

Administrators' Conflict Management Strategies Utilization and Job Effectiveness of Secondary School Teachers in Obubra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated administrators' conflict management strategies utilization and job effectiveness of secondary school teachers in Obubra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and null hypotheses were developed to guide the study. The study adopted factorial research design. Census technique was used in selecting the entire population of 464 secondary school teachers in the area. Conflict Management Strategies Utilization Questionnaire (CMSUQ) and Secondary School Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (SSTJEQ) were used respectively, as instruments for data collection. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using Population t-test, and Multiple Regression analyses. Findings revealed that, teachers' job effectiveness level in Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high. The findings also revealed among others that; the utilization of the three conflict management strategies (arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication) had a joint significant influence on secondary school teachers' job effectiveness. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that; secondary school principal should not rely wholly on one conflict management strategy, instead they should learn how to use various conflict management strategies and apply them based on the nature of conflict.

Keywords: Administrators, Conflict, Management, Conflict Management, Conflict Management Strategies, Utilization, Job Effectiveness, Secondary School, Teachers.

1. Introduction

Every organization, whether formal or informal, has objectives established to be achieved. No organization can reach its ends without a corresponding means. One of the most important means through which any organization can achieve stated objectives is through human resources. These are the major determinants of any organizational success or failure, because they perform managerial functions and the manipulation of other devices, machines or material resources to work accordingly. In the context of the secondary school, teachers are the main human resources needed to implement the secondary school curriculum for the goals of secondary education to be realized. On this note, there is need for every secondary school teacher to be very effective in discharging his or her duties in order to improve the quality of students produce, and to boost the manpower of the economy.

Teachers' job effectiveness refers to the extent to which teachers carry out their instructional and pedagogical duties of teaching and behaviour modification as a means of making learners useful to themselves, and for the development of the society which they belong. Teachers' job effectiveness is the pivot around which teaching and co-curricular

activities of the school revolve. It offers learners the opportunity to get adapted to the school environment for improved academic performance (Owan, 2012).

An effective teacher can be judged based on the following indices: having a positive attitude, development of a pleasant social /psychological climate in the classroom, having high expectations of what students can achieve, lesson clarity, effective time management, strong lesson structuring, the use of different teaching methods, using and incorporating pupil ideas, using appropriate and varied questioning, proper classroom management, good chalkboard management, use of good disciplinary approaches, proper classroom sitting arrangement, understanding individual differences of learners, high level of punctuality, decent dressing attitudes, good possession or grasp of subject mastery, good record keeping attitudes, effective communication skills, good health practices within and outside the classroom environment, and other good personal characteristics such as honesty, politeness, flexibility, simplicity, trustworthiness, firm and fairness and so on.

Teachers' job effectiveness has been a major issue of concern to the government and other relevant stakeholders. This is seen through the regular workshops, seminars, and other retraining programmes organized for teachers as means of enabling them to adjust to the dynamic needs of the society.

In the past, teachers' job effectiveness in the school system had been hindered by a lot of factors, which resulted in teachers embarking on strikes at various times to draw the attention of the Government to their plight. The situation in the past was so bad that teachers' job, called for sympathy from other professions. It was considered a reproach to take up teaching as a profession, parents were finding it very difficult to release or give their daughters in marriage to teachers. Teachers' effectiveness was also hindered by the problem of poor salaries. Salaries were not paid, and as when due. Teachers were deprived of their promotion and lack of good working environment which affected most teachers' attitude to work.

Presently, the conditions of service offered to teachers have improved slightly, as it is no longer considered a reproach to become a teacher. This is evident in the sudden influx of people to the teaching profession including those not suitably qualified for the job. For example, the Federal government n-power initiative attracted a lot of graduates from various disciplines such as law, engineering, medicine and so on who were not suitably qualified for the job. According to Avverosuo (2017), this sudden influx of people into the profession is as a result of slight improvement in the condition of service for teachers; this include relatively prompt payment of teachers' salaries, increment of teacher's salaries following the recent minimum wage pronouncement, promotion of teachers in some quarters and building of classroom blocks and few offices being a project recently embarked upon by the state Government (Avverosuo, 2017).

In Cross River State for instance, there have also been remarkable improvements in terms of prompt payment of primary and secondary school teachers' salaries. This was done to reduce the bulk of buying a new computer by teachers which would have affected their livelihood and sustenance since many teachers rely on their salaries for survival. However, given these recent developments and improvement by the Government and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to improve the standard of teaching profession as well as boost teachers' effectiveness, one expected every secondary school teacher to be highly motivated and effective in discharging their duties. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be

the case in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, where many secondary school teachers have been displaying unprofessional and unethical attitudes to work.

It has been reported many times that many teachers in Obubra Local Government Area are truant and inconsistent to work, especially those in remote schools of the Area. Many teachers rarely report to school on the first day of resumption and are often found exhibiting poor attitudes towards: time management, record keeping, punctuality, relationship with others, note writing, discipline of students, teaching the students, evaluation of learners and so on. In fact, many secondary school teachers in remote communities have been observed many times to be lukewarm, lackadaisical, engaging in sexual relationship with senior students, and negligent to duties; consequently, leading to many parents degrading the status of teaching profession. This ineffectiveness by many teachers is unacceptable, given that it has not only tarnish the image of the teaching profession, but can also be inferred to have contributed in some ways, to students' poor academic performance in classroom and standardized examinations. It was based on these negative attitudes of secondary school teachers in the area that made the researcher to suspect poor utilization of conflict management strategies as having an association with teachers' job effectiveness.

Conflict management strategies refers to those techniques or approaches that can be used to prevent, control or resolve conflicts. Conflict management strategies are very important to any school because it is through these strategies that negative effects resulting from conflicts can be minimized or controlled. There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve conflict in schools. These include: dominance, compromise, synergy, culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, win-win strategy (Anashie & Kulo, 2014); adjudication, collective bargaining, confrontation, problem solving, creation of budget committee, separation device, neglect or silence, clarification of inter dependencies, consultation, boxing the problem, clarification of goals, and prayer (Ihuarulam, 2015). The focus of this study is on three conflict management which include: arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication conflict management strategies.

Arbitration conflict management strategy is used in a situation where a neutral party helps groups in conflicts to discuss their difficult issues which allows disputants to ventilate anger and frustration in a free, open and therapeutic fashion (Oboegbulem & Onwurah, 2011). It can also be a process in which a third party, neutral in the matter, after reviewing evidence and listening to arguments from both sides, issues a decision to settle the case (Amoh, 2007).

Dialogue conflict management strategy is a process where groups in conflicts are brought together (face-to face) to express their views on the subject matter. The conflict parties share their feelings and fears, are open to listening to the other parties' needs, are willing to be changed by what they hear, and are open to the idea of being vulnerable (Oboegbulem & Onwurah, 2011).

Effective communication conflict management strategy is a strategy where all the necessary information needed by groups are communicated to them in due time, acted upon and provision of appropriate feedback. It can be used to avoid, minimize and manage conflicts when they occur. It is used by both parties in the conflict to say their mind, listen to others, and for apology where necessary. By so doing they would be able to explain organizational policy and listen to complaints and problems of members of staff. In addition, management should not fold their arms to rumours. Each time a rumour emanates, it must be

confronted with relevant facts clearly communicated to all levels of units, departments and organizations (Obi, 2004).

Empirically, various studies have made attempts to uncover the relationship that exist between the variables of this study with other dependent variables. It becomes pertinent to review some empirical studies for the purpose of clarity.

Muhammad, Rahmat, Muhammad, and Malik (2013), investigated teachers' job performance at secondary school level in Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was revealed that the expressed teachers' job performance was above average and was good. In another study, Ogoch, (2014), examined the level of job satisfaction and teacher effectiveness in Trans-Mara West District, Kenya. The study revealed among other things that the level or degree of teacher effectiveness is good. This is because majority of the respondents said they effectively did their duties.

Adeyemi (2009) examined principals' management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings showed that conflicts have not been effectively managed by principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the strategies for resolving conflicts. Based on the findings, it was recommended that principals should inculcate the idea of setting up of committees to resolve conflicts. Principals should allow a free flow of information while communication gap should be prevented.

Arop and Bassey (2017) examined the influence of administrators' conflict management techniques and supervision of students' legal rights in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. It was revealed that there was a significant influence of administrators use of dialogue and domination on secondary school students' rights to fair hearing, dignity of human person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association except in the recognition and protection of students' rights to freedom of religion. Oshionebo and Ashang (2017), examined the administrative strategies for the resolution of principal-teacher conflicts among secondary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. One research question and hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The target population for this study was 2,231 respondents comprising 2,021 Secondary School Teachers and 210 School Principals. A total of 202 teachers and 21 principals were selected using simple random sampling technique. The study favoured the use of dialogue for principal-teacher conflict resolution among other administrative strategies such as dominance, compromise, smoothing, synergy, culture of civility, mediation, negotiation, and communication.

Sompa (2015), investigated management strategies of interpersonal conflict between teachers and head teachers in selected secondary schools of Lusaka Province, Zambia. Findings revealed that teachers and head teachers were able to manage conflict through different management strategies such as confrontation, avoidance, dialogue, maintaining government policy by giving teachers copies of working conditions, charging the teacher, mediation, communication and scolding the teacher.

In another study, Owan (2018), investigated conflict management strategies and secondary school teachers' job effectiveness. Six null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted correlational and factorial research designs. Findings revealed that, teachers' job effectiveness level in Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high. Findings also revealed that arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication strategies respectively, had a significant relationship with secondary school teachers' job effectiveness. Smoothing strategy had no significant relationship to secondary school teachers' job

effectiveness. The findings also revealed among others that; the four conflict management strategies (arbitration, dialogue, effective communication and smoothing) had a joint significant influence on secondary school teachers' job effectiveness. It was based on this background that this study was considered pertinent to carry out.

2. Statement of the problem

Teachers were supposed to maintain good attitudes towards the teaching and instruction of learners under an ideal condition. They were supposed to do this with all amount of effectiveness in terms of having a positive attitude to work, development of a pleasant social /psychological climate in the classroom, having high expectations of what students can achieve, lesson clarity, effective time management, strong lesson structuring, the use of different teaching methods, using and incorporating pupil ideas, using appropriate and varied questioning, proper classroom management, good chalkboard management, use of good disciplinary approaches, proper classroom sitting arrangement, understanding individual differences of learners, proper teaching, high level of punctuality, proper note writing/records keeping and many other such good attitudes. Such effectiveness was also expected to yield positive results in terms of improved academic performance of student and the attainment of set goals.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, where many secondary school teachers have been observed to be ineffective in performing their duties as manifested in their lateness to school, irregular attendance to classes, lack of self-discipline, poor attitudes towards writing notes of lesson, improper marking of students' attendance register, and several other unacceptable attitudes that cannot contribute to the attainment of set objectives. In the past, many teachers have attributed their ineffectiveness to be a product of poor motivation, poor facilities/infrastructural supply, poor/late payment of salaries by the government, and so on.

However, in recent times, the Government and other NGOs have made attempts to improve teachers' effectiveness, by organizing retraining and development workshops for teachers. The government has also improved in terms of quick payment of secondary school teachers' salaries. Sadly, these efforts made by the government and other stake holders have not yielded any corresponding improvement. Conversely, many teachers in Obubra Local Government Area are still adamant and unwilling to change.

It is as a result of this, that the researcher wonders whether teachers' persistent ineffectiveness in Obubra Local Government Area, could be as a result of poor utilization of conflict management strategies by secondary school administrators. Thus, the problem of this study put in question form is: what influence has administrators' conflict management strategies utilization on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary school in Obubra Local Government Area? An attempt to provide answer to this question, made carrying out this study germane.

3. Purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate administrators' conflict management strategies utilization and teachers' job effectiveness in secondary school in Obubra Local Government of Cross River State. The objectives of this study were:

- i. To examine the level of teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

- ii. To examine the influence of administrators' utilization of arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication conflict management strategies on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools.

4. Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- i. Teachers' job effectiveness level in secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area is not significantly high.
- ii. Administrators' utilization of arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication, conflict management strategies have no significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools.

5. Methods

The research design adopted for the study was the factorial research design. According to Shuttleworth (2016), a factorial design is often used by scientists wishing to understand the influence of two or more independent variables upon a single dependent variable. This design was considered appropriate because factorial designs allow experiments to have more than one independent variable (factors), and either a dependent variable or dependent variables with categories (levels). In this study, four factors (three conflict management strategies) were jointly studied to determine their influence on the dependent variable (secondary school teacher's job effectiveness).

The population of this study comprised all the 464 public secondary school teachers distributed across the 16 available public secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Census technique was employed by the researcher in selecting the entire population of 464 public secondary school teachers in the area.

Two instruments designed by the researcher were used for data collection including: Conflict Management Strategies Utilization Questionnaire (CMSUQ) and Secondary School Teachers Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (SSTJEQ). The former was used to assess administrators' conflict management strategies utilization. It comprised a total number of 20 items that were organized on a 4-point Likert scale. The latter was designed by the researcher to obtain information from respondents with respect to secondary school teachers' job effectiveness. It comprised 10 items that were arranged on a four Point Likert Scale. 464 senior secondary students across all the schools in the area were used to assess the effectiveness of their mathematics teachers.

The reliability of the instruments was established through Cronbach alpha. In determining the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was carried out using 40 teachers drawn from two public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, who were not part of the study sample. The following reliability estimates of 0.85, 0.88, 0.86, and 0.91 were obtained for arbitration, dialogue, effective communication, and teachers' job effectiveness, in that order. The implication of these results was that the instruments (CMSUQ and SSTJEQ) were highly reliable for use.

Copies of the questionnaires were administered to the sampled schools on different occasions based on the permission of the respective schools' principals. In assessing administrators' conflict management strategies utilization, the sampled 464 teachers were used to complete the questionnaire (CMSUQ). In order to obtain reliable and unbiased data, the researcher made use of 464 senior secondary school students to assess their mathematics teachers' job effectiveness.

The collected data were prepared on a person by item matrix using a computer spreadsheet program (Microsoft Excel version 2016). The data of this study were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and variance; while Population t-test, and multiple regression statistical techniques were used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance using Microsoft Excel version 2016. The criterion variable was therefore regressed on each of the four explanatory variables (X_1 ---- X_3). The regression equation is $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3$ Where $b_1 - b_3$ are the regression weights that represent the relative contributions of the independent variables (X_1 ---- X_4) to the prediction of the dependent variable (Y).

6. Results and discussion

This section is further divided into: presentation and interpretation of results, and discussion of findings.

6.1. Presentation of results

The results obtained from the analysis of this study were presented based on the hypotheses formulated to guide the study.

Hypothesis One (H_01)

Teachers' job effectiveness level in secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area is not significantly high. The result of the analysis of data using Population t-test statistical technique is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1:

Summary of Population t-test result of secondary school teachers' job effectiveness level in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State (N = 464)

Variable	Mean	μ	SD	SE	t-cal.	Sig.
Teachers' job effectiveness	7.27	.25	2.592	.120	-147.362	.000

* sig. at < .05 df = 463; μ = Test value;

The results presented in Table 1, revealed that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 463 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that, teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high.

Hypothesis Six (H_06)

Administrators' utilization of arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication, conflict management strategies have no significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. The result of multiple regression analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2:

Summary of Multiple Regression results of the influence of administrators' utilization of arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication strategies on secondary teachers' job effectiveness (N= 464)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
.171	.029	.023	2.562

It can be inferred from the results presented in Table 2 that, the utilization of the three conflict management strategies namely: arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication have a joint multiple correlation ($R = .171$) which is positive in predicting teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. This implies that, the utilization of the three conflict management strategies is quite relevant and important towards the determination of teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. Furthermore, the three conflict management strategies explained 2.9% of the total variance of teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area ($R^2 = .029$). By implication, the remaining 97.1% may be due to other factors that were not studied. However, in order to determine whether, the R^2 value of .3643 obtained is statistically significant, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the regression analysis was performed as shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Regression Analysis

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig. F</i>
Regression	3	91.003	30.334	4.621	.003*
Residual	460	3019.86	6.565		
Total	463	3110.86			

* Significant at $p < .05$

The results presented in Table 3 shows clearly that, the R^2 value obtained from the regression analysis, is statistically significant, since the p -value .003* is less than .05 alpha level (i.e. $F = 8.301$; p -value .003 < .05). This means that the R^2 value of .029 obtained, was not due to chance. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that, administrators' utilization arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication conflict management strategies have a joint significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools.

In order to determine the conflict management strategy with the highest influence, the relative contributions of the three variables (Arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication) to teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools was used as presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Relative Contributions of administrators' utilization of arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication conflict management strategies to teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	5.172	.593	8.724		.000
Arbitration strategy	.100	.056	1.775	3 rd	.076
Dialogue strategy	.098	.041	2.395	1st	.017
Effective communication	.073	.034	2.138	2nd	.033

The results presented in Table 4 revealed that, two out of the three conflict management strategies examined were statistically significant in influencing teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. That is, dialogue and effective communication strategies

were statistically significant in influencing teachers' job effectiveness respectively (with p-values .017, .and .033 < .05); while arbitration strategy alone was not statistically significant (with p-value .076 > .05). Out of the two statistically significant conflict management strategies, dialogue had the highest influence ($t = 2.395$); followed by effective communication conflict management strategy ($t = 2.138$).

6.2 Discussion of results

For the first hypothesis, the results of this study established that, secondary school teachers' job effectiveness in Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high. This result may be because teachers in the area were quite effective in making deliberate efforts to enhance students' knowledge in their subjects. They were also reported to be responsive to students' views and comments during lessons; many came to teach with already prepared lesson notes; many teachers supported students to take active part in co-curricular activities of the school and in writing clearly on the chalkboard for every student to see. They were also reported as being effortful in stimulating students' interest in their subjects, in responding to students' questions satisfactorily during lessons, in providing clear explanations of important issues in their subjects, in the display of their subject mastery and in their evaluation of students during and after lessons.

This finding does not mean that teachers' effectiveness in the area is near perfection, but implies that, to a significant extent, teachers job effectiveness in Obubra was high enough and was not due to chance. This finding supports the findings of Muhammad, Rahmat, Muhammad, and Malik (2013) that investigated teachers' job performance at secondary school level in Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was revealed that the expressed teachers' job performance was above average and was good. The finding also supports the finding of Ogoch, (2014), who examined the level of job satisfaction and teacher effectiveness in Trans-Mara West District, Kenya. The study revealed among other things that the level or degree of teacher effectiveness is good. This is because majority of the respondents said they effectively did their duties. In support of Ogoch's findings, the present study revealed many secondary school teachers demonstrated positive attitudes to work as revealed by majority of the responses. Owan (2018), also established that teachers' job effectiveness level is significantly high.

The findings of the study also revealed through the results of the ANOVA that the three conflict management strategies have a joint significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. However, dialogue had the highest influence, followed by effective communication and then arbitration. This finding corroborates the finding of Owan (2018), which revealed that, four conflict management strategies arbitration, dialogue, effective communication and smoothing had a joint significant influence on secondary school teachers' job effectiveness.

Relatively, arbitration strategy had no significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. This finding does not support the findings of Inang (2016); and Adeyemi (2009) who in their study revealed a significant relationship between mediation, avoidance, collaboration, and teachers' job performance.

This study also established that dialogue conflict management strategy has a significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. The findings of Arop and Bassey (2017) revealed that that there was a significant influence of administrators use of dialogue and domination on secondary school students' rights to fair hearing, dignity of human person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association except in the

recognition and protection of students' rights to freedom of religion. It also supports the position held by the findings of Oshionebo and Ashang (2017), whose study favoured the use of dialogue for principal-teacher conflict resolution among other administrative strategies such as dominance, compromise, smoothing, synergy, culture of civility, mediation, negotiation, and communication.

It was also disclosed through the findings of this study that; effective communication utilization has a significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. The finding of this study corroborates the findings of Sompa (2015), who revealed that teachers and head teachers were able to manage conflict through different management strategies such as confrontation, avoidance, dialogue, maintaining government policy by giving teachers copies of working conditions, charging the teacher, mediation, communication and scolding the teacher. Owan (2018) revealed that effective communication strategy has a significant relationship with secondary school teachers' job effectiveness.

7. Conclusion

It was concluded generally that; administrators' conflict management strategies utilization has a significant influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary. Many secondary school teachers in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, are discharging their duties above average. Dialogue conflict management strategy has the highest influence on teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools. The more school principals utilize these conflict management strategies, the more likely they will be able to boost the morale of their teachers to work effectively.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, and in order to improve secondary school teachers' job effectiveness, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Teachers should be provided with the enabling environment, incentives, funds and materials by the government in order to motivate them to improve in their job effectiveness.
- ii. Principals should ensure that they setup conflict management committee (CMC) in their schools that will serve as the body responsible for managing teachers' conflict. Staff in this committee should be adequately trained on how to handle conflicts and other related matters.
- iii. Teachers in conflict should always be brought to interact face to face and explain their feelings in order to ensure that their differences, disparities, and positions are well understood. This will enable them to resolve their issues amicably through proper dialogue.
- iv. Teachers should develop positive attitudes by being always ready to apologize to another when an action by them caused others to get angry. This will help eliminate some conflicts before they even occur or help manage a conflict situation.
- v. Secondary school principal should not rely wholly on one conflict management strategy, instead they should learn how to use various conflict management strategies and apply them based on the nature of conflict.

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