

ASSERTIVE OR NONASSERTIVE; MEASURING THE COMMUNICATION STYLES OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Assertive communication is the ability to express oneself and behave in a way that respects the rights and opinions of others while also stepping up for your own needs and rights. Assertiveness as one the most crucial soft skills for teachers because it help them in classroom management , build an environment of trust and respect with students, help in personal and professional growth. That is why present study aimed at measuring the communication styles of prospective teachers. The study adopted survey method to proceed. All the prospective teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at university of Sargodha were population of the study. Through random sampling 197 prospective teacher from undergraduate programs were selected (Male=29, Female=168). ZandaX Assertiveness Test ($\alpha=.857$) was used to explore communication styles of prospective teachers. Based on the results, the study found that 104 respondents (53%) were nonassertive and 93 (47%) were assertive in their communication style. To address the need of more than half of the sample it is recommended to develop assertive communication skills of prospective teachers through relevant training program.

Keywords: Assertive communication, prospective teachers, social skills.

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Introduction

One of the most crucial aspects of the teaching profession is communication. Teaching interactions tend to be defined by clear, meaningful, and focused communication (Pasaragonda, 2021). The ability to express the real sense of communication with evident intentions and emotions to others is defined as assertiveness. It is being able to both express one's own feelings while respecting the rights of others. (Pipas et al. 2010). Effective teaching actually involves a variety of abilities one of them is assertiveness communication, which is essential motivator that help teachers perform their tasks more successfully. Consequently, it impacts the overall learning environment and leads to an improvement in their professionalism (Bukhari, et. al., 2024).

Similarly, assertiveness is highly valued in today's educational system. According to numerous studies, instructors who are assertive in the classroom benefit from increased student participation and improved teacher-student relationships (Parray et al. 2020). In consideration of this, it is outmost need of the students of the twenty-first century to have teachers who are assertive so that they might follow them (Nithya et al. 2022). So it very important to explore the communication styles of prospective teachers either they are assertive or nonassertive in their communication style. A person who is frequently taken advantage of, feels powerless, takes on everyone else's issues, gives in to impulsive and inappropriate demands (aggressive), and lets others make decisions for them (passive) is considered non-assertive. "I'm not OK" is the fundamental message that he or she conveys. A nonassertive person can be aggressive, passive and passive aggressive in his communication style. A person who makes decisions for himself, acts in his own best interests, defends himself, communicate his emotions honestly, and controls his interactions with others is known as assertive person. "I'm OK and you're OK" is the fundamental message conveyed by an assertive person. Researches shows People with nonassertive communication style always face anxiety, stress, relationship issues and low professional development etc. Assertive communication style is very crucial soft skills for teachers as it help them to build a conducive learning environment with mutual trust (Antonio Ragusa et al. 2022). It help them to grow professionally and increase their job satisfaction. So as Institute of Education at University of Sargodha is offering various teaching courses it is very important to explore the communication styles of these prospective teachers as it is very important skills for teacher to master.

Literature Review

Concept of Assertiveness

Salter introduced the idea of assertiveness in 1959 through his work. The English verb "to assert" (to insist) is where the word "assertiveness" originates. To put it simply, it means that the individual can "stand one's ground" and defend their position. As an alternative to adverse forms of behavior including passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive behavior, assertive behavior is a positive approach to connect with others. These nonassertive behaviors are very common in modern society. Unfortunately they are growing more with the passage of days (Postolati, E 2017).

Assertiveness is a critical component of effective interpersonal communication. It refers to the ability to express one's feelings, opinions, and needs openly and honestly while respecting the rights of others (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). Assertiveness stands as a middle ground between aggression and passivity, allowing individuals to communicate their viewpoints without infringing upon others' boundaries (Speed, Goldstein, & Goldfried, 2018). It is considered an essential skill for personal and professional success, contributing to self-confidence and healthy interpersonal relationships (Lange & Jakubowski, 2017).

For students to build healthy relationships with teachers, peers, neighbors, seniors, friends, and coworkers, among others, assertiveness is essential. They must be assertive to overcome the obstacles because they require help from others in various contexts. They risk losing their sense of self if they are unable to communicate their ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Furthermore, poor communication and a lack of openness can harm their relationships and cause tension, anxiety, and depression.

Assertiveness helps people reach their goals, improve their communication skills, boost their self-esteem, and become more competent. It also helps them make more thoughtful judgments, maintain control over the situation, form strong bonds with others, and succeed better academically. Assertive people are more likely to have favorable outcomes when interacting with others, prefer to base their findings on their own observations, and are generally happier in relationships and life. Therefore, we believe that assertive behavior supports strong and open communication with others. It makes a person more active, autonomous, and responsible in world exploration, goal achievement, and the ability to constructively defend his own needs, interests, and ideas. Assertive communication is a balanced way of communication between aggression and passivity. Assertive behavior prevents personal helplessness, gives one an advantage in challenging situations, and has a positive association with emotional stress adaptation processes like problem-solving. Passive or subservient behavior is not a part of assertiveness (E. Postolati 2017)

Assertive communication skill is essential for leading a successful life. Assertiveness is crucial skill for students to develop their communication skills this skill leads to an improvement in students' academic achievement. It improves students' interpersonal skills and sense of self-confidence. Young individuals encounter several problems when this ability is weak. Adults need to be assertive due to their age and peer pressure. This skill is closely related to confidence, self-worth, and anxiety (Ahmed. N at.al 2025)

Non-assertive communication typically manifests in three forms: passive, Passive aggressive and aggressive communication. Passive communicators often avoid expressing their feelings, leading to frustration and resentment (Speed et al., 2018). They prioritize others' needs over their own, fearing rejection or conflict (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). On the other hand, aggressive communicators express their opinions in a way that violates the rights of others, often using hostility or dominance (Bishop, 2006). Passive aggressive communicators act out indirectly and always do fake cooperation. Passive behavior can result in poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression due to suppressed emotions (Lange & Jakubowski, 2017). Aggressive communication, while outwardly expressive, damages relationships and creates a hostile environment (Fensterheim & Baer, 2020). While passive aggressive also have resentment inside which leads to anxiety and anger. All three nonassertive styles are linked to interpersonal difficulties and are less effective than assertive communication in achieving constructive outcomes.

Assertive communication skill as most crucial soft skill for prospective teacher (Kabat et al. 2020) a good teacher establishes an example for her students by doing her best work. One of the main prerequisites for teaching is assertiveness. Since task focus is typically linked to teacher assertiveness, active teachers typically display greater power and control in the classroom. Students generally view active teachers as more competent. In the classroom, self-assured teachers project a positive and competent image, effectively lead class discussions, express themselves with confidence. Therefore, it is very important for teacher to be assertive as it will help our education system to boost up (Nithya S, at. al. 2022). The importance of social competency (i.e. assertive communication skills) for new teachers as well as the factors that led to its growth within the framework of teacher education is highlighted in this study of Cartensen et al. 2020. The prospective teachers should receive training that includes positive aspects of developing their own identity, learning how to express their own need and respect others needs too and avoided negative appraisal, improving their ability to accept critical

feedback and learn something positive from them , which leads to responsible behavior, and solving educational tasks.

Theoretical background

Levine, Salter and Bandura work provide basis to our study their view supported the objective of our study. Theoretical background are given below.

According to Levine (1969), adaptability is a means of change that allows a person to maintain his principles while adjusting to the conditions of his surroundings. Survival relies on adaptability of a person, which is a manifestation of the organism's overall coherence. A person who exhibits either an aggressive or passive (non-assertive) behavioral style is one who lacks effective adaptation and who has to unlearn incorrect behaviors in order to acquire adaptive behaviors, which is essentially a survival skill.

Salter theory of reflex conditioning(1949).

Salter was the first to use the term assertiveness in literature. According to Salter theory of reflex conditioning (1949):People exhibit two types of behaviors excitatory (assertive person) and inhibiting (nonassertive person). Being assertive makes one more productive and efficient at work. The nonassertive person, on the other hand, is hesitant to approach unfamiliar situations and individuals. a nonassertive person can learn assertive communication skills if he has to be exposed to related techniques. According to Salter, having assertiveness is essential for daily life and mental health.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) According to the social learning theory, people pick up new skills by watching and copying the actions of others. This behavior was termed social learning In other words, learning does not require firsthand experience of anything. A live observation that is, a real person modeling or doing the behavior is not always necessary for observational learning to take place. It can also occur from seeing fictional or real-life personalities in films, TV shows, videos, etc. Verbal instruction or hearing someone explain or demonstrate how something proceeds can also result in observational learning. It emphasizes the notion that humans may learn through observation. Individuals pick up behaviors by watching and then copying the actions of others. Connecting with people who express similar behaviors and adopting their set of attitudinal thinking systems are the direct causes of learning a new skill.so this provide basis to our intervention as prospective teacher can learn assertive communication skills if they are exposed to planned intervention. Bandura determined that successful observational

learning requires four components. **Attention:** prospective teachers must be engaged effectively by planned intervention. **Retention:** Prospective teachers must be able to recall the information they received. **Reproduction:** Students should be given time to practice the observed behavior. **Motivation:** A student must be able to see the benefit of a new behavior for long term assimilation.

Research Objectives/Questions

The core objective of the study was to explore the communication styles of prospective teachers. For this purpose following research questions were designed

- i. What are the communication styles of prospective teachers?
- ii. Is there any difference among BS and B.ED prospective teachers based on their communication style?
- iii. What is the difference in communication styles of prospective teachers based on their demographics?

Research Methodology

Research design: The study adopted survey method to proceed. **Population:** All the prospective teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at university of Sargodha were population. **Sample and sampling method;** the study used Convenience sampling method to select sample of the study Characteristics of the sample are given in the table.1.1

<i>Program</i>	<i>Semester</i>	<i>Gender</i>	
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
BS	3 rd	0	13
BS	4 th	13	15
BS	5 th	1	28
B.ED.	1 st	1	27
B.ED	5 th Intake	1	16
B.ED	7 th	5	30
B.ED	8 th	8	39
Total	7 classes	29	168

Table 1. Characteristics of Sample of Study

Validity and reliability of the tool

We adopted **ZandaX Assertiveness Test (2011)** to explore communication styles of prospective teachers. It was based on **15 items**. The research tool was validated through **expert opinion**. For reliability we pilot tested our research instrument and collect data from **30 students** other than undergraduate and found the reliability ($\alpha=.857$) through

Cronbach Alpha

Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the result of the study. This study aimed at to explore the communication styles of prospective teachers. The graphical representation of the results and its interpretation is given in this section.

Research question#01What are the communication styles of prospective teachers?

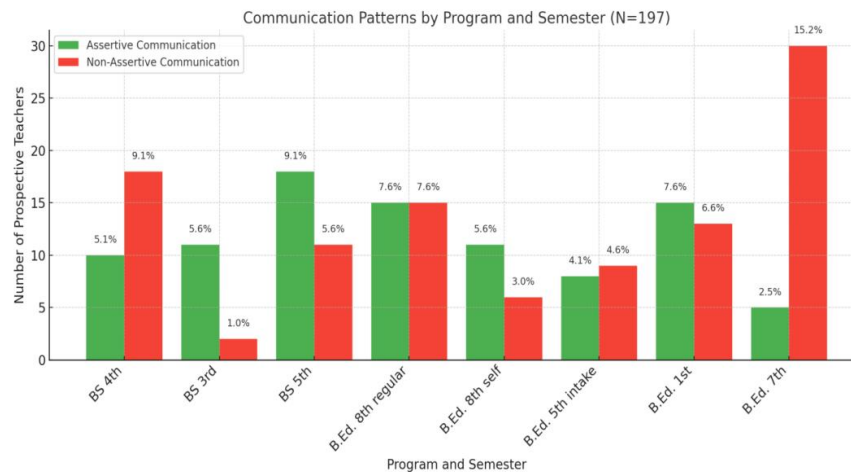


Figure 1.1 *Assertive and non-assertive prospective teachers*

Figure 1.1 shows the results of 1st research question. Out of 197 prospective teachers 104(53%) were nonassertive and 93(47%) were assertive in their communication style. Graph 4.2.1 showed the % of each class having assertive and nonassertive communication style. B.ED 7th have highest % of prospective teachers with nonassertive communication style which is 15.2% and lowest %of prospective teachers having assertive communication styles which is 2.5%.with that BS4th have 9.1% nonassertive prospective teachers which is 2nd highest and 5.1% prospective teachers are assertive in their communication style. In BS 3rd 5.6%

prospective teachers have assertive and 1.0% have nonassertive communication styles. BS 5th have highest % of prospective teachers having assertive communication styles which is 9.1% and 5.6% were nonassertive in their communication styles. B.ED.8th regular have equal % of prospective teacher for both assertive and nonassertive communication style 7.6% were assertive and 7.6% were nonassertive in their communication style. B.ED.8th self have 5.6% prospective teachers with assertive communication style and 3.0% having nonassertive communication style. B.ED. 5th intake have 4.1% prospective teachers with assertive communication style and 4.6% with nonassertive communication style.

In B.ED.1st 7.6% prospective teachers have assertive communication style and 6.6% have nonassertive communication style. So overall B.ED 7th have more number of prospective teachers who have nonassertive communication style.

(Figure 1.2) Nonassertive prospective teachers

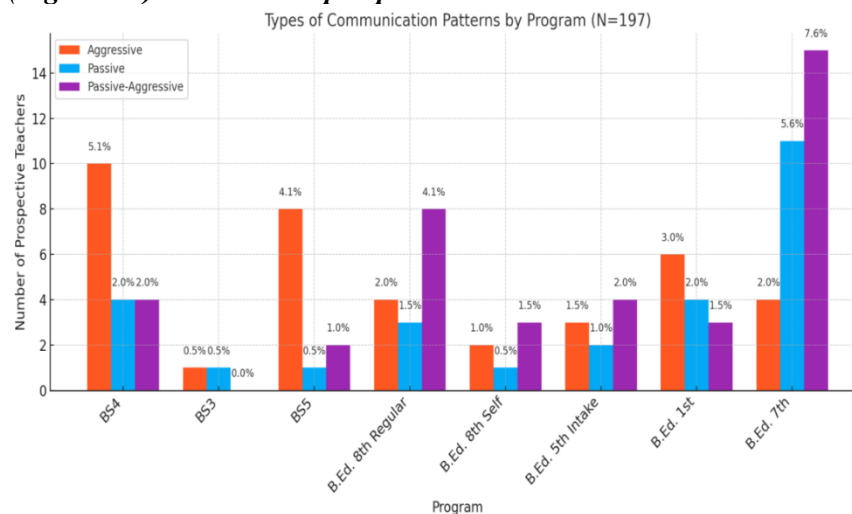


Figure 1.2

Figure 1.2 illustrates the nonassertive communication of sample. Out of 104 prospective teachers (53%) were nonassertive in their communication styles. Most of the prospective teachers (20%) were passive aggressive in their communication style. B.ED. 7th were highest (7.6%) than other program. 19% were aggressive in their communication style, 14% were passive in their communication style.

Research question#02 Is there any difference among BS and B.ED prospective teachers based on their communication styles?

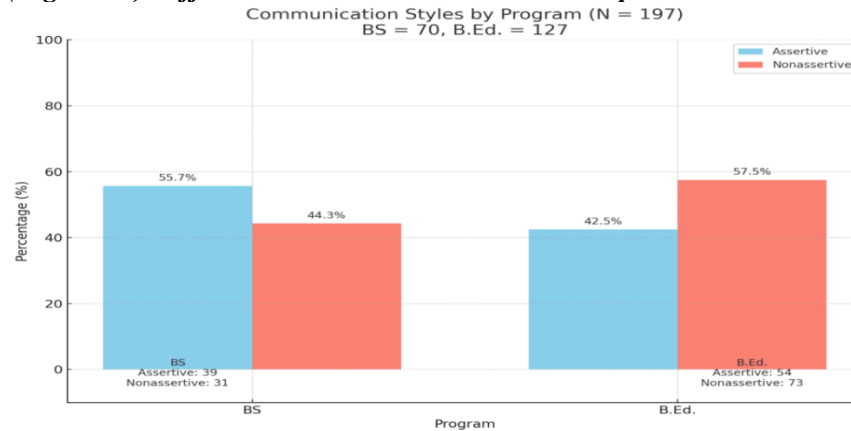
(Figure1.3) Difference between BS and BE.D Prospective teachers**Figure1.3**

Figure 1.3 demonstrated the difference between BS and B.ED. Program based on their communication styles. BS students were more (55.7%) assertive communication compared to B.Ed. students (42.5%). In contrast, B.Ed. students showed a higher proportion of nonassertive communication (57.5%) than BS students (44.3%).

Research#03 What is the difference in communication styles of prospective teachers based on their demographics?

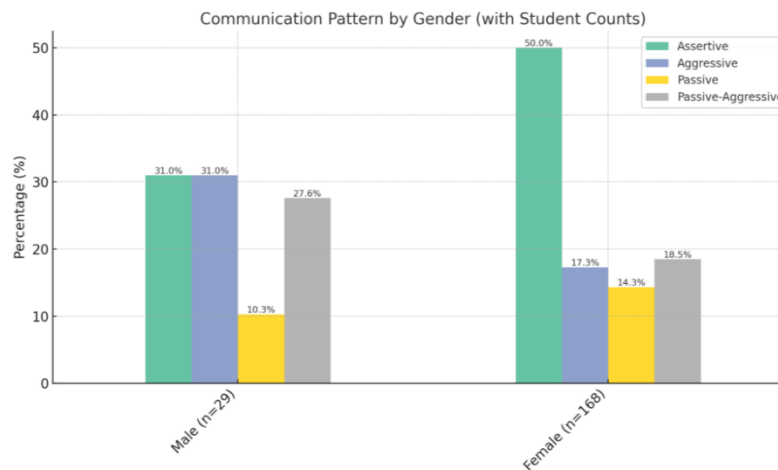
(Figure 1.4) Gender**Figure1.4**

Figure 1.4 shows significant gender-based difference in communication styles with females having more assertiveness (50%) and males were less

assertive (31%). Male have higher tendency toward aggressive 31% and passive-aggressive styles 28% respectively compared to female (17% and 18%). Passive communication is slightly more common among females (14%) than males (10%).

(Figure 1.5) Locality

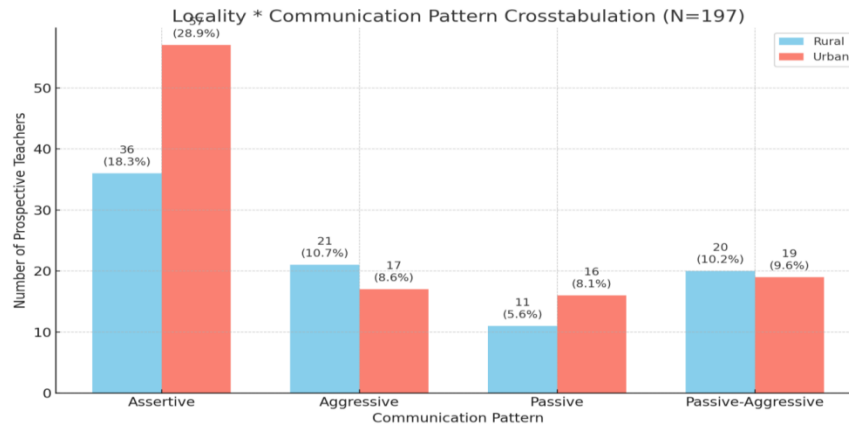


Figure 1.5

Figure 1.5 demonstrated noticeable differences in communication styles based on their locality (rural and urban). Urban prospective teachers are more assertive (52%) while prospective teachers having rural locality were less assertive (41%). Aggressive communication is significantly higher among rural students (24%) than urban students (16%). Passive communication is slightly more prevalent in urban students (Urban=8.1% and Rural=5.6%), but the percentages are close.

(Figure

1.6) Schooling

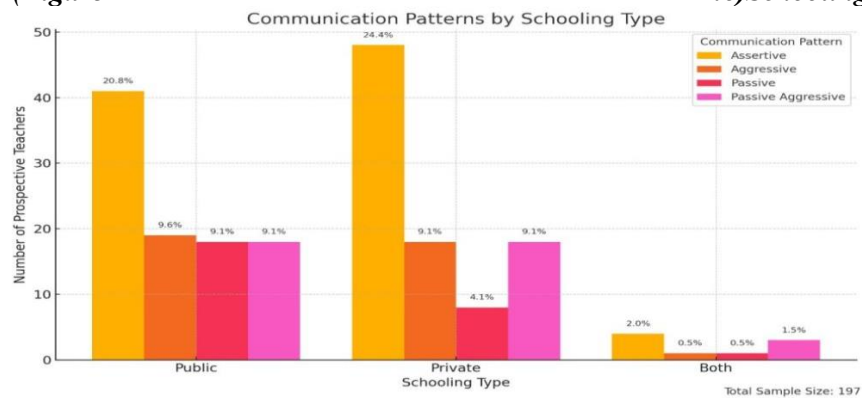


Figure 1.6

Figure 1.6 shows that prospective teachers who have private schooling were more assertive (52.2%) in their communication patterns compared to those from public schools (47.7%).

(Figure 1.7) Job nature

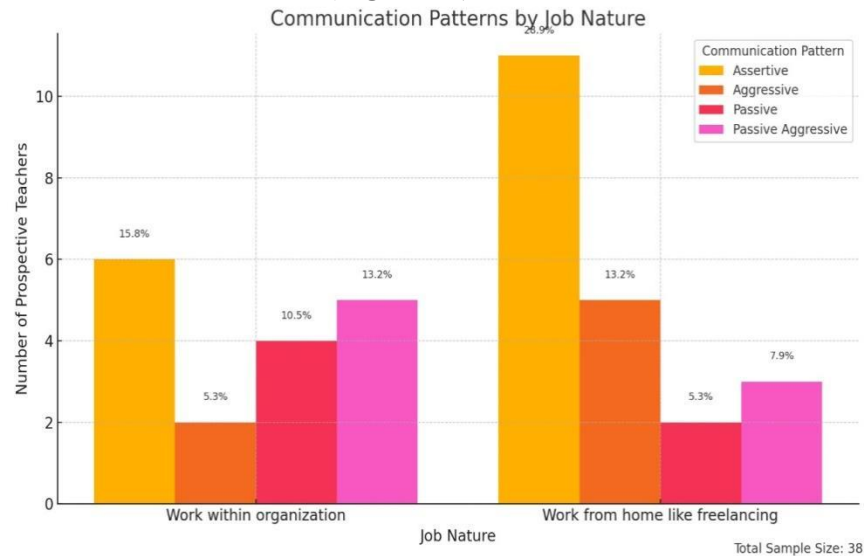


Figure 1.7 shows that prospective teachers' communication styles vary significantly based on their job nature:

Prospective teachers who are engaged in freelance or remote work are more assertive (52.4%) than those who are working in organization (35.3%). Prospective teachers working in organization comparatively are more passive-aggressive (29.4%) and passive (23.5%) communication patterns. Aggressive communication is also more frequent among freelancers (23.8%) than organizational workers (11.8%).

Discussion

The present study was aimed at to measure the communication style of communication of prospective teachers. Communication styles of prospective teacher were identified. major result of our study revealed that prospective teachers are less assertive in their communication styles consisted Samfira, E.M(2020) as it emphasize on assessing the levels of assertive communications skills of future teachers so they can help their students to be assertive. The study identify significant difference of communication pattern based on their gender as female prospective teachers are more assertive in their communication than males prospective teachers moreover males tend to be more aggressive in their

communication style. These findings are consisted with the previous researches Smye, M. (1980) & Immanuel, E. (2022).

Conclusion

Findings revealed that more than half of the sample or nonassertive in their communication style. Prospective teachers from BS program are more assertive than B.ED. It was also found that females are more assertive than male. Prospective teachers having urban locality are more assertive while prospective teachers from rural areas are less assertive. Prospective who working in the organizations are less assertive while prospective teachers working as freelancers are more assertive in their communication styles. Prospective teachers having public schooling are less assertive while prospective teachers having private schooling are more assertive in their communication styles. In the light of findings study made following recommendations relevant training program should be given to prospective teachers. teachers training institutes should offers them communication skills course in all semester instead of only one semester mainly focuses on their assertive communication skill. Awareness sessions should be provided to improve their Assertive communication skills. Other researcher can explore communication styles of students from other disciplines.

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