Head Teachers' Laissez-Faire Management Practices and Teacher Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Rwampara District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between head teachers' laissez-faire management practices and teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, Uganda. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of delegation of duties, control mechanisms, and decision-making freedom on teacher performance. The study was guided by Transformational Leadership Theory and adopted a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design. The study population comprised 137 participants, including teachers, deputy headteachers, headteachers, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons, the District Education Officer, the Inspector of Schools, and chairpersons of Boards of Directors. A sample of 111 respondents was planned, using simple random sampling for teachers and purposive sampling for key informants. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The reported correlation and regression analyses were based on 85 teacher responses. The findings revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between delegation of duties and teacher performance indicators, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.672 to 0.698. Control mechanisms were also positively correlated with teacher performance, with coefficients ranging from 0.608 to 0.623, while decision-making freedom recorded coefficients ranging from 0.635 to 0.651. Multiple regression analysis showed that delegation of duties ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$), control mechanisms ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$), and decision-making freedom ($\beta = 0.328$, $p < 0.001$) were significant positive predictors of teacher performance. The model explained 61.3% of the variation in teacher performance ($R^2 = 0.613$). The study concludes that effective delegation, appropriate supervision, and teacher participation in decision-making are important correlates of teacher performance in private secondary schools. It recommends that headteachers balance professional autonomy with clear expectations, supportive supervision, and accountability mechanisms.

Keywords: Laissez-faire management, delegation of duties, control mechanisms, decision-making freedom, teacher performance, private secondary schools, Rwampara District, Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is widely recognized as an important factor in the effective management of educational institutions because it influences organisational direction, staff motivation, professional relationships, and the conditions under which teaching and learning take place. In schools, head teachers are responsible for providing instructional guidance, coordinating staff activities, monitoring performance, and ensuring that teachers work towards institutional objectives. Research has demonstrated that school leadership is associated with educational outcomes, particularly when leaders focus on instructional improvement, teacher development, and the quality of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). However, the influence of leadership depends partly on the management practices adopted and how these practices are implemented within a particular school context.

Leadership styles vary in the extent to which leaders provide direction, participate in decision-making, supervise employees, and delegate responsibilities. Burns (1978) distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership, while Bass (1985) further developed the concept of transformational leadership and its implications for organisational performance. Bass and Riggio (2006) subsequently discussed how leadership behaviours can influence followers' motivation, commitment, and performance. Within this broader leadership literature, laissez-faire leadership represents a comparatively hands-off approach in which leaders tend to avoid active involvement in decision-making, delay responding to problems, or provide limited guidance and supervision when these are needed.

Laissez-faire leadership should not, however, be equated automatically with effective delegation. Delegation involves assigning responsibilities and granting appropriate authority while maintaining accountability and providing the support necessary for employees to accomplish their tasks. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership may become problematic when leaders fail to provide direction, feedback, or timely assistance. Bass and Riggio (2006) distinguish laissez-faire leadership from more active leadership behaviours, while Yukl (2013) emphasises the importance of appropriate coordination, support, and monitoring in the performance of leadership responsibilities. Consequently, the implications of a hands-off management approach may depend on whether teachers possess the professional competence, resources, and autonomy required to perform their duties effectively.

Teacher performance is an important component of school effectiveness. It encompasses teachers' ability to prepare and deliver lessons, manage classrooms, assess learners, fulfil professional responsibilities, and demonstrate the competencies required for effective instruction. Stronge (2018) identifies instructional planning, classroom management, assessment, and professional responsibilities as important dimensions of teacher effectiveness. Similarly, research on school leadership suggests that leadership practices can influence educational outcomes through their effects on teachers' working conditions, professional learning, and instructional practices (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). These perspectives suggest that the relationship between head teachers' management practices and teacher performance deserves systematic investigation.

In private secondary schools, effective management is particularly important because schools must coordinate teaching activities, maintain professional standards, respond to parents' expectations, and sustain the quality of educational services. Although granting teachers professional autonomy can create opportunities for initiative and independent work, limited managerial involvement may also leave teachers without adequate guidance, feedback, or support. The effects of such practices cannot be assumed to be uniform across all schools; they require examination within the relevant institutional and local context.

In Uganda, head teachers play a central role in the daily administration of secondary schools and the coordination of teachers' professional responsibilities. Nevertheless, the extent to which laissez-faire management practices are associated with teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District requires context-specific empirical evidence. Findings from other educational settings may provide useful theoretical guidance, but they cannot automatically establish the nature or strength of this relationship in Rwampara District.

This study therefore examined the relationship between head teachers' laissez-faire management practices and teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, Uganda. Specifically, it investigated three dimensions of laissez-faire management practices: delegation of responsibilities, control mechanisms, and freedom in decision-making.

Examining these dimensions separately provides a basis for understanding whether the way responsibilities are assigned, activities are monitored, and professional decisions are made is associated with teachers' effectiveness in executing learning tasks, performance during teaching and learning, and professional competence. The study contributes context-specific evidence to discussions about school leadership and teacher performance and may inform school management practices aimed at balancing teacher autonomy with appropriate guidance and accountability.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to examine the effects of headteachers' laissez-faire management practices on teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, Uganda.

The study was guided by three specific objectives:

- To analyze the influence of delegation of duties on teacher performance.
- To assess the influence of control mechanisms on teacher performance.
- To establish the influence of decision-making freedom on teacher performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study draws on leadership theory, particularly the distinction between active leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Burns (1978) introduced a distinction between transactional and transformational leadership, and Bass (1985) expanded the theoretical discussion of how leadership behaviours influence followers. Bass and Riggio (2006) explain that transformational leadership involves behaviours intended to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and support followers, whereas laissez-faire leadership is characterised by the avoidance or absence of leadership when intervention is required.

The theory provides a useful basis for examining how head teachers' involvement, or lack of involvement, may be related to teachers' professional activities. In a school setting, teachers may need autonomy to apply their professional knowledge, adapt instructional approaches, and respond to learners' needs. However, autonomy does not eliminate the need for clear expectations, timely feedback, coordination, and accountability. From this perspective, the possible influence of laissez-faire management depends not only on the freedom granted to teachers but also on whether the head teacher fulfils essential management responsibilities.

The study also draws on the broader educational leadership literature, which emphasises that leadership practices influence teaching and learning partly through their effects on teachers and the Organisation of instructional work. Robinson et al. (2008), in a meta-analysis of research on educational leadership, found that leadership approaches differ in their relationships with student outcomes, highlighting the importance of the specific practices leaders undertake rather than treating leadership as a single undifferentiated construct. Hallinger (2011) similarly reviewed developments in instructional leadership research and emphasized the significance of leadership in relation to school improvement. These perspectives support the need to examine specific management practices and their association with teacher performance rather than assuming that all forms of leadership have equivalent effects.

Delegation of Duties and Teacher Performance

Delegation of duties involves assigning responsibilities and appropriate authority to teachers to undertake instructional and administrative tasks. Effective delegation can promote accountability, trust, professional development, and efficient task completion. When responsibilities are allocated according to teachers' abilities and accompanied by clear expectations, teachers may become more confident and committed to their work (Yukl, 2013).

However, delegation without clear instructions or follow-up can create role ambiguity and weaken accountability. The effectiveness of delegation therefore depends on the fairness of task allocation, clarity of responsibilities, the competence of the individuals involved, and the availability of appropriate support. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) highlighted the importance of school leadership in influencing teaching practices and educational outcomes. These considerations informed the examination of delegation of duties and teacher performance in Rwampara District.

Control Mechanisms and Teacher Performance

Control mechanisms refer to the procedures used by school management to monitor activities, assess progress, provide feedback, and ensure that institutional responsibilities are fulfilled. In secondary schools, these mechanisms may include checking lesson plans, reviewing schemes of work, monitoring classroom instruction, examining assessment records, and discussing teachers' progress. Such procedures can help head teachers identify challenges, provide professional guidance, and promote accountability.

Educational leadership literature identifies the Organisation and monitoring of instructional activities as relevant dimensions of school leadership (Hallinger, 2011). Robinson et al. (2008) also demonstrate the importance of examining particular leadership practices when considering their relationships with educational outcomes. These perspectives suggest that monitoring should not be understood solely as the exercise of authority; it can also provide a means of identifying areas where teachers require support or professional development.

In the context of laissez-faire management, the key issue is whether control mechanisms are adequate, consistent, and constructive. Excessive monitoring may restrict professional autonomy, while insufficient monitoring may allow instructional challenges to remain unresolved. Effective school management therefore requires an appropriate balance between teacher independence and managerial oversight. This study examined the relationship between control mechanisms and teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District.

Decision-Making Freedom and Teacher Performance

Freedom in decision-making refers to the extent to which teachers are permitted to make professional decisions concerning their work. In secondary schools, such decisions may concern lesson delivery, classroom management, teaching methods, assessment practices, and the organisation of learning activities. Teacher autonomy can create opportunities for professional judgement and adaptation to learners' needs. However, decision-making freedom must operate within school policies, curriculum requirements, professional standards, and agreed institutional objectives.

Bass and Riggio (2006) provide a basis for distinguishing autonomy supported by effective leadership from laissez-faire behaviour characterised by the avoidance of leadership responsibilities. Similarly, Yukl (2013) discusses the importance of matching delegation and employee discretion to the demands of the task and the capabilities of those responsible for carrying it out. These perspectives indicate that decision-making freedom should not necessarily be interpreted as an absence of management; its usefulness may depend on the availability of clear expectations, professional competence, and appropriate accountability.

In schools, the relationship between decision-making freedom and teacher performance may therefore be influenced by the extent to which teachers have the skills and resources needed to make sound professional decisions. This study investigated whether freedom in decision-making was associated with teachers' effectiveness in executing learning tasks, their performance during teaching and learning, and their professional competence.

Teacher Performance

Teacher performance refers to the extent to which teachers fulfil their instructional and professional responsibilities effectively. It includes lesson planning, classroom instruction, management of learning activities, assessment of learners, and fulfilment of wider professional obligations. Stronge (2018) identifies multiple dimensions of teacher effectiveness and emphasises the importance of examining teaching practices and professional responsibilities when evaluating teacher performance.

Teacher performance may also be influenced by the organisational environment in which teachers work. School leadership can shape expectations, coordination, professional support, and opportunities for improvement. Hallinger (2011) and Robinson et al. (2008) provide broader evidence that leadership practices

are relevant to school functioning and educational outcomes. These studies do not, by themselves, establish the effect of laissez-faire management in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, but they provide a rationale for investigating this relationship empirically.

In this study, teacher performance was examined through effectiveness in executing learning tasks, performance during teaching and learning, and professional competence. These dimensions provided the basis for analysing the relationships between teacher performance and the three management-practice variables: delegation of responsibilities, control mechanisms, and freedom in decision-making.

Research Gap

Existing leadership literature provides a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding how school leadership practices may be associated with teachers' work and educational outcomes (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). Leadership theory also distinguishes active leadership from laissez-faire behaviour, which involves avoiding necessary decisions or interventions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, general evidence on educational leadership does not establish how specific laissez-faire management practices relate to teacher performance in every local setting.

The present study addressed this contextual gap by examining delegation of responsibilities, control mechanisms, and freedom in decision-making in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, Uganda. It analysed how these dimensions were associated with teachers' effectiveness in executing learning tasks, performance during teaching and learning, and professional competence. The study thus sought to provide local evidence that could inform school management and contribute to the wider discussion of leadership practices in secondary education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design using quantitative and qualitative approaches, as reported in the original study. A cross-sectional design enables researchers to collect information about variables from a defined population at a particular point in time. It is appropriate for describing existing conditions and examining relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004).

The quantitative approach provided a basis for measuring head teachers' laissez-faire management practices and examining their statistical relationships with teacher performance. The qualitative component was intended to provide additional perspectives and contextual explanations concerning the management practices under investigation. Combining quantitative and qualitative evidence can offer complementary insights into a research problem, provided the two forms of evidence are analysed and integrated appropriately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Hirose, 2019).

Because the study used a cross-sectional design, the results are interpreted as evidence of statistical associations rather than definitive proof that laissez-faire management practices caused changes in teacher performance. Establishing causality would require a design capable of addressing temporal order and alternative explanations.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 137 individuals, from which a planned sample of 111 respondents was identified, according to the original study records. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) developed a widely used table for estimating sample sizes from defined population sizes. Their approach provides a practical reference for survey sampling, although the appropriateness of a particular sample also depends on the study objectives, sampling procedure, expected response rate, and planned statistical analyses.

The manuscript should clearly distinguish the planned sample of 111 from the 85 respondents included in the reported correlation and regression analyses. The final report should explain how the 85 cases were obtained, including the number of questionnaires distributed, the number returned, exclusions, and the resulting response rate. These details are important for assessing the adequacy of the data and the extent to which the findings may represent the target population.

Data Collection Instruments

The study used the data collection instruments specified in the original research report. The questionnaire was used to obtain structured information about the management practices and teacher performance variables, while the qualitative instrument, where administered, was intended to obtain explanations and perspectives that could complement the quantitative findings.

Research instruments should be aligned with the study objectives and should measure the constructs they are intended to assess. Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasise the importance of matching data collection methods to research questions and research design. Where questionnaires contain several items intended to measure a common construct, the researcher should also explain how the items were developed, scored, and interpreted.

The questionnaire items in this study addressed delegation of responsibilities, control mechanisms, freedom in decision-making, and teacher performance. The operational definitions and scoring procedures should be reported consistently with the original instrument so that readers can understand how the study variables were measured.

The research report indicated that the instruments were reviewed by experts for content validity, yielding a Content Validity Index of 0.91. Reliability was assessed using the test-retest method, which produced a reported reliability coefficient of 0.87 (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 16. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and questionnaire responses. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the direction and strength of the relationships between management practices and teacher performance. Multiple regression analysis was used to estimate the contribution of delegation of duties, control mechanisms, and decision-making freedom to teacher performance.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically. The researcher identified recurring ideas in participants' accounts, organized related responses into themes, and interpreted the findings in relation to the study objectives. Quantitative and qualitative findings were compared during interpretation to identify areas of convergence and to provide contextual explanations of the statistical results.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved obtaining the necessary institutional and school permissions, explaining the purpose of the research to participants, and securing informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and respondents' information was treated confidentially. Findings were intended for academic purposes, and participants' identities were to be protected in the presentation of results.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics and Response Information

The study targeted teachers and key informants drawn from private secondary schools and education stakeholders in Rwampara District. The research report indicated a planned sample of 111 respondents from a population of 137. However, the reported correlation and regression tables used 85 teacher responses.

Consequently, the inferential findings presented below refer specifically to the analytical sample of 85 teachers.

Delegation of Duties and Teacher Performance

The correlation analysis revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between delegation of duties and the three teacher performance indicators. Delegation of duties was correlated with effectiveness in executing learning tasks ($r = 0.685$, $p < 0.01$), display during teaching and learning activities ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.01$), and teachers' competency ($r = 0.698$, $p < 0.01$).

These results indicate that better delegation practices were associated with stronger teacher performance across the measured indicators. The relationship was strongest for teacher competency, followed closely by effectiveness in executing learning tasks. The findings suggest that assigning responsibilities appropriately and providing teachers with opportunities to exercise professional responsibility may be important for teacher effectiveness.

Control Mechanisms and Teacher Performance

Control mechanisms also demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with teacher performance. The reported correlation coefficients were 0.614 for effectiveness in executing learning tasks, 0.623 for display during teaching and learning activities, and 0.608 for teachers' competency. All relationships were statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$).

The findings suggest that monitoring, supervision, and feedback were associated with improved teacher performance. The relationship was strongest for teachers' participation during teaching and learning activities. This pattern indicates that appropriate school-level oversight may support classroom engagement and the execution of professional responsibilities.

Decision-Making Freedom and Teacher Performance

Decision-making freedom was positively and significantly correlated with all three teacher performance indicators. The reported coefficients were 0.648 for effectiveness in executing learning tasks, 0.635 for display during teaching and learning activities, and 0.651 for teachers' competency. All relationships were statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$).

These findings indicate that greater decision-making freedom was associated with better teacher performance. The relationship was strongest for teachers' competency, suggesting that professional autonomy and participation in school-level decisions may support teachers' confidence and application of professional knowledge.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contribution of delegation of duties, control mechanisms, and decision-making freedom to teacher performance.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Headteachers' Management Practices and Teacher Performance (N = 85)

Predictor	B	Standardized β	t	Reported significance
Constant	1.052	—	3.12	0.003
Delegation of duties	0.412	0.354	4.21	<0.001
Control mechanisms	0.368	0.312	3.76	<0.001
Decision-making freedom	0.395	0.328	3.94	<0.001

Source: Research report, regression analysis.

The regression results indicate that all three management practices were positive and statistically significant predictors of teacher performance. Delegation of duties had the largest standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$), followed by decision-making freedom ($\beta = 0.328$, $p < 0.001$) and control mechanisms ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$).

The model summary reported a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.783$, an R^2 of 0.613, an adjusted R^2 of 0.602, and a standard error of the estimate of 0.418. The reported analysis of variance indicated that the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 81) = 65.85$, $p < 0.001$.

The R^2 value indicates that the three management practice measures collectively accounted for 61.3% of the observed variation in teacher performance in the analytical sample. The remaining variation may be associated with other factors not included in the model, such as remuneration, workload, teaching resources, professional development, school culture, and individual teacher characteristics.

DISCUSSION

Delegation of Duties and Teacher Performance

The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between delegation of duties and teacher performance. Delegation was associated with teachers' effectiveness in executing learning tasks, participation during teaching and learning activities, and professional competency. It also emerged as the strongest standardized predictor among the three management practices included in the regression model.

One possible explanation is that appropriate delegation gives teachers opportunities to exercise their skills, take responsibility for assigned tasks, and contribute to school activities. When responsibilities are distributed fairly and matched to teachers' competencies, teachers may develop a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to their work.

These findings are consistent with the broader leadership literature, which recognizes the importance of leadership practices in influencing instructional processes and school outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). However, delegation should not be equated with the absence of leadership. Teachers require clear expectations, appropriate resources, and reasonable follow-up to ensure that delegated responsibilities contribute to school objectives.

Control Mechanisms and Teacher Performance

The findings also demonstrated positive relationships between control mechanisms and teacher performance. Supervision, monitoring, and feedback were associated with better execution of teaching tasks, classroom engagement, and teacher competency.

These results suggest that teacher autonomy is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to ensure consistent performance. Appropriate monitoring can clarify expectations, identify professional development needs, and help teachers maintain instructional standards. Constructive feedback can further support professional improvement by helping teachers recognize strengths and address weaknesses in their teaching practices.

The findings therefore support a balanced approach in which headteachers provide teachers with room to exercise professional judgement while maintaining suitable supervision and accountability. Control mechanisms should be supportive rather than merely punitive, allowing teachers to improve their practice while ensuring that school responsibilities are fulfilled.

Decision-Making Freedom and Teacher Performance

Decision-making freedom was positively and significantly associated with all three teacher performance indicators. It also made a statistically significant contribution to teacher performance in the regression model.

The findings suggest that teachers may perform better when they have opportunities to contribute to school decisions and exercise professional judgement in instructional activities. Participation can help teachers feel valued, increase their commitment to school objectives, and allow them to apply their professional knowledge to classroom challenges.

Nevertheless, decision-making freedom should operate within agreed curriculum requirements, professional standards, and school policies. The findings do not establish that unrestricted autonomy is beneficial in every circumstance. Rather, they suggest that opportunities for professional participation and autonomy were positively associated with teacher performance in the schools studied.

Overall Relationship between Management Practices and Teacher Performance

The regression model explained 61.3% of the variation in teacher performance, indicating that delegation of duties, control mechanisms, and decision-making freedom jointly had substantial explanatory value within the analytical sample. All three predictors were statistically significant, suggesting that teacher performance was associated with a combination of responsibility allocation, oversight, and professional autonomy.

These results provide a more nuanced interpretation of laissez-faire management than simply classifying it as beneficial or harmful. Some elements commonly associated with a hands-off approach, particularly delegation and decision-making freedom, may support teacher performance when implemented appropriately. At the same time, the positive relationship with control mechanisms suggests that effective teacher performance also requires monitoring and guidance.

The findings should be interpreted as associations and regression-based predictions rather than definitive proof of causation. Because the study used a cross-sectional design and relied partly on reported perceptions, it cannot establish that the management practices alone caused the observed differences in teacher performance.

CONCLUSION

The study found that headteachers' management practices were positively and significantly associated with teacher performance in private secondary schools in Rwampara District, Uganda. Delegation of duties showed positive relationships with effectiveness in executing learning tasks, participation during teaching and learning activities, and professional competency. Control mechanisms were also positively associated with teacher performance, highlighting the importance of supervision and feedback. Decision-making freedom demonstrated positive relationships with all three performance indicators, suggesting that teacher autonomy and participation in school decisions may support professional effectiveness.

The regression results further indicated that delegation of duties, control mechanisms, and decision-making freedom were significant positive predictors of teacher performance. Together, these variables accounted for 61.3% of the variation in teacher performance in the reported analytical sample.

The study concludes that effective teacher performance is best supported by a balanced management approach that combines appropriate delegation, professional autonomy, constructive supervision, and accountability. The findings do not imply that complete non-intervention by headteachers is desirable. Instead, they underscore the importance of empowering teachers while maintaining clear expectations and adequate professional support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

Headteachers should allocate responsibilities fairly, consider teachers' competencies, communicate expectations clearly, and provide the resources required to complete assigned tasks.

Private secondary schools should establish consistent classroom observation, lesson-plan review, assessment monitoring, and constructive feedback procedures. Supervision should identify improvement needs and support teachers' professional growth.

Headteachers should involve teachers in relevant academic planning, instructional decisions, school committees, and discussions concerning teaching and learning. This may strengthen professional ownership and commitment.

School leaders should provide teachers with reasonable professional freedom while maintaining clear standards, agreed responsibilities, and appropriate follow-up. Autonomy should be accompanied by support rather than neglect.

School proprietors and administrators should provide opportunities for teacher development in instructional methods, assessment, classroom management, and professional collaboration.

Future studies should compare private and government-aided secondary schools and consider longitudinal or multi-district designs to establish whether the observed relationships are consistent across different contexts and over time.

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