The Impact of Perceived Organizational Politics on Employee Commitment: The Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy: A Study Among the Public Sector Employees in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary workplaces, perceived organizational politics persist as a ubiquitous force, intricately shaping the dynamics of organizational behavior and wielding significant influence over a multitude of outcomes. This study delves into the significance of perceived organizational politics in shaping employee commitment, emphasizing the nuanced interplay between perceived organizational politics and individual characteristics. Specifically, we investigate the moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals aim to acquire, protect, and build resources, we examined how self-efficacy, as a crucial personal resource, impacts this relationship. The current study surveyed employees from the public sector in Sri Lanka. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, a total of 211 questionnaires were returned and usable. We employed a convenience sampling method to capture the complexity of this relationship. Quantitative analysis revealed a significant negative association between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment, underscoring the detrimental impact of perceived organizational politics on organizational outcomes. Furthermore, our findings highlight the pivotal role of self-efficacy as a moderator, elucidating how individuals' belief in their capabilities moderates the effects of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment. Our study underscores the imperative for organizations to recognize and mitigate the adverse effects of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment. Moreover, it underscores the importance of considering individual characteristics, such as self-efficacy, in understanding and managing workplace dynamics effectively. By elucidating the complex interplay between perceived organizational politics, self-efficacy, and employee commitment, this research contributes to both theoretical advancements and practical implications for organizational management and human resource practices.

Keywords: Employee commitment, perceived organizational politics, public sector employees, self-efficacy

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01. Introduction

Moreover, perceived organizational politics has been found to have adverse effects on employee engagement (Landells & Albrecht, 2019). Employees who perceive political behaviors in the workplace are less likely to be emotionally invested in their work and demonstrate lower levels of discretionary effort (Treadway et al., 2005). This lack of engagement can hinder productivity, innovation, and collaboration within the organization ultimately affecting its performance and competitiveness. Furthermore, perceived organizational politics has been associated with various negative employee-level outcomes, including increased stress, anxiety, and job dissatisfaction (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010). Employees may feel marginalized or unfairly treated, leading to a decline in their overall well-being and job performance (Bedi & Schat, 2013). Additionally, perceived organizational politics can contribute to the development of a toxic work environment characterized by interpersonal conflict, gossip, and rumors, further exacerbating employee morale and engagement issues (Khan et al., 2021).

Overall, the existing literature underscores the detrimental implications of perceived organizational politics for employee morale and engagement. Organizations must recognize the importance of addressing organizational politics and fostering a culture of transparency, fairness, and trust to mitigate these negative effects and promote a positive work environment conducive to employee well-being and performance (Sandeep, 2023).

Exploring how individual characteristics, such as self-efficacy, influence the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment is essential for a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics. Thus, the concept of employee commitment has garnered significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike due to its positive impacts on organizational outcomes (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Research suggests that self-efficacy can serve as a critical factor in determining how individuals perceive and respond to perceived organizational politics.

Individuals with high self-efficacy may be more resilient and less affected by perceived politics in the workplace (Caprara et al., 2009). They are likely to perceive themselves as capable of navigating political situations effectively and maintaining their commitment to organizational goals despite challenges. Committed employees tend to exhibit higher job performance, increased job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and improved organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy may perceive organizational politics are more threatening and may struggle to maintain their commitment in the face of perceived injustice or unfairness. Further, committed employees tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and loyalty toward the organization, leading to improved job performance and higher-quality output (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

By examining individual characteristics such as self-efficacy in the context of perceived politics and commitment, organizations can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to empower employees and enhance their ability to cope with political challenges (Osei et al., 2017). This approach can contribute to the creation of a resilient workforce that remains committed to organizational goals even in the face of adversity, ultimately fostering a positive organizational culture and improving overall performance (Beer, 2009). In today's contemporary work environment, it is clear that not all employees show equal commitment to their work. Consequently, managers need to understand the personal and situational factors that foster

employee commitment to achieve optimal organizational performance (Almatrooshi et al., 2016). To address this, the COR theory, a significant construct in organizational behavior and psychology developed by Hobfoll (1989) may be considered. COR theory states that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect their valued resources.

These resources can be objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies (Hobfoll, 1989). The loss of these resources, or the threat of such loss, is a primary source of stress. According to COR theory, resource loss is more salient and has a more significant impact than resource gain. However, resource gain becomes critical during periods of resource loss, as gaining resources can help offset the negative effects of the loss (Hobfoll, 2001). COR theory has been extensively applied to understand workplace stress and its effects on employees' psychological well-being and performance. It explains how perceived organizational politics can deplete employees' resources, leading to decreased commitment and increased stress (Halbesleben et al., 2014). COR theory introduces the concept of "resource caravan passageways," which are environments that support or hinder the acquisition and conservation of resources. In organizational contexts, supportive work environments can act as passageways that facilitate resource gain and reduce resource loss (Hobfol et al., 2018). According to the COR theory, individuals strive to acquire and protect resources, which encompass emotional bonds and attachments to the organization (organizational commitment) (Westman et al., 2004).

The Conservation of Resources theory, as discussed by Halbesleben et al. (2014), posits that employees are driven by the desire to preserve their current organizational benefits such as job stability, compensation, incentives, positive feedback, and career advancements, while also striving for new achievements. When these organizational benefits are threatened or diminished, it leads to heightened stress among employees. According to COR theory, employees channel additional energy, time, and effort into safeguarding and attaining organizational benefits, to avoid losing what they already have. The theory further explains that employees need to enhance their general self-efficacy by improving their skills and capabilities to meet job demands, thereby either securing more organizational resources or preventing the loss of existing ones (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Employees with high self-efficacy tend to be intrinsically driven to show greater initiative in the workplace (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Self-efficacy was selected due to its nature as a resiliency factor, significantly influencing employees' performance at work (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). We decided to investigate the impact of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment, recognizing that organizational politics are an unavoidable aspect of any organization (Agarwal, 2016). Notably, 88% of managers acknowledge its presence within their organizations (Buchanan, 2008).

This research aims to examine the moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. There is a shortage of empirical evidence regarding the interaction among these variables, and theoretical arguments or empirical tests based on the COR theory are currently lacking. Therefore, the framed research questions focus on the moderating role of self-efficacy in the context of perceived organizational politics and employee commitment: How can organizations foster employee commitment in the face of perceived organizational politics? this question aims to explore strategies and interventions that organizations can implement to mitigate the negative impact of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment, taking into account the moderating role of self-efficacy. How does the self-efficacy of individuals shape their commitment levels in politically charged environments? this question seeks to examine how individuals' beliefs in their abilities (self-efficacy) influence

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their commitment to organizational goals when confronted with perceived organizational politics, providing insights into the mechanisms through which self-efficacy moderates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment.

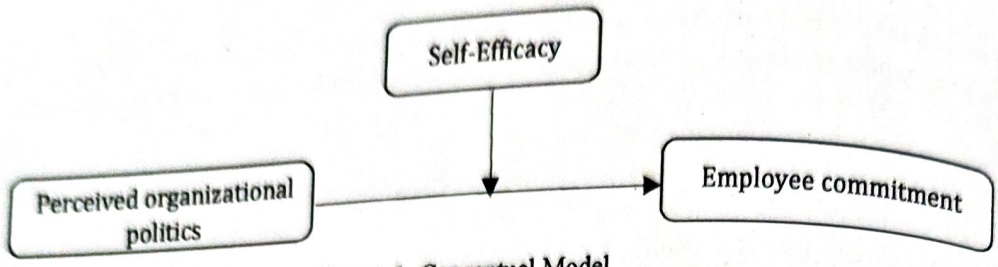


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

02. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Political behavior was initially thought of by academics as a defensive coping mechanism. Contrary to this popular belief, political behavior refers to an individual's use of unofficial influence to obtain desired results that cannot be obtained by company-recommended procedures (Gandz & Murray, 1980). Later, political behavior was considered to improve the conditions of others instead of focusing on personal achievements (Kapoutsis et al., 2017).

The impacts of perceived organizational politics have been the subject of a great deal of research, and the vast majority of this work shows that these substances may have unfavorable effects on a variety of crucial affective, cognitive, and behavioral job outcomes. The concept perceived organizational politics linked to lower levels of task and contextual performance (Chang et al., 2009), lower levels of work engagement (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014), decreased job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, as well as increased job distress (Vigoda, 2002), frustration (Chang et al., 2009), job tension (Hochwarter et al., 2010).

2.1. Perceived Organizational Politics and Employee Commitment

Organizational politics refers to a form of employee behavior aimed at maximizing self-interest, either in the short or long term, either at the expense of others or in alignment with their interests (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). This behavior often involves manipulation, defamation, subversive activities, and the misuse of power (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). However, Ferris et al., (1989) argued that the actual occurrence of politics does not matter as individuals' subjective perception of politics within the organization, as it has implications for organizational outcomes. By this perspective, Ferris and Kacmar (1992) defined perceived organizational politics as individuals' evaluations of the extent to which their work environment is characterized by self-serving behaviors exhibited by co-workers and supervisors.

We establish the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment based on the COR theory. The COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire and protect their resources, such as time, energy, and social support (Hobfoll, 2001). When individuals perceive organizational politics, they feel a threat to their existing resources. As a result, individuals may experience strain and attempt to protect their resources, which can ultimately affect their organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

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Miller et al. (2008) found that perceptions of organizational politics negatively impact various employee outcomes, including organizational commitment. Specifically, it reported that high levels of perceived organizational politics are associated with a 35% reduction in organizational commitment among employees. Landells and Albrecht (2019) indicated that organizational politics are linked to increased employee stress and decreased engagement, which indirectly lowers organizational commitment. The study highlighted that organizational politics could lead to a drop in employee commitment by approximately 25-30% due to the increased stress and reduced engagement. In the hospitality industry, Karatepe (2013) found that perceptions of organizational politics mediated by work engagement resulted in lower affective commitment. The findings showed that organizational politics could decrease commitment levels by around 20-25% in high-stress environments such as the hotel industry.

Moreover, perceived organizational politics can have distinct effects on the different components of organizational commitment, namely affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment an individual has to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and is characterized by feelings of loyalty, identification, and a strong desire to remain a part of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). According to the COR theory, individuals strive to acquire and protect resources, including emotional attachment to the organization (organizational commitment). Higher levels of perceived organizational politics can adversely affect affective commitment, leading to a decrease in emotional attachment to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002). When individuals perceive political behaviors within the organization, they may experience feelings of disillusionment, disengagement, and betrayal. These negative emotions can reduce identification and loyalty towards the organization (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Further, normative commitment refers to a sense of obligation and moral duty to remain a part of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Individuals with high levels of normative commitment feel a strong sense of responsibility towards the organization and believe that they should stay with the organization because it is the right thing to do. They may feel a moral obligation due to the benefits they have received from the organization or a sense of loyalty towards their co-workers or superiors (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). When individuals perceive higher levels of politics, it can erode the sense of fairness, trust, and reciprocity that underpins normative commitment. This may reduce feelings of moral obligation to stay with the organization. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Perceived organizational politics is negatively related to employee commitment.

2.2. Self-Efficacy as a Moderator on the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Politics and Employee Commitment

Self-efficacy, as proposed by Bandura (1977), refers to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to execute courses of action required to achieve desired outcomes. In the context of perceived organizational politics and its impact on employee commitment, self-efficacy is likely to moderate the relationship between these variables.

Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to perceive themselves as capable of effectively navigating through challenging situations, such as dealing with organizational politics (Caprara et al., 2009). They possess a strong belief in their ability to manage their resources and overcome obstacles, even in the face of perceived political behaviors within the organization. As a result,

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high self-efficacy individuals may exhibit resilience and proactivity in mitigating the negative effects of perceived organizational politics on their employee commitment.

On the other hand, individuals with low self-efficacy may perceive themselves as less capable of coping with or addressing perceived organizational politics. They may experience heightened feelings of threat to their resources and may struggle to maintain their employee commitment in the face of such challenges.

Therefore, self-efficacy is expected to moderate the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment by influencing individuals' perceptions of their ability to effectively manage the impact of politics on their resources and commitment levels. Research suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking social support, problem-solving, and reframing negative situations in a more positive light (Bandura, 1977). These strategies can buffer the detrimental effects of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment.

In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy may be more prone to adopting maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as avoidance or withdrawal, which can further exacerbate the negative impact of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment.

Therefore, self-efficacy acts as a moderator in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment, influencing individuals' perceptions of their ability to cope with and manage the challenges posed by political behaviors within the organization. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H2: Self-efficacy moderates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment.

03. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection Procedure and Sample

The sample of this research comprises employees from the public sector in Sri Lanka. Since the public sector plays a significant role in the social, political, and economic development of the country and Sri Lanka's public sector workforce is diverse and encompasses various occupations, ranging from administrative staff to healthcare workers, educators, and law enforcement, understanding the employee commitment of public sector employees is crucial.

For data collection, this study employed self-administered questionnaires. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, a total of 211 questionnaires were returned and deemed usable, resulting in a response rate of 52.69%. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling method. By utilizing a larger sample size through a convenient sampling method, the results may better reflect the diversity of responses and behaviors present in the wider group (Emerson, 2021).
Prior permission was obtained from the relevant heads of the departments of public sector organizations to conduct data collection, and the questionnaires were distributed along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Among the 211 participants in this study, 56% were males. Approximately 75% of the respondents reported being married. In terms of age distribution, 49% were in the 30-39 years age group, while 23% fell between the ages of 21 and 29. In terms of educational qualifications, 35% of the respondents held a postgraduate degree, and 31% had completed a professional course. Regarding work experience, 61% had been with their current organization for more than 6 years, while the remaining participants had a tenure of less than 6 years. In terms of job positions, 56% of the respondents were in an executive position, while 32% held managerial positions.

3.2. Measures

This study used the Meyer and Allen (1997) 19-item measures to assess the three components of organizational commitment: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a seven-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The scale assessing affective commitment consisted of a total of six items. A sample item for this scale is "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me." The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.74. The normative commitment scale also consisted of six items:The sample item for this scale is "I would feel guilty if I left my organization now". The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.77. The scale for measuring continuance commitment included a total of seven items. The sample item for this scale was "If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, 1 might consider working elsewhere." The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.74. Perceived organizational politics was measured with a six-item scale developed by Hochwarter et al. (2003). This scale assesses the extent to which individuals perceive various political behaviors or actions within their organizations. A sample item from the scale is: "People spend too much time ingratiating themselves with those who can help them". We used Chen et al. (2001) 8-item New General Self-Efficacy scale to measure self-efficacy. A sample item for self-efficacy is 'I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself'. Cronbach's alpha was 0.717.

04. Results

4.1. Reliability Test

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's alpha value	No. of questions
Perceived organizational politics	0.717	9
Self-efficacy	0.717	8
Employee commitment	0.755	12

Source: Reliability Analysis by SPSS

According to Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values of all variables ranged from 0.717 to 0.755, it fulfills the relevant accepted of reliability. Generally, values should be located between 0.7 and 1.0. If the alpha values lie between that range, it concludes that the variables are reliable.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

According to Table 2, the Pearson correlation value of perceived organizational politics and self-efficacy is 0.651 which implies that there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational politics and self-efficacy. According to the same table, the significant value is 0.000 (i.e. $p<0.01$) hence both variables are significant at 0.01 the relationship between the variables is significant.

Table 2: Two-Tailed Correlation Analysis Table

		Perceived organizational politics	Self-efficacy	Employee commitment
Perceived organizational politics	Pearson correlation	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		
	N	211		
Self-efficacy	Pearson correlation	.651	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	211	211	
Employee commitment	Pearson correlation	-.690	.699	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	211	211	211

Source: Correlation Analysis by SPSS

Similarly, Pearson's correlation value of perceived organizational politics and employee commitment is -0.690 which implies that there is a negative relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. The corresponding significant values are 0.000 (i.e. $p<0.01$) hence both variables are significant at 0.01 indicating that the relationship between the variables is significant. Therefore, it can be statistically said that there is a significant and negative relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment.

4.3. Regression Analysis

Table 3: Regression Analysis (Model Summary Table)

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.750[a]	.563	.558	.1612

a. Predictors: (constant), Perceived organizational politics. Self-efficacy

b. Dependent variable: Employee commitment

Source: Regression Analysis by SPSS

We performed hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test hypotheses. In this work experience a control variable was entered in step 1, predictor variables perceived organizational politics was entered in step 2, and self-efficacy was entered in step 3. The interaction terms for 'perceived organizational politics and self-efficacy' were entered in step 4. The scores for

organizational organizational politics and self-efficacy (Aiken & West 1991). The interaction terms were obtained by multiplying the centered scores (see Table 2). The moderating test was performed in Process Macro 4.0 SPSS. There was a significant interaction found between perceived organizational politics and self-efficacy and employee commitment (r=0.563, p=0.000). It was found that the participants who reported higher self-efficacy had a positive impact on perceived organizational politics. Therefore self-efficacy positively moderates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. This is significant because the significant value 0.000 is less than 0.01($p< 0.01$) that we obtain from the significant F change.

05. Discussion

The current study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature on organizational behavior by highlighting the moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between organizational politics and employee commitment. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis provided strong evidence supporting our hypotheses, particularly regarding interaction effects. Consistent with previous research, our study confirms that perceived organizational politics negatively affects employee commitment. · Organizational politics often creates a work environment characterized by uncertainty, mistrust, and lack of support, which erodes employee morale and loyalty (Vikoda, 2000). Our findings from Step 2 of the regression analysis confirm this, demonstrating that higher levels of organizational politics are associated with lower levels of employee commitment. The significant moderating role of self-efficacy identified in Step 4 of the regression analysis sheds light on an important psychological resource that can buffer the adverse effects of organizational politics. Self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, has been shown to improve individuals' resilience and ability to manage stress (Bandura, 1997). Our results indicate a significant interaction effect ($r = 0.563$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that employees with high self-efficacy are better equipped to maintain commitment levels even in politically charged environments. The interaction effect suggests that self-efficacy plays an important role in how employees perceive and respond to organizational politics. Employees with high self-efficacy may feel better able to view issues of organizational politics as challenges rather than insurmountable obstacles. This perspective is consistent with Aiken and West's (1991) findings, which emphasize the importance of psychological resources in moderating stressor–outcome relationships. The practical implications of these findings are significant for organizational management. By fostering self-efficacy among employees through targeted training and development programs, organizations can mitigate the negative effects of perceived organizational politics on employee commitment. Interventions aimed at improving self-efficacy may include skills training, mentoring programs, and supportive leadership practices that strengthen employees' confidence in their abilities. In addition, promoting an open and fair organizational culture may further reduce negative perceptions associated with organizational politics. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of self-efficacy as a moderating factor in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. Our findings suggest that enhancing self-efficacy can serve as a valuable strategy for organizations to maintain high levels of employee commitment in the face of political challenges. Future research should examine additional moderating and mediating variables that may further elucidate these complex relationships. Organizations should continuously develop and implement employee empowerment strategies.

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5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Recognizing self-efficacy as a moderator in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment enriches current research. This highlights the importance of examining how individual variables can moderate the influence of organizational factors on employee decisions. Organizations can increase employee commitment by implementing multifaceted strategies. First, prioritizing employee training and development efforts aimed at improving self-efficacy through programs that focus on self-reliance, problem-solving, and resilience can mitigate the harmful effects of perceived organizational politics. Second, leadership strategies should train managers to effectively recognize and address perceived organizational politics, fostering an open and supportive work environment, especially beneficial for employees with high self-efficacy. Third, human resource policies should prioritize fairness, equity, and merit, include clear guidelines for decision-making, reduce perceptions of politics, and strengthen employee commitment. These integrated approaches align personal development with organizational practices and foster a positive workplace environment that promotes employee well-being and commitment.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on organizational behavior by providing empirical evidence on the moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. This broadens understanding of how individual differences such as self-efficacy may influence the impact of organizational politics on employee outcomes. This underscores the importance of considering psychological evidence in organizational behavior research. This study supports and extends Aiken and West's (1991) correlational model, demonstrating that self-efficacy can moderate the relationship between perceived organizational politics and employee commitment. This highlights the complex interplay between individual and organizational factors in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. In addition, the findings contribute to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) suggesting that self-efficacy is an important factor that can buffer the negative effects of workplace stressors such as organizational politics. It adds to the knowledge of how self-efficacy works in different organizational contexts and its importance in improving employee resilience and commitment. Future research should build on these findings by examining other potential moderating and mediating variables that may further clarify the relationships between perceived organizational politics, self-efficacy, and employee commitment. Examining these dynamics in different cultural and organizational settings can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact in different contexts.

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