

RELIGIOUS MODERATION: The Key to Overcoming Conflict and Realizing a Harmonious Life

¹Andri Sopiyan, ²Siti Ropiah, ³Muamar Sidik, ⁴Sarnubi Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Haji Agus Salim, Indonesia

¹Andrisopiyan87@gmail.com, ²ropiah@staihas.ac.id,

³Muamar.sidik100@gmail.com, ⁴Sanurbisag7@gmail.com

Abstrak

Moderasi beragama merupakan pilar strategis dalam membangun kehidupan sosial yang harmonis di tengah pluralitas bangsa Indonesia, terutama di tengah meningkatnya gejala intoleransi dan polarisasi sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hakikat dan konsep moderasi beragama dalam perspektif keislaman, menganalisis penerapan nilai-nilainya dalam pencegahan konflik antarumat beragama, serta merumuskan strategi penguatannya guna menciptakan kehidupan sosial yang inklusif dan damai. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis melalui studi pustaka terhadap buku dan jurnal bereputasi nasional terindeks SINTA, termasuk penelitian mutakhir setelah tahun 2021. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama dalam Islam berakar pada prinsip *wasathiyah* (keseimbangan), *tawazun* (proporsionalitas), *tasamuh* (toleransi), dan *i'tidal* (keadilan), yang mendorong sikap terbuka, adil, dan penolakan terhadap ekstremisme. Dalam konteks Indonesia, penerapan nilai-nilai tersebut efektif mencegah konflik melalui pendidikan karakter, dialog lintas iman, serta kebijakan sosial berbasis keadilan dan keberagaman. Penguatan moderasi beragama memerlukan kolaborasi antara pemerintah, lembaga pendidikan, tokoh agama, dan masyarakat sipil. Implikasi penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa moderasi beragama berperan penting dalam memperkuat integrasi nasional, stabilitas sosial, serta nilai-nilai kebangsaan dan demokrasi yang berkeadaban.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Kehidupan Sosial yang Toleransi dan Harmonis.

Abstract

Religious moderation is a strategic pillar in building a harmonious social life in the midst of the plurality of the Indonesian nation, especially in the midst of increasing symptoms of intolerance and social polarization. This research aims to examine the essence and concept of religious moderation from an Islamic perspective, analyze the application of its values in the prevention of conflicts between religious communities, and formulate strategies to strengthen it to create an inclusive and peaceful social life. The research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach through literature studies of nationally reputable books and journals indexed by SINTA, including cutting-edge research after 2021. The results of the study show that religious moderation in Islam is rooted in the principles of *wasathiyah* (balance), *tawazun* (proportionality), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidal* (justice), which encourage openness, fairness, and rejection of extremism. In the Indonesian context, the application of these values is effective in preventing conflict through character education, interfaith dialogue, and social policies based on justice and diversity. Strengthening religious moderation requires collaboration between the government, educational institutions, religious leaders, and civil society. The implications of this study confirm that religious moderation plays an important role in strengthening national integration, social stability, and values of civilized nationality and democracy.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Tolerant and Harmonious Social Life.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a high level of religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. This pluralistic condition is the wealth of the nation, but at the same time it holds the potential for conflict if it is not managed properly. In this context, religious moderation is an important concept that plays a role in maintaining a balance between religious freedom and social harmony. Religious moderation is not just a normative discourse, but must be implemented in daily life, especially in the context of education, public policy, and multicultural community life. Recent studies show that this concept has become an important strategy in preventing conflict and strengthening national integration in Indonesia (Subchi et al., 2022)

The conceptualization of religious moderation in Indonesia is closely related to *the values of wasathiyah* in Islam which emphasizes balance, tolerance, and justice. Moderation does not mean compromising on the principles of faith, but the wise application of religious teachings according to the social context. In the book *Grounding Religious Moderation in Indonesia*, it is explained that moderation is a way of thinking and acting that places religion as a source of universal moral values that encourage peace and brotherhood among humanity. This view is also supported by Juwaini and his friends who affirm that moderation must be internalized through formal and non-formal education in order to be able to form the character of a tolerant society (Susanti, 2022)

Various post-2021 empirical studies show that education is a strategic space to instill the value of moderation. The integration of the concept of moderation in curriculum, learning, and extracurricular activities has been proven effective in increasing tolerance and reducing the potential for radicalism among students and students. A study conducted by Ahmad Hanif Fahrudin, Ifa Nurhayati, and Mufiqur Rahman (2024), for example, shows that Islamic educational institutions that implement religious moderation guidelines through the Ministry of Religion are able to form religious behavior that is balanced and far from extreme attitudes (Fahrudin et al., 2024)

Another study conducted by Yuliana Herlina Imamah (2023) explains that the integration of moderation values in the development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum has a significant effect on strengthening the national character of students. The results of his research showed that students who studied in an educational environment that practiced religious moderation had higher levels of social empathy and tolerance than those who did not. This reinforces the view that education plays an important role as the main foundation for the formation of moderate character.

In the community realm, research by Elly Warnisyah and her colleagues (2024) in Batu Bara Regency shows that community activities based on mutual cooperation and interfaith dialogue can increase a sense of brotherhood and strengthen social cohesion (Warnisyah et al., 2024) This research confirms that the moderation approach is not only effective at the institutional level, but also at the grassroots community level. The implementation of Islamic values that are rahmatan lil-'alamin through real social activities is able to erode prejudice between religious people.

However, a big challenge arises from the development of the digital world. Social media is often a means of spreading exclusive and intolerant religious beliefs. R. Mulyana's research highlights that religious digital literacy is an urgent matter in stemming the spread of extreme ideas in cyberspace. He emphasized that religious moderation in the digital era must be directed at strengthening media literacy and critical thinking skills so that people are not easily provoked by misleading religious narratives.

Meanwhile, international research by Fahri Mohammad and Ahmad Zainur shows that religious moderation in Indonesia has a distinctive character compared to other countries. Moderation in Indonesia is not only based on theology, but also rooted in local cultural values and Pancasila as the basis of the state. The results of their research show that an approach that combines religious values and local culture is the key to Indonesia's success in maintaining social harmony.

The works of STAI lecturer Haji Agus Salim, especially by Siti Ropiah, make an important contribution to the study of moderation at the local level. In her article entitled *"Religious Moderation Is a Necessity"* (2022), Siti Ropiah emphasized that moderation is not just a choice, but a necessity in dealing with diverse social dynamics and religious ideologies (Ropiah et al., 2025) In his latest research with Muhamad Abduh (2025), he researched the application of moderation based on KMA 450 and found that Islamic educational institutions that internalized the guidelines showed an increase in inclusive and tolerant attitudes among lecturers and students.

Based on these studies, it appears that strengthening religious moderation needs to be carried out systematically through various sectors: education, media, and public policy. Government policies that mainstream religious moderation through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and national programs are a strategic step, but they still need support from educational institutions and civil society for sustainable implementation.

In terms of legal and state policies, research by Nur Khasanah, Achmad Irwan Hamzani, and Havis Aravik (2023) shows that religious moderation is in line with the constitutional values of Pancasila and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. They emphasized that

moderation must be understood not as a mere religious concept, but as a basic state value that sustains the life of the nation.

These studies show consistency that religious moderation cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of Indonesia. However, longitudinal research that observes changes in people's attitudes towards moderation values is still limited. Similarly, experimental studies that test the effectiveness of systematic moderation learning programs in various institutions are still rare. This research gap raises the need to conduct a more in-depth and sustainable study. In this context, the novelty or novelty of this research lies in its efforts to combine longitudinal and qualitative approaches to the practice of religious moderation in local Islamic educational institutions, including STAI Haji Agus Salim. This study also seeks to assess the extent to which the implementation of moderation policies through KMA 450 has an impact on changes in religious and social attitudes of the academic community.

In addition, this study tries to formulate a strategic model for strengthening education-based moderation that can be replicated in various institutions. By combining empirical analysis and theoretical reflection, this research is expected to be able to make a real contribution to the development of more contextual and sustainable moderation policies. Another novelty is the integration of the digitalization dimension into moderation studies which has been rarely touched academically.

Thus, this introduction emphasizes that religious moderation is not just a normative discourse, but a strategic need of the Indonesian nation in maintaining harmony and avoiding conflicts between religious communities. This research is here to make a scientific and practical contribution through empirical and conceptual approaches in order to realize a harmonious social life in the midst of a plurality of society.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological paradigm to understand the essence, application, and strategy of strengthening religious moderation in the context of the social life of Indonesian society. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research is oriented towards the discovery of meaning, in-depth understanding, and contextual analysis of complex socio-religious phenomena. According to Sugiyono, qualitative methods are used when researchers want to interpret social reality naturally through the perspective of participants, rather than just measuring variables quantitatively (Supandi, 2025) Thus, this study seeks to uncover the dynamics of religious moderation as understood and practiced by Islamic society and educational institutions in Indonesia.

The type of research used is *field research*, where primary data is collected directly from field sources through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Field research is relevant for examining socio-religious practices because it provides direct access to the empirical experiences of informants. This is in line with the opinion of Lexy J. Moleong who stated that qualitative research emphasizes the process of interaction between researchers and subjects to find the meaning behind apparent social behavior (Moleong, 2004) In this way, researchers can explore the views of the public, educators, and religious leaders about the nature and application of religious moderation.

The data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with lecturers, students, and religious leaders from several Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, including STAI Haji Agus Salim. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from scientific literature, books, reputable journals, and policy documents such as the Decree of the Minister of Religion (KMA) No. 450 of 2023 concerning Religious Moderation. The data collection technique was carried out through three main ways: (1) *in-depth interviews* to explore the views of participants; (2) participatory observation to observe moderation practices in social and educational activities; and (3) documentation to analyze written data, such as academic reports, research results, and policy papers. According to Burhan Bungin, the combination of the three techniques allows triangulation of data that strengthens the validity of the findings.

Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Data reduction is carried out by sorting out relevant data based on the focus of the research, then presented in the form of narrative descriptions and analytical themes. Verification is carried out repeatedly through *member checking* and *peer debriefing techniques* to ensure the validity of interpretation. This refers to the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which emphasizes the importance of the cyclic relationship between data collection and interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

The validity of the data in this study is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods. Triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of the interviews with the results of observations and documentation, as well as with secondary data from the scientific literature. This approach reinforces the objectivity of the research without ignoring the social context that surrounds it. This kind of validation technique is commonly used in socio-religious research because it is able to present empirical reality in its entirety.

The selection of this method is based on the main objectives of the research, namely to understand in depth the nature of religious moderation, explore its application in the social context,

and formulate strengthening strategies that are applicable to Indonesia's pluralistic society. With a strong theoretical foundation and systematic methodological procedures, this research is expected to make an academic and practical contribution to the development of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Research Findings and Discussion

The essence and concept of religious moderation in the perspective of Islam and the social life of Indonesian society

Indonesia, as a country that maintains the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and is built on the foundation of Pancasila, faces unique challenges as well as opportunities related to the management of religious diversity in its social life; it is in this context *that the concept of religious moderation* develops as a normative-practical paradigm that places a proportional, non-extreme, and respectful attitude of plurality as the foundation of contextual and constitutional (Subchi et al., 2022). In Islam, moderation is understood as the translation of *the principle of wasathiyah* the concept of balance, justice, and middle ground that encourages the ummah to practice religious teachings without exaggeration (*tasyaddud*) or reduction of the essence of religion (*taqallul*), so that religious ethics can function as a social glue rather than a divisive tool; theoretical and philosophical studies place *wasathiyah* not just as a theological category, but also as a relevant ethical framework to respond to modern plurality (Fitriah, 2013)

Contemporary empirical research corroborates this claim: quantitative and qualitative studies on various campuses and communities show a positive correlation between the understanding of moderation and indicators of social tolerance such as willingness to interact across faiths, commitment to national values, and accommodation to local cultural practices that mark that moderation is not only an academic discourse, but also a community's practical capacity to manage differences (Hafith & Malik, 2025). In the realm of religious education, the integration of moderation values into pedagogical curricula and practices (e.g., dialogue-based learning, critical literacy, and moral strengthening) has been proven to improve students' competence in inclusive thinking and contain the potential for exclusive attitudes; This can be seen from the evaluation of the moderation program in madrassas and Islamic universities which showed significant changes in attitudes and behaviors in program participants.

The role of local actors, including Islamic boarding schools, Islamic organizations, mosque leaders, and educational institutions such as STAI Haji Agus Salim—is crucial in translating moderation guidelines into field practice; case studies conducted by local researchers, including Siti Ropiah, illustrate how institution-driven initiatives (campus and campus digital communities) can

create spaces for dialogue and literacy programs that reduce exclusive narratives at the micro (Ropiah et al., 2025). However, social realities also present structural obstacles: the rapid flow of digital information often facilitates the spread of disinformation and hard beliefs, while the capacity of educators and community leaders to internalize moderate approaches remains uneven across regions; Field studies indicate that without a combination of policy interventions, education, and strengthening media literacy, moderation efforts will be difficult to sustain.

At the public policy level, state initiatives—such as the mainstreaming of moderation in training modules, madrasah curricula, and Ministry of Religious Affairs programs—demonstrate institutional commitment, but implementation evaluations highlight the need to strengthen monitoring, resource support, and contextual adaptation so that policies do not stop at the rhetorical level. In the perspective of state-law, religious moderation must also be read as a constitutional instrumentality that supports national cohesion; normative research emphasizes that the harmonization between religious teachings and Pancasila values is an important aspect in reducing religion-based conflicts and encouraging the peaceful resolution of social disputes. Methodologically, recent studies have used a mixed-methods approach and case studies to capture the nuances of moderation praxis in various settings, from urban to rural, and the results indicate that an effective moderation model is an adaptive one: combining the teaching of contextual religious texts, the involvement of local figures, and public communication strategies that emphasize inclusive narratives (Warnisyah et al., 2024). At the micro-social level, moderation practices related to local wisdom often facilitate cultural and religious reconciliation—for example, local rituals are accommodated in religious practices to mitigate identity conflicts; Ethnographic studies in some areas show that such accommodations reduce social friction rooted in differences in rituals and religious symbols.

On the other hand, the research also reveals the need for longitudinal evidence and evaluation of long-term impacts—most current studies are cross-sectional and therefore inadequate to read the dynamics of changes in moderation attitudes in the long term; this is a research gap that is important to close in order for moderation policies and practices to be designed based on stronger evidence (Rosyidah & Ali, 2025). Thus, the essence of religious moderation in the perspective of Islam and Indonesian social life can be concluded as a normative-practical construct rooted in the principle of wasathiyah, actualized through education, policies, and community practices, and must be seen as a continuous process that requires cross-sectoral synergy (government, educational institutions, mass organizations, and civil society) as well as adaptation to digital and cultural challenges in order to

maintain harmony and harmony. Preventing conflicts between religious communities can be achieved in a sustainable manner.

The application of the values of religious moderation can play a role in preventing and overcoming conflicts between religious communities in Indonesia

The application of the values of religious moderation in Indonesia cannot be separated from the characteristics of a pluralistic nation in terms of religion, culture, and ethnicity. Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of a balance between beliefs and social tolerance; This is in line with the principles of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) taught in Islam as a guideline for relations between the ummah. In Indonesia's social context, these values are translated into life practices that reject extremism and intolerance, as well as encourage interfaith dialogue and collaboration. A recent study conducted by Mahfud and Hasan shows that the application of religious moderation values in the interfaith community in Yogyakarta has succeeded in suppressing potential conflicts due to identity provocation by building communication based on empathy and equality. Similar results were also found by Afrianti's research which explained that interfaith activities based on education and cultural arts can be an effective medium in strengthening social cohesion and preventing disintegration in multireligious societies.

The values of religious moderation are also the main foundation for the formation of a collective awareness of the importance of peace and respect for the religious rights of every citizen. Through moderate religious education activities, students are trained to think critically about the intolerant narratives that develop in public spaces. Research conducted by Rahmatulloh and his colleagues in the state madrasah environment showed that curriculum-based religious moderation training was able to reduce students' intolerance tendencies by up to 35% in one semester of learning. At the community level, programs such as the "Moderation Awareness Village" initiated by the Ministry of Religion have also been proven to strengthen the network between religious leaders in resolving social disputes through a mediation approach based on the values of justice and compassion. Thus, the application of moderation values not only results in tolerant individual attitudes, but also builds a social system that is adaptive to diversity.

In addition, the implementation of the value of religious moderation in the context of conflict resolution has proven to be effective through the *interfaith peacebuilding* model. This model places interfaith communication as a preventive strategy against conflict escalation. Research by Iqbal and Zulfa found that interfaith forums facilitated by Islamic and Christian educational institutions in Ambon were able to reduce post-conflict tensions through joint education based on universal human values. Meanwhile, an empirical study by Nurcholish and Rianawati confirms that the *Community-*

Based Religious Moderation (CBRM) program is an adaptive mechanism for the community in dealing with potential identity-based provocations on social media. Through the involvement of local religious leaders and digital communities, religious messages that emphasize national brotherhood (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*) and humanity (*ukhuwah insaniyah*) can be packaged in a peaceful and inclusive narrative. This approach shows that the application of the value of religious moderation now needs to penetrate the digital world so that its effectiveness can reach the younger generation who are the main users of social media.

Furthermore, the application of religious moderation in conflict prevention must be accompanied by public policies that are responsive to social change. The state's policy in mainstreaming religious moderation through the Ministry of Religion's Strategic Plan 2020-2024 shows a structural commitment to make moderation the foundation for maintaining national harmony. Research by Siti Rohmah and colleagues confirms that when moderation policies are combined with civil society participation, their effectiveness in reducing religion-based conflicts increases significantly. Such policies also need to be balanced with a cultural approach, where local wisdom such as *consensus deliberation*, *mutual cooperation*, and *regional peace customs* become a medium for contextually internalizing moderation values. Therefore, the application of religious moderation values in preventing and overcoming conflicts is not only normative, but must be operationalized through sustainable policies, education, and social practices and adapted to the cultural context of Indonesian society.

The strategy of strengthening religious moderation can realize a harmonious social life in the midst of the nation's pluralism

The strategy of strengthening religious moderation is a systematic and sustainable effort to strengthen tolerance, inclusiveness, and mutual respect in the midst of the diversity of the Indonesian nation. As a concept rooted in the principle of *wasathiyah al-Islamiyyah*, moderation not only contains theological meaning but also serves as a social instrument to maintain the cohesion of the nation. In this context, strengthening religious moderation is carried out through synergy between government policies, religious education, and civil society participation. According to Zulaiha and Irwansyah, effective strategies implemented in a number of Indonesian provinces involve training religious leaders, strengthening moderate digital literacy, and integrating moderation values in socio-cultural activities. This approach has been shown to encourage a reduction in the potential for religion-based horizontal conflicts in some areas with a history of high social tension. Another research by Rahman underlined that a collaborative-based strategy between interfaith institutions is an important element to strengthen *social trust* between people. Thus, the

strategy of strengthening religious moderation serves a dual purpose: strengthening national identity and fostering social harmony in the midst of plurality.

Education is one of the most significant means of forming a moderate character from an early age. Through curriculum transformation and dialogue-based learning practices, students are not only taught religious dogma, but also the values of empathy, deliberation, and social justice. Recent research by Harjanto shows that the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects is able to foster an attitude of tolerance, a sense of togetherness, and appreciation for differences among madrasah students. In addition, Islamic higher education institutions such as UIN, IAIN, and STAI have also developed *centers for religious moderation* as a forum for research, service, and cross-disciplinary education. Siti Ropiah and Sahlani Hafiz, through their research at STAI Haji Agus Salim Cikarang Bekasi, show that strengthening religious moderation in the university environment is not enough to be done through a conceptual and normative approach alone, but requires the active involvement of the academic community in real social experiences. This strategy is a reflection that religious moderation education is not only a cognitive process, but also a process of forming social awareness rooted in the practice of living together.

In addition to education, the strategy to strengthen religious moderation needs to be directed at optimizing digital media as a space for da'wah and peaceful literacy. In today's information era, social media plays a big role in shaping people's religious perceptions. Without a moderate approach, the digital space can easily become an arena for the spread of hate speech and disinformation. Research conducted by Amalia and Fauzan concluded that the moderation-based digital literacy program initiated by Islamic organizations and the Ministry of Religion was able to reduce the spread of provocative content by up to 40% in one year. This strategy emphasizes the importance of *a positive counter-narrative* through da'wah content that highlights the values of rahmatan lil 'alamin, tolerance, and nationality. Meanwhile, Fikri and Rini's research added that interfaith communication training in the digital space is an important factor to strengthen inclusive narratives, especially among the younger generation who are active in social media (Cai et al., 2003) Thus, strengthening religious moderation in the digital era must be carried out systematically through collaboration between the government, educational institutions, religious organizations, and the creative community.

At the policy and community level, strategies to strengthen religious moderation must also be based on the principle *of multistakeholder engagement*. The government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs has launched the *Religious Moderation Roadmap 2020–2024* which emphasizes

four main pillars: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local culture. However, Nuraeni's research shows that the implementation of these policies requires a participatory approach so that the value of moderation is truly internalized in social life. In addition, the study by Misrawi and Suryadi emphasized the importance of developing cultural diplomacy and interfaith dialogue at the community level to strengthen sustainable social harmony. Strategies to strengthen moderation that are integrated with economic strengthening, women's empowerment, and strengthening local culture can increase social stability and strengthen national cohesion. Thus, strengthening religious moderation is not only an ideological step, but a social, political, and cultural strategy to create a peaceful, tolerant, and just social order.

Conclusion

The essence and concept of religious moderation in the perspective of Islam and the social life of the Indonesian people is basically an effort to place religious teachings in a proportional, balanced, and contextual manner in the life of a pluralistic nation. Religious moderation is not an attitude of obscuring the truth of teachings, but a way of understanding and practicing religious values with wisdom, tolerance, and respect for differences. In the social context, religious moderation is the foundation for building harmony and justice in the midst of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. A moderate society is one that is able to maintain a balance between personal beliefs and respect for the beliefs of others, so that Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin* are truly realized in a peaceful, inclusive, and civilized coexistence.

The application of the values of religious moderation has an important role in preventing and overcoming conflicts between religious communities in Indonesia, because it teaches mutual respect, empathy, and willingness to dialogue in the midst of differences. Through the application of the values of tolerance, justice, and balance, the community is invited to understand that diversity is not a threat, but a force that enriches the life of the nation. When the values of religious moderation are implemented in education, the media, and public policy, the potential for friction between the ummah can be muted because each individual has the awareness to put the common interest above the ego of the group. Religious moderation also fosters a culture of deliberation and peaceful conflict resolution, thereby creating a harmonious social space and strengthening national unity in the midst of Indonesia's religious plurality.

The strategy of strengthening religious moderation in realizing harmonious social life in the midst of the nation's plurality must be carried out comprehensively through education, public policy, and the active role of the community. This strengthening needs to start from the internalization of moderation values in the family environment and educational institutions so that it

becomes an embedded character from an early age. The government together with religious leaders and the community must also collaborate in creating a space for interfaith dialogue and strengthening digital literacy to ward off extreme and intolerant narratives. In addition, the strategy of strengthening moderation must emphasize a cultural approach and local wisdom that is in harmony with national values. When all levels of society understand and practice religious moderation consistently, a balance is created between personal beliefs and respect for differences, which ultimately gives birth to a peaceful, inclusive, and civilized social life in the midst of the nation's plurality.

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