulging in rationalizing hiding (Wang et al., 2023). For example, when someone asks for some information or report, the hider explains not providing the requested information because the information is not allowed to be shared or confidential. In rationalized, no deception is involved (Connelly et al., 2012). Playing dumb means when a person acts as if he does not have information or acts as ignorant. (Connelly et al., 2012). For instance, when data is requested, the hider explains that he does not know about the requested information. Evasive

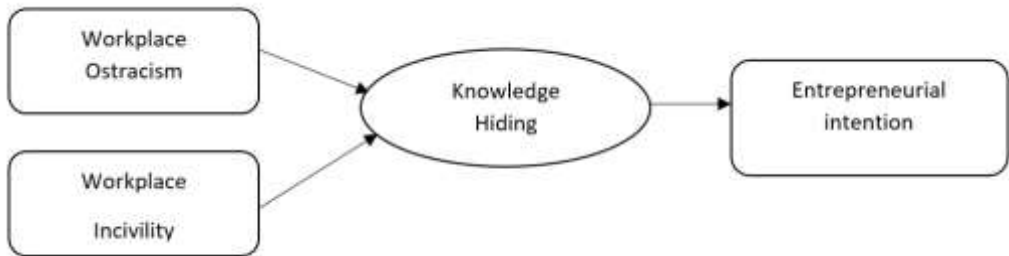
hiding occurs when someone does not provide full information or postpones a plan to deliver information (Ahmad et al., 2023). In evasive hiding, the actor provides fabricated information and sometimes promises to provide requested information in the future but intends to hide particular knowledge (Connelly et al., 2012). Hence, based on this, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Knowledge Hiding (KH) has a relationship with Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)

H6: Knowledge Hiding (KH) mediates the relationship between WO and EI

H7: Knowledge Hiding (KH) mediates the relationship between WI and EI

2.6 Theoretical model:



3 Methodology

3.1 Sample design and data collection

The cross-sectional design was employed to test various hypotheses in this study. The authors targeted managerial-level employees in the telecom sector of Pakistan (Mattar et al., 2022). The human resource department requested a list of telecom company staff, and we took time from officials to conduct this survey. Using probability sampling, a survey was conducted through a questionnaire and approached by the managers in different branches of mobile service companies (Al-Dhuhouri & Mohd Shamsudin, 2023). The distribution entailed receiving 325 responses to a total of 400 questionnaires. After thorough analysis, 275 questionnaires seemed helpful in analysis much above the standardized sample size requirement grounded in regression analysis by Heir et al. (2007), that is, five responses for 1 measuring item. Table 1 represents demographic information, including gender, education level, age, class, and occupation. It is clear from Table 1 that 68.5% (98) of the 275 respondents were male, while 31.5% (45) were female. The survey comprised 70 respondents, or 49%, under 25. furthermore, 46% (67) respondents were between the ages of 26 to 45, 3.5% (5) respondents were between the ages of 46 to 55, and 0.7% (1) respondents were over the age of 56 years. Statistics indicated that the age range of 26 to 45 comprised the majority of respondents. The results also presented demographic information about the respondents' education level. The analysis of the poll's results showed that among the respondents, 42.7% (61) had bachelors, 51.7% (74) carried a master's degree, just 1.4% (2) held a PhD, and 4.2% (6) comprised the remaining participants. Additionally, the analysis confirms that many participants hold master's degrees (Adnan et al., 2024).

3.2 Questionnaire/ Measures

The researchers collected data via questionnaires, adapting all measuring scales from prior research. Every question was closed-ended and evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To measure workplace ostracism, we used the 10-item scale Ferris et al. (2008) gave us. For workplace incivility, a seven-item was adopted (Cortina et al., 2001). The reliability of this scale has been checked, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.9 for this study. For knowledge-hiding measures, we used 12 12-item scale given by Connelly et al. (2012)

consisting of three parts: evasive hiding and playing dumb. We rationalized hiding, which many popular studies use (Peng et al., 2020) to measure knowledge hiding. We used a five-item scale developed by Linan and Chen (2009) to measure entrepreneurial intentions. These measures of entrepreneurial intentions are widely used and adopted by many studies (Neneh, 2019; Santos & Linan et al., 2016). Before data collection, content validity was checked, pretesting was done to ensure no more need for amendments, and responses were used to check the reliability of measures used for measuring study variables.

3.3 Common Methods Bias

According to Kock (2015), there may be common method bias when using the PLS-SEM approach for data analysis, and full collinearity can be used to assess common method bias. This study used VIF (variance inflation factors) to identify common method bias by applying a full collinearity test. If VIF values are higher than 3.3, it indicates problems in the measurement model, but after running a full collinearity test, the constructs of the study showed less value than 3.3. This suggests the model is free of biases and non-normal data and is okay for further proceedings using PLS-SEM.

4 Results

This study uses PLS-SEM for analysis, a popular and modern estimation method. With the help of underpinning theory, the study predicted and explained the relationship of the constructs under study. According to Hair et al. (2016), PLS is a popular technique and widely used when the study's objective is to predict and explain the constructs of the study. Moreover, PLS-SEM is also called a convenient and flexible approach to analyzing and building a model (Ringle et al., 2005). PLS-SEM requires and demands fewer constrictions for sample size, stands for no normally distributed area, and helps avoid data normality issues (Hair et al., 2016). This study analyzed data using the PLS algorithm, bootstrapping to calculate path coefficients, significant levels, and factor loadings.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	98	68.5
	Female	45	31.5
Age	Up to 25	70	49.0
	26-45	67	46.9
	46-55	5	3.5
	56+	1	.7
Qualification	Bachelor's	61	42.7
	Master's	74	51.7
	PhD	2	1.4
	Others	6	4.2
Nature of Employment	Contractual	26	18.2
	Permanent	113	79.0
	others	4	2.8
Length of Service	Up to 1 Year	41	28.7
	2-5 Years	52	36.4
	5-10 Years	26	18.2
	10+ Years	24	16.8

4.1 Measurement model assessment

The study evaluated the measurement model using comparative reliability, convergent validity (composite reliability), factor loadings, and average variance. Table 2 displays AVE values greater than 0.50, composite reliability values greater than 0.70, and factor loadings for constructs greater

than 0.60. (Hair et al., 2016).

4.2 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was checked by applying the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) as a viable approach to evaluate discriminant validity. Although the Fornell-Larcker test, in many cases, does not give a lack of discriminant values, both Fornell-Larcker and HTMT ratio tests are applied in this research. Table 3 shows values for both tests to determine the discriminant validity of the construct

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

Following an evaluation of the measurement model assessment, the significance of the structural model was assessed using t-values, path coefficients, and standard errors. Results were evaluated under PLS-SEM, and hypotheses were assessed based on some critical values, i.e., t-value > 1.645 and p-value < 0.05. Table 4 exhibits the results of the structural model assessment and path coefficients

Table 2: Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Entrepreneurial intentions	E1	0.821	0.899	0.925	0.712
	E2	0.875			
	E3	0.813			
	E4	0.842			
	E5	0.865			
Evasive hiding	EH1	0.776	0.755	0.846	0.598
	EH2	0.77			
	EH3	0.594			
	EH4	0.831			
playing dumb	PD1	0.676	0.825	0.879	0.646
	PD2	0.753			
	PD3	0.637			
	PD4	0.83			
Rationalized hiding	RH1	0.813	0.704	0.814	0.526
	RH2	0.755			
	RH3	0.889			
	RH4	0.794			
workplace ostracism	OS1	0.699	0.917	0.931	0.576
	OS2	0.773			
	OS3	0.709			
	OS4	0.705			
	OS5	0.714			
	OS6	0.79			
	OS7	0.812			
	OS8	0.861			
	OS9	0.813			
	OS10	0.691			
workplace incivility	WI1	0.677	0.915	0.911	0.518
	WI2	0.758			
	WI3	0.748			
	WI4	0.766			
	WI5	0.699			
	WI6	0.710			
	WI7	0.865			

Table 3: Fornell-Lacker criteria

	EH	EI	PD	RH	OS	WI
EH	0.762					
EI	0.293	0.844				

PD	0.657	0.274	0.804			
RH	0.664	0.216	0.462	0.725		
OS	0.558	0.502	0.462	0.521	0.759	
WI	0.468	0.584	0.461	0.568	0.798	0.748

Table 4: HTMT criteria

	EH	EI	PD	RH	OS
EH					
EI	0.351				
PD	0.804	0.268			
RH	0.868	0.274	0.581		
OS	0.661	0.538	0.489	0.599	

Table 5: Structural model assessment

Relationships	beta	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
WO -> EI	0.558	0.057	9.726	0.000	Supported
WO -> KH	0.505	0.087	5.809	0.000	Supported
KH-> EI	0.462	0.065	7.087	0.021	Supported
WO ->KH ->EI	0.019	0.069	10.281	0.005	Supported
WI ->KH ->EI	0.587	0.072	13.464	0.024	Supported

Ostracism can lead to job stress and burnout, leading to developing entrepreneurial intentions in victims. Results are consistent with previous studies, as workplace ostracism significantly impacts knowledge hiding (Burmeister et al., 2021; Fatima et al., 2021). The proposed hypothesis that workplace ostracism influences entrepreneurial intentions is supported and consistent with the literature. Previous studies have shown that workplace ostracism hurts employees, emotionally disturbs them, and leads to job stress and burnout (Qian et al., 2017). In turn, job stress and burnout result in the development of entrepreneurial intentions (Duan et al., 2020). This study showed that ostracized people come into the category of out-groups and feel emotionally hurt and disturbed. Ostracized employees imply anti-social behaviors and hide their knowledge from peers, managers, or subordinates. Our study showed a significant positive impact of workplace ostracism on knowledge-hiding behaviors. All three dimensions of learning to hide, i.e., rationalized hiding, playing dumb, and evasive hiding, are positively correlated with workplace ostracism. Our central hypothesis is also accepted as results showed that workplace ostracism significantly impacts entrepreneurial intentions. This study supports the view of mediating the role of knowledge hiding between entrepreneurial intentions.

Similarly, workplace incivility also shows a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. And also, knowledge hiding mediates this relationship. Previous research has shown that incivility in the workplace negatively impacts productivity and creativity in the workplace, ultimately affecting positive entrepreneurial intentions. As a result, this study aims to provide useful information for business owners in Pakistan's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, specifically in reducing WO and WI, to create an innovative culture that leads to positive entrepreneurial intention.

5 Discussions

This study aimed to investigate the impact of workplace ostracism and incivility on entrepreneurial intentions with the mediating role of knowledge hiding. Regarding studies in literature, workplace ostracism and incivility can lead to knowledge hiding as a result and under the basis of social exchange theory and the impact of this knowledge-hiding phenomenon on entrepreneurial intentions. This study proposed to check a new antecedent of entrepreneurial intentions: workplace ostracism and incivility.

5.1 Theoretical and practical implications

This study shed some light on the fact and pathways of workplace ostracism, incivility and its consequences. Moreover, this study also encountered and tried to address some new antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions. This study adds to the literature by adding the value of new perspectives on workplace ostracism, incivility and entrepreneurial intentions. This study validates the basic assumptions of social exchange theory by validating the results of ostracism, incivility and knowledge hiding. In a previous study, negative consequences were measured as a result of ostracism which is accurate and validated. However, this study further expands that there is some light on positive attitudes and negative consequences of job stress and burnout.

Moreover, this study also validated the assumption of the theory of planned behaviour. It aimed to add value by addressing the feelings and intentions of ostracized employees to be self-employed people and think differently, which can lead to entrepreneurial behaviours. This study also has some implications for managers. Although undoubtedly entrepreneurship and self-employment play a pertinent role in the economic development of an economy, people who are ostracized get emotionally and physically sick and develop turnover intentions followed by entrepreneurial intentions, which is a problem for employers as Pakistan is facing an unskilled labour force and issues of turnovers which is a significant cause of the problem for managers because when people leave, it costs the organization to hire, train and retain new employees. Managers or employers must first create an environment discouraging ostracism practices and encouraging a healthy and friendly work environment. Managers must work on reducing these practices because it may be possible that people with high intellectual capital and resources develop turnover and entrepreneurial intentions that would leave the company that cost high organization.

5.2 Limitations and Future Recommendations

This research also has some limitations. First, this study focuses on only the knowledge-intensive in the FMCG sector. The sample size should include other sectors, like software, telecommunication, and real estate. Second, this study used knowledge hiding as mediating variable between ostracism. There may be other mediating variables like the co-worker relationship, job stress, and depression between workplace ostracism, incivility and entrepreneurial intentions. There may be other antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions and consequences of workplace ostracism and incivility. Lastly, this study used cross-sectional data, and results may differ if longitudinal studies are done to check the changes in intentions over some time of ostracized people and to check the actual entrepreneurial behaviours of employees.

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