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Using the Whatsapp Chat Timer for Residents of Kejaksan, Cirebon City

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital communication technology has transformed social interactions, with WhatsApp becoming a widely used platform for daily communication among residents of Kejaksan, Cirebon City. One of its features, disappearing messages, allows users to set messages to disappear automatically after a specified period, including 24 hours. However, its implications for community communication practices remain insufficiently explored. This study aimed to examine how residents of Kejaksan used WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature, focusing on usage contexts, challenges, and perceived effects on social communication patterns. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation involving four informants selected through purposive sampling, including neighborhood administrators (Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga, RT/RW), homemakers, and merchants. Data credibility was assessed through source and methodological triangulation and member checking, while data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicated that disappearing messages were used selectively for confidential, temporary, or informal communications, including personal disclosures, one-time address sharing, private price negotiations, preliminary internal discussions, and the exchange of sensitive personal information. However, the feature was rarely enabled in family or neighborhood groups because members needed to retain important information. Four major challenges were identified: technical difficulties and limited digital literacy, loss of important information, miscommunication resulting from disappearing messages, and psychosocial concerns, including reduced interpersonal trust. The feature offered perceived privacy benefits and encouraged openness but could also disrupt communication continuity and reduce efficiency. The study concluded that community-based digital literacy initiatives and mutually agreed communication guidelines were needed to promote the responsible use of disappearing messages in neighborhood groups.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of communication technology in the digital era has brought significant changes to social interactions (Anisti et al., 2023; Apriyani, 2023; Hanandini,

2024; Setiawati, 2024; Xia et al., 2024; Yıldız & Nur, 2024). Technological advancements have enabled individuals to communicate, exchange information, and maintain social relationships without meeting in person. One of the most significant developments has been the transition from predominantly face-to-face communication to digital communication. Digital technologies have made communication faster, more accessible, and more flexible. Among the various digital communication platforms, WhatsApp has become a widely used instant messaging application because of its accessibility, ease of use, and diverse communication features. According to Raharti, as cited in Koten et al. (2022), WhatsApp is one of the most widely used internet-based communication services. In addition to text messaging, WhatsApp supports voice and video calls, photo and video sharing, voice messages, document exchange, and group communication. These features have encouraged its adoption across various social groups, including students, employees, merchants, homemakers, and community leaders, making it an important medium for everyday communication (ElShabassy & Fahmy, 2026; Tang et al., 2024; Wang & Wang, 2026).

Over time, WhatsApp has evolved beyond personal messaging into a platform that facilitates social coordination and community activities. Within families, it is used to exchange information, maintain relationships, and organize gatherings. At the community level, WhatsApp supports the coordination of neighborhood activities, community service initiatives, social gatherings, and religious events through neighborhood administrative groups (Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga, RT/RW). In education, WhatsApp facilitates information sharing and discussions among teachers, lecturers, and students, particularly in distance learning environments. Its accessibility and rapid information delivery have contributed to its widespread use as a communication platform (Wulandari, 2025). Consequently, WhatsApp has become an integral component of digital communication practices, influencing how individuals and communities exchange information and coordinate activities.

In Kejaksan District, Cirebon City, WhatsApp has become an important communication medium for residents in their daily activities (Ilham et al., 2026; Suryanada & Aprilia, 2024). Residents use the application for family communication, community coordination, professional activities, educational purposes, business promotion, and customer interactions. Its use extends across different age groups and social backgrounds, reflecting its relevance to community communication practices. The increasing reliance on digital communication has enabled residents to exchange information and coordinate activities more efficiently (X. Chen et al., 2025; Y. Chen et al., 2024; Tong et al., 2025). However, the transition from face-to-face interaction to digital communication may also influence interpersonal relationships, particularly when reduced direct interaction affects emotional closeness and social engagement (Sulastri, 2025). Therefore, digital communication technologies should be understood not only as tools for exchanging information but also as factors that may shape social relationships and community interaction patterns.

In addition to facilitating communication, WhatsApp has introduced various features designed to enhance user privacy and information security. These developments reflect growing concerns regarding the protection of personal information in digital communication environments. WhatsApp provides privacy-related functions, including account security settings and disappearing messages (Soelistiyowati & Armayudha, Geraldo Armayudha2,

2025). One such function is the 24-hour disappearing messages setting, which allows new messages in a conversation to disappear automatically after 24 hours. This feature enables users to manage message retention according to their communication preferences. Unlike conventional messaging, in which conversations may remain accessible indefinitely unless manually deleted, disappearing messages introduce a temporary dimension to digital communication.

According to Waqiah and Saleh (n.d.), WhatsApp's 24-hour disappearing messages feature represents a development that may influence users' communication practices. WhatsApp conversations are commonly retained for future reference, allowing users to review information, revisit agreements, and retrieve previously exchanged messages. However, enabling disappearing messages limits the period during which new messages remain available within a conversation. This characteristic may influence how individuals communicate, particularly when discussing personal, informal, or sensitive matters. Some users may perceive temporary messaging as providing greater privacy and feel more comfortable expressing personal opinions or sharing sensitive information. Nevertheless, disappearing messages do not guarantee complete confidentiality because recipients may preserve information through screenshots, message forwarding, or other recording methods.

Previous research has also examined WhatsApp's role in shaping communication practices. Fauzi (2021) explained that WhatsApp use could influence communication patterns and public participation in social activities. The platform facilitates rapid information exchange and enables individuals to coordinate activities without geographical constraints. These findings suggest that digital communication platforms can contribute to changes in social interaction and community participation.

Furthermore, Anuggerah and Nurfalah (2024) indicated that social media use among adolescents in Kejaksan, Cirebon City, could become more constructive when accompanied by an understanding of digital communication ethics. These findings highlight the importance of digital literacy in encouraging responsible online communication. Although previous studies have examined WhatsApp in educational, family, economic, and community contexts, research specifically addressing its disappearing messages feature remains comparatively limited within the literature reviewed. The temporary nature of disappearing messages introduces distinct communication characteristics that may influence interpersonal openness, perceived privacy, information retention, and trust. Consequently, examining the use of WhatsApp's 24-hour disappearing messages setting is relevant to understanding how digital communication practices develop within local communities.

This study aimed to identify, describe, and analyze how residents of Kejaksan District, Cirebon City, used WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature in their daily communication. Specifically, it examined the contexts in which the feature was used, including family interactions, friendships, professional communication, and community activities. The study also explored users' experiences and perceptions regarding the feature's implications for information retention, message exchange, interpersonal relationships, and social communication patterns.

Investigating WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature is important because temporary message retention introduces opportunities and challenges for digital communication. Although the feature may enhance users' perceived privacy and encourage

openness, it may also contribute to information loss, difficulties retrieving previous messages, and misunderstandings when important information is no longer accessible. These issues are particularly relevant in communities where WhatsApp is frequently used for social coordination, economic activities, and neighborhood administration. Understanding residents' experiences with disappearing messages may therefore provide insights into the relationship between privacy preferences, information management, and communication effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute to community-based digital literacy initiatives and encourage more informed use of privacy-related messaging features.

Based on the reviewed literature, previous studies have primarily examined WhatsApp as a general communication platform in education, family interactions, business activities, and community engagement. Existing research has emphasized group communication, digital communication ethics, and the platform's role in supporting everyday activities. However, the specific implications of disappearing messages for information retention, interpersonal trust, and community communication have received comparatively limited attention, particularly in the context of Kejaksan District, Cirebon City. This study addressed this research gap by examining residents' experiences with WhatsApp's 24-hour disappearing messages setting, the challenges encountered during its use, and its perceived effects on social communication. Its contribution lies in providing context-specific qualitative insights into how temporary messaging features are understood and used within neighborhood communities.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the use of WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature and its perceived effects on social communication among residents of Kejaksan District, Cirebon City. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, communication behaviors, and interpersonal interactions in their natural social environments (Sugiyono, 2023). The descriptive design enabled the researcher to explore communication practices, privacy perceptions, and challenges associated with the use of disappearing messages.

The research was conducted in Kejaksan District, Cirebon City, involving residents who actively used WhatsApp in their daily activities. The location was selected because WhatsApp was used for various forms of interpersonal and community communication. The study examined participants' experiences with the disappearing messages feature in family, social, and community interactions.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2023). The inclusion criteria required participants to be residents of Kejaksan District, aged 17 years or older, active WhatsApp users, and willing to share their experiences. Informants represented different social and occupational backgrounds, including students, employees, homemakers, merchants, and community leaders. Their participation provided contextual information about the use of WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature in everyday communication.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews explored informants' experiences, motivations, perceptions, and challenges associated with using WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature. Observations focused on communication practices and interactions involving WhatsApp,

particularly the use of disappearing messages in individual and group conversations. As explained by Marshall (1995), as cited in Sugiyono (2023), observation facilitates an understanding of participants' behavior and its underlying meaning. Documentation included relevant field notes, screenshots, and other supporting materials, where available, to supplement the interview and observation findings (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data credibility was assessed through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from different informants, while methodological triangulation involved examining the consistency of findings across interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by confirming relevant interpretations with informants to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2023). During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were reviewed, categorized, and organized according to the research objectives. The selected data were subsequently presented in narrative descriptions and thematic categories to identify recurring patterns and relationships. Finally, conclusions were developed and verified by examining the consistency of emerging interpretations across the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe patterns of use of WhatsApp's Chat Timer (temporary messages) feature among residents of Kejaksan, Cirebon City, and to identify the challenges they face. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four informants representing various backgrounds: neighborhood association (RT) leaders, sub-neighborhood association (RW) leaders, homemakers, and merchants. The analysis was conducted based on the three main dimensions of Manuel Castells' Network Society theory: Space of Flow (the space of information flow), Timeless Time (non-permanent time), and the dimension of Chat Timer usage.

Use of the Chat Timer by the Cirebon City Prosecutor's Office Community

Frequency of Use of the Chat Timer Feature

All information regarding the existence of WhatsApp's Chat Timer feature (24-hour temporary messages) was obtained by neighborhood association and sub-neighborhood association (RT / RW) administrators through app update notifications and conversations among administrators. Housewives learned about it from WhatsApp pop-ups and their savings club friends, while merchants learned about it from fellow merchants at the market. One homemaker admitted that she only truly understood it after her child explained it to her: "I knew about it, even though I didn't understand it right away when it first appeared. I saw the words 'temporary message' while chatting with a friend, but I didn't realize what it meant until my child told me."



Image of Informant 1: Using WhatsApp as a Social Media Platform
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

This feature is used very infrequently. RT administrators began experimenting with this feature around 2025–2026, but not on a regular basis. Housewives use it at most once a month, while merchants use it only for specific business purposes. Nearly all informants stated that they never activate this feature in family groups or neighborhood associations (RT/RW) groups because of the need for archiving and documentation. RT administrators emphasized.

"It is almost never used in neighborhood association (RT) groups, because announcements to residents must remain accessible as an archive."

1. Context of Use

   The Chat Timer is not used on a regular basis, but only in certain situations. Depending on the context:
2. Private Chat

   Used for conversations that are somewhat personal or not important enough to keep for a long time. Housewives use it to talk about personal problems or share other people's addresses or phone numbers that are needed only once.
3. Family Group

   It's rarely used because family members need a chat that can be saved for record-keeping purposes.
4. Work Group

   It is sometimes used, depending on the need. Neighborhood Association and Sub-Neighborhood Association (RT / RW) officials use it for internal discussions that are not yet finalized, for sending residents' personal data (such as NIK) that must not be stored for long periods, and for coordinating spontaneous activities that do not need to be archived.
5. **Community groups/RT/RW**

   Almost never, because the information in that group is important and needs to be accessible for future reference.

Business Context

Vendors use this feature to negotiate wholesale prices for yams in private, send price lists for chicken that are valid only for that day, or send customer addresses to delivery drivers—without the information being saved in the chat.

Changes to How Messages Are Displayed When the Timer Is Active

When the Chat Timer is active, informants reported being more concise and getting straight to the point. They tended to avoid small talk because they realized the messages would disappear. The Neighborhood association administrator explained that in internal discussions where decisions were not yet final, he felt freer to express his opinions without fear of them being permanently recorded. On the other hand, however, some informants became more cautious in phrasing their messages for fear of miscommunication that could not be traced back.

Impact on Trust Among Users

The Chat faeture has a dual effect on trust.On the hand, this feature increases trust in situations that require privacy. Such as sharing sensitive data. On the other hand, this feature can decrease trust if used without mutual agreement.On informant recounted that in a PPK group, an announcement about a social gathering sent with the timer active caused panic because members who hand't read it missed the information. This led to distrust the group adminitrators. Merchants also felt that customers became suspicious of them when transfer receipts were lost due to the timer.

The Possibility of Misunderstandings Due to Deleted Messages

Miscommunication is one of the most noticcable consequences of using the Chat Timer. Informants reported several incidents:

1. Important messages, such as patrol schedules, social assistance information, or insttructions from the sub-district office, disappear before all group members have a chance to read them.
2. A homemaker missed an announcement from the homeroom teacher because she accidentally activated the default timer.
3. Merchants lose order list and transfer receipts, leading to repeated reconfirmations and potential confliets.

In addition, technical confusion has exacerbated the misunderstanding. Merchants claim.

"I often get confused about setting the duration (24 hours, 7 days, 90 days). Once, I set it wrong and ended up with a timer on all new chats. " Not understanding the difference between the default timer (which applies to all new conversations) and an individual timer for a single chat is the main obstacle that leads to both technical and communication misunderstandings.

Using the WhatsApp Chat Timer.

Perceptions of Automatically Deleted Messages

All informants understood that messages sent via Timer Chat would disappear after a certain period (24 hours, 7 days, or 90 days). They used this feature selectively in conversations they deemed unnecessary to preseve, such as preliminary internal disscusions, personal confessions, or price negotiations. The awareness that not all information needs to

be permanent indicates that the Kejaksan community has intuitively internalized the logic of "timeless time".

However, this perception also leads to cation. Informants admitted to being more careful because messages will be deleted, especially when sharing important information. A housewife recounted.

"My child once sent a photo of a drawing from school via a timed chat, but since the timer ran out before I could download it, the photo dissapeared. In the end, I had to ask them to resend it, and my child got upset."

Sense of Security and Privacy

Most informants felt more comfortable speaking when sing the Chat Timer because messages aren't stored for long. This feature also made them feel safer sharing personal information, such as rsident's national ID numbers, phone numbers, or customer addresses. Merchants said.



Image of Informant 2: Chatting a customer
Source: Researcher's Documentation,2026

However, this sense of security is not entirely without concern. Some informants feel that this feature could actually undermine trust in communication if the other party intentionally activates the timer without their knowledge. The RW administrator stated that in family or work-related communication, trust is more easily maintained if messages are stored permanently.

Impact on Information Storage

The Chat Timer feature has a significant imoact on data storage. Informants have reported the loss of media files (photos, videos, transfer receipts) before they could be downloaded. Merchnts have even suffered transaction losses.

"Many customers send proof of transfer via a timed chat, and by the time I get a chance to look at it, it's already gone. As a result, I have to reconfirm the payment, and sometimes I'm even suspected of playing games."

In addition, backup synchronization is a serious issu. Message deleted by the timer are not included in the backup if the backup is performed after the messages have been deleted. A homemaker wh rarely backs up her phone regretted what happened when her phone broke.

Level of Openness in Conveying a Message

Some informants felt more open when using the Chat Timer because massages aren't saved for long. Ahomemaker stated that this feature makes it easier for her to confide in others

about personl issues without worying that others might read her massages later. Merchants also fell more at ease when negotiating confidentail prices. However, this openness only occuurs in conversations that are intentionally meant to be temporary. In formal contexts, such as neighborhood association (RT/RW) group, informants are actually more reserved and choose not to activate the timer .



Image of Informant 3: Using WhatsApp Group
Source: Researcher's Document, 2026

Changes to How Messages Are Displayed When the Timer Is Active

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In addition, technical confusion exacerbates misunderstandings. A merchat admitted; "I often get confused about setting the duration (24 hours 7 days, 90 days). Once, I set it wrong and ended up applying the timer to all new chats." The failure to distinguish between the defautl timer (which applies to all new conversations) and induvidal timers for a single chat has become a major obstacle that leads to both technical and communition misunderstandings .

This study foud that the WhatsApp Chat Timer feature is used selectively by residents of Kejaksan only in specific communition situatins that are confidential, temporay, or informal . Use of this feature is not routine and tend tends to be limited to personal conversations such as confiding in others, sharing phone numbers or addresses needed only once, and confidential price negotiations among merchants. Among Neighborhood Association (RT / RW) administrators, this feature is sometimes used for preliminary internal discussions, the transmission of residents personal data such as National Identification Numbers (NIK) that must not be stored for long periods,or the coordination of spontaneus activities that do not need to be archived. Conversely, nearly all informants stated that they never activate the Chat Timer in familiy groups or Neighborhood Association (RT /RW) groups due to the need to be accessed again at any time. This pattern indictes that the public ha developed an awareness of the distinction between temporary information and information that must be permanent, reflecting the internalization of the logic of "timeless time" in their digital lives. In this concept, linear time boundaries become blurred because users themselves determine the duration of a message's existences, so communication takes place within a fast-paced and flexible flow of information yet one that is also vulnerable to data loss.

From the perspective of communition speed, a psychology paradox has been observed. On one hand, rccipients tend to open and respond more quickly to messeges sent via Timer Chat because they are aware that the messages will disappear soon. This creates a senses of urgency that prompts a faster initial response

Compared to regular chat. On the other hand, howeve, this initial response speed does not guarantee smooth communication overal. In fact, Timer Chat often slows down the completion of a conversation because messages that haven't been read or had their important information noted will be delete, forcing the recipient to ask for a resend. This back and forth process doubles the duration of the conversation and can potentially lead to frustation. The primary factors influencing message delivery speed are not the feature itself, but rather the internet connection, user's habits regarding checking their phones, and their awareness of the message's time limit. Thus, a feature designed to improve efficiency can actually become a source of inefficiency in practice.

The most signifieant challenge indentified in this study relates to low technical digital literacy among the public, particulaly among adults and mierobusiness owners. Many users have difficuly distinguishing between the defautlt timer setting which applies to all new conversation and the individual timer setting, whieh applies only to a specific chat. Misunderstanding this differenee has serious consequences,as important massages from various contacts are automatically deleted without the user realizing it. This situation not only causes inconvenience but also financial loss, especially for merhants who lose transation

records and accounts receivable and payable records. Other technical issues include differenes in WhatsApp versions that result in inconsistent settings menus, as well as older devices that do not immediately synehronize timer settings.These challenges are compounded by backup synchronization issues, where massages deleted by the timer cannot be recovared if the backup process is performed after the massages have been deleted As aresult, when a phone breaks or is replacd, all digital records previously sent via the timer mode cannot be recovered.



Image of Informant 2: Chatting a customer

Source: Researcher's Documentation,2026

In the cotext of group communication, activating the Chat Timer without mutual agreement has proven to hinder effective coordination. In Neghborhood Associations, PKK group, important annouueements such as patrol schedules, social assistance informatian, instructions from the sub-distriet office, or decisions resulting from deliberations disappear before all members have a chance to read them. Residents who are late to check the group loss access to this information. Forcing administrators to repeat the announcecements multiple times. This creates an additional communication burden, miscommutication, and exhausting group dynamies.Instead of facilitating coor dination, the Chat Timer feature actually hinders the smooth flow of collective commmunication, which requires documentation and the ability to revisit the informatian. Therefore, the use of this feature in official community group is stongly discouraged there is a mutual agreement and a technical understanding.



Image of Informant 3: Using Whatsapp Group

Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

From a psychosocial perspective, the Chat Timer feature has a dual impact on openness and trust. Some users feel more free and secure in sharing personal information because massages won't be stored for long, thereby reducing the risk of personal data being leaked. On the other hand, this feature can also erode trust between users if used unilaterally without the other person's knowledge. When someone realizes that important massages were intentionlly sent in timer mode without a clear reason, supicion and a sense of being disrespected arise. Furthermore, messages that are deleted before they can be read can lead to misunderstandings and con PKK should establish a written agreement not to activate the Chat Timer for communications intended as announcements or for archival purposes. Administrators and microbusiness owners also need to be encouraged to perform routine backups as a safeguard against data loss. Finally, app developers may consider adding more explicit warnings when users are about to activate the default timer, so that the decision to enable this feature is made consciously and does not hinder social communication. This study has limitations due to the small sample size of only four informants in a single region, so the results cannot be generalized. Future research is recommended to involve a more diverse group of informants and to conduct direct observations of residents' digital communication practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, this study concluded that the use of WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature among residents of Kejaksan District, Cirebon City, was selective and situational. Residents primarily enabled the feature for confidential, temporary, or informal conversations, including personal disclosures, one-time sharing of contact information or addresses, confidential price negotiations among merchants, preliminary internal discussions, and the exchange of sensitive personal information, such as national identification numbers (Nomor Induk Kependudukan, NIK). Conversely, the feature was rarely enabled in family groups, neighborhood association groups (Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga, RT/RW), and other formal communication settings because participants needed to retain messages for future reference, documentation, and administrative purposes.

Furthermore, the study identified four major categories of challenges associated with the feature. First, technical difficulties and limited digital literacy included confusion between default message timer settings and individual chat settings, incorrect selection of message retention periods, and difficulties managing message backups. Second, the disappearance of important information, including photographs, videos, and payment receipts, before users could save it created potential risks of financial loss and incomplete administrative records. Third, miscommunication occurred when messages disappeared before all group members had read them, resulting in unequal access to information and the need to repeat or resend messages. Fourth, psychosocial challenges included anxiety, reduced interpersonal trust when the feature was enabled without mutual agreement, and potential conflicts arising from the unavailability of transaction records.

Overall, WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature had both perceived benefits and limitations for community communication. Although it enhanced users' sense of privacy and encouraged openness when sharing personal information, it could also disrupt communication

continuity and reduce efficiency when important messages disappeared and had to be resent. Therefore, the study recommended community-based digital literacy initiatives to improve users' understanding of the feature and its implications for information management. It also emphasized the importance of establishing mutually agreed communication guidelines within formal neighborhood groups, particularly regarding the retention of announcements, administrative information, and other messages requiring documentation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that this study was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Hanifa Nabila: research conceptualization, methodology design, experiment execution, data collection, data analysis, manuscript drafting, and manuscript revision. Farida Nurfalah: research supervision, validation of research results, provision of scientific input, and manuscript review and revision. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used in the preparation of this manuscript to help improve linguistic clarity, correct grammar, and refine the writing structure. Generative AI was not used to generate, manipulate, or analyze research data. The entire content of the manuscript has been reviewed and verified by the author(s). The author(s) are fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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