

Employee motivation, engagement, and sustainable best practices in the community extension program of higher educational institutions

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Abstract

This study investigated employees' motivation, engagement, and sustainable best practices in community extension programs across higher educational institutions. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved non-teaching and teaching employees from selected HEIs as participants. Data were gathered using a validated instrument with excellent internal consistency, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), Scheffe post hoc tests, and correlation analyses were employed to analyze the data. Findings showed that the workforce was predominantly female and early-career, with a balanced proportion of teaching and non-teaching personnel. Results revealed high levels of motivation across intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic domains, with altruistic motivation emerging as the strongest factor. Engagement was also high across awareness, participation, and skills development, indicating strong involvement in the community extension activities and meaningful application of academic knowledge. Sustainable best practices were rated strongly, particularly in sustainability and monitoring and evaluation, highlighting environmental stewardship, participatory governance, and systematic evaluation processes. Significant differences were observed based on years in service, with employees serving 11-15 years showing greater motivation and engagement. Correlation analyses revealed highly significant positive relationships between motivation, engagement, and sustainable practices, suggesting that motivated and engaged employees substantially contribute to effective and long-lasting community extension programs. Overall, the study highlights the crucial role of intrinsic values, institutional support, and capacity building in enhancing community extension initiatives and promoting sustainable development through higher education.

Keywords: community extension, engagement, HEIs, motivation, sustainable practices, sustainability

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1. Introduction

Community extension is a core function of higher education institutions (HEIs), providing a structured avenue for translating academic knowledge into socially responsive action. It bridges universities and communities by transferring expertise, research outputs, and innovative solutions to address real-world challenges. Beyond compliance, community extension reflects the commitment of HEIs to national development and inclusive growth through initiatives such as livelihood training, health promotion, environmental programs, disaster preparedness, and capacity-building activities. In the Philippine context, community extension is part of the trifocal mandate of instruction, research, and extension and is institutionalized through CHED policies, including Memorandum Order No. 52, series of 2016, which emphasizes improving the quality of life of Filipinos (Peñaredondo-Untong, 2020).

Community extension enhances the social relevance of HEIs by positioning them as catalysts for change and community development. It transforms academic learning into meaningful service, fosters experiential learning and civic responsibility, and strengthens partnerships with local communities, government units, and organizations. As noted by Salazar (2020), integrating community-responsive initiatives with academic functions strengthens institutional identity, builds public trust, and aligns local efforts with national and global development goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through education, livelihood, health, environmental, and empowerment programs, community extension contributes to several SDGs, particularly those related to poverty reduction, health, quality education, decent work, sustainable communities, and partnerships.

The effectiveness and sustainability of community extension programs depend largely on internal organizational factors, particularly employee motivation, engagement, and the adoption of sustainable best practices. Faculty and administrative personnel serve as the backbone of extension initiatives, and their motivation influences program quality, continuity, and impact. Motivated and engaged employees demonstrate dedication, creativity, and initiative, often balancing extension work alongside teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Engagement fosters a sense of shared purpose and active involvement, strengthening collaboration, accountability, and community partnerships (Burkhart-Kriesel et al., 2019; Atilas, 2019; Edmunds, 2020). Sustainable best practices ensure that community extension efforts extend beyond short-term activities. These practices include structured planning, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, documentation, resource mobilization, and community empowerment approaches that promote long-term impact and self-reliance (Garay et al., 2021). However, many HEIs continue to face challenges such as limited funding, heavy workloads, insufficient staffing, lack of incentives, and weak planning and evaluation systems, which hinder sustained engagement and lead to fragmented initiatives.

Despite the growing body of research on community extension outcomes, limited attention has been given to the internal human factors that influence program sustainability. There is a need for integrated studies that examine how employee motivation, engagement, and sustainable practices collectively shape the effectiveness and longevity of extension programs. Addressing this gap is essential for HEIs to strengthen workforce support systems, institutionalize sustainable practices, and develop resilient community extension programs aligned with long-term development goals.

2. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive–correlational quantitative research design to determine the relationships among employees’ motivation, engagement, and sustainable best practices in community extension programs. The respondents consisted of 601 faculty members and administrative staff from selected higher education institutions,

selected through stratified random sampling based on position and years of service to ensure proportional representation across groups. Data were collected using an adapted and validated standardized questionnaire administered online via Microsoft Forms. The instrument comprised four sections covering respondents' demographic profile, employee motivation, employee engagement, and sustainable best practices, with all items measured using a 4-point Likert scale. A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted, and reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded values ranging from 0.935 to 0.987, indicating excellent internal consistency. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance and institutional approvals were secured, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and weighted mean, as well as inferential statistics such as correlation analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Scheffé post hoc tests.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of Study Participants

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	199	33.1
Female	402	66.9
Years in Service		
5 years	244	40.6
6 – 10 years	169	28.1
11 – 15 years	121	20.1
16 – 20 years and above	67	11.1
Position		
Faculty (Teaching)	312	51.9
Administrator and Staff (Non-Teaching)	289	48.1

The data show that most respondents were female (66.9%), while males comprised 33.1%, indicating a female-dominated workforce a trend commonly observed in academic institutions, particularly in community-oriented roles (Rara et al., 2020). In terms of tenure, the largest group had five years or less of service (40.6%), suggesting a relatively young and dynamic workforce, while only 11.1% had 16 years or more, indicating limited seniority. Faculty members slightly outnumbered administrative and staff personnel (51.9% vs. 48.1%), reflecting balanced representation between teaching and non-teaching employees.

These findings suggest that the institution's community extension programs benefit from a predominantly female and early-career workforce, which may foster innovation and adaptability in outreach initiatives (Hernandez et al., 2021). This profile aligns with broader higher education trends where women comprise a substantial portion of community engagement participants (Dulnuan, 2020); Raton-Hibanada et al., 2025). However, the high proportion of early-career staff underscores the need for strong mentorship and professional development to support sustained engagement. While some studies report more balanced or even male-dominant distributions in certain administrative roles (Astillero et al., 2020) persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to limit women's advancement in academia, particularly in leadership and specific disciplines (Raton-Hibanada et al., 2025). Thus, beyond representation, comprehensive and intersectional policies remain essential to address systemic gender inequities in higher education institutions.

Table 2

Summary of Employees' Motivation in Community Extension Programs

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Intrinsic Factors	3.71	Strongly Agree	2
Extrinsic Motivation	3.61	Strongly Agree	3
Altruistic Motivation	3.72	Strongly Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.68	Strongly Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

The results indicate that employees are highly motivated to participate in community extension programs, with a composite mean of 3.68 interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. All three motivational dimensions altruistic, intrinsic,

and extrinsic were rated highly, reflecting the multifaceted nature of employee engagement. Altruistic motivation emerged as the strongest driver, showing that employees are primarily inspired by a genuine desire to help others and contribute to community well-being beyond institutional requirements. Intrinsic motivation also plays a significant role, as employees derive personal fulfillment, purpose, and satisfaction from extension activities, reinforcing their values and sense of social responsibility. Although extrinsic motivation ranked lowest, it remained strongly agreed upon, indicating that recognition, career development, and institutional support continue to reinforce participation. These findings align with previous studies (Buabeng et al., 2020); Lee & Kim, 2024); Homberg et.al, 2016), which emphasize the dominance of altruistic and intrinsic motivations in prosocial roles, supported by extrinsic incentives. Overall, the results suggest that employee engagement in community extension is primarily value-driven, strengthened by personal fulfillment and sustained through organizational support, fostering a culture of volunteerism and lasting social impact in higher education institutions.

Table 3*Summary of Employees' Engagement in Community Extension Programs*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Awareness	3.64	Strongly Agree	1.5
Participation	3.60	Strongly Agree	3
Skills Development	3.64	Strongly Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	3.63	Strongly Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 shows that employees' engagement in community extension programs in higher education institutions is very high, with an overall mean of 3.63 (Strongly Agree). All indicators awareness, participation, and skills development were rated strongly agree. Awareness and skills development ranked highest (WM = 3.64), indicating that employees are well-informed about extension programs and perceive them as effective avenues for enhancing personal and professional competencies. Participation, while slightly lower (WM = 3.60), still reflects strong involvement and commitment among respondents.

Overall, the findings suggest that employees possess high levels of understanding, active involvement, and continuous skill enhancement through community extension activities, supporting Sak's (2006) multidimensional engagement model. The slightly lower participation rating may reflect practical constraints such as time or logistics, but the results nonetheless highlight a strong culture of engagement within higher education institutions. Such engagement is essential in the Philippine context, where HEIs are mandated to conduct extension services, and it significantly contributes to institutional effectiveness, sustainable community development, and national welfare (Calimpos et al., 2023); Alshamrani et al., 2023).

Table 4*Summary of Sustainable Best Practices in Community Extension Programs*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Implementation Strategies	3.54	Strongly Agree	3
Sustainability	3.59	Strongly Agree	1.5
Monitoring and Evaluation	3.59	Strongly Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	3.57	Strongly Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

The results indicate that respondents strongly agree on the importance of the three core components of effective community extension work: implementation strategies, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation. Among these, Sustainability and Monitoring and Evaluation ranked highest (WM = 3.59, Rank 1.5), reflecting respondents' emphasis on long-term impact through community empowerment, strong partnerships, accountability, and continuous program improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are particularly valued for tracking progress, assessing effectiveness, and ensuring responsiveness to community needs. Implementation Strategies also received a strong agreement rating (WM = 3.54, Rank 3), highlighting the importance of clear planning, stakeholder coordination, and adaptive approaches in delivering successful programs. Although ranked slightly lower, it remains a critical foundation for effective extension initiatives Overall, the composite mean of 3.57 (Strongly

Agree) reflects a holistic and positive view of community extension work, underscoring the need for well-implemented, sustainable, and rigorously evaluated programs to achieve meaningful and lasting community impact.

Table 5

Differences in Employees' Motivation in Community Extension Programs When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Intrinsic Factors	1.708	0.192	Not Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	1.883	0.170	Not Significant
Altruistic Motivation	0.131	0.717	Not Significant
Years in Service			
Intrinsic Factors	4.881	0.002	Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	3.989	0.008	Significant
Altruistic Motivation	5.339	0.001	Significant
Position			
Intrinsic Factors	1.536	0.216	Not Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	0.013	0.909	Not Significant
Altruistic Motivation	0.859	0.354	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Employees' motivation did not differ significantly by sex or position, indicating similar intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation across these groups. In contrast, years of service significantly affected motivation ($p = 0.002, 0.008, 0.0001$), with those serving 11–15 years showing higher levels across all dimensions. Longer tenure appears to enhance personal fulfilment, recognition of institutional support, and altruistic engagement, aligning with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation-Hygiene,). This sustained motivation highlights the value of experience in fostering commitment, social responsibility, and effective participation in community extension programs. While early-career employees may be more externally motivated, seasoned staff rely more on intrinsic and altruistic factors, emphasizing the importance of long-term engagement and professional growth for maximizing institutional impact.

Table 6

Differences in Employees' Engagement When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Awareness	1.579	0.209	Not Significant
Participation	0.327	0.567	Not Significant
Skills Development	5.892	0.016	Significant
Years in Service			
Awareness	6.204	0.000	Significant
Participation	4.910	0.002	Significant
Skills Development	2.261	0.080	Not Significant
Position			
Awareness	2.894	0.089	Not Significant
Participation	1.180	0.278	Not Significant
Skills Development	1.145	0.285	Not Significant

Table 8 shows employees' engagement in the community extension program by profile. Skills development differed by sex ($F = 5.892, p = 0.016$), with males rating higher, while awareness and participation showed no gender differences. Years in service significantly affected awareness ($F = 6.204, p = 0.000$) and participation ($F = 4.910, p = 0.002$), with longer-serving employees more engaged, but skills development was not affected by tenure. Position had no significant effect on any factor, suggesting equitable access to opportunities. These results align with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), indicating that experience and gender-related exposure shape engagement. Mentorship, structured onboarding, and inclusive training can enhance participation and address observed gender disparities, promoting effective and equitable community extension programs.

Table 9*Differences in Sustainable Best Practices When Grouped According to Profile Variables*

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Implementation Strategies	1.053	0.305	Not Significant
Sustainability	1.570	0.211	Not Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	0.863	0.353	Not Significant
Years in Service			
Implementation Strategies	5.103	0.002	Significant
Sustainability	2.569	0.053	Not Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	1.716	0.163	Not Significant
Position			
Implementation Strategies	5.839	0.016	Significant
Sustainability	0.811	0.368	Not Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	13.304	0.000	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Analysis of community extension practices shows that gender does not significantly affect implementation, sustainability, or monitoring and evaluation, indicating equitable engagement across male and female employees. In contrast, years of service significantly influence implementation strategies ($F = 5.103$, $p = 0.002$), with employees serving 11–15 years demonstrating greater competence in planning and executing programs, likely due to accumulated experience and institutional knowledge. Position also affects implementation ($p = 0.016$) and monitoring and evaluation ($p = 0.000$), with administrators and staff performing higher, reflecting their leadership and oversight responsibilities. Sustainability ($F = 2.569$, $p = 0.053$) and monitoring ($F = 1.716$, $p = 0.163$) do not vary significantly with tenure, suggesting these practices rely on standard procedures or team-based approaches. Sustainability is also consistent across positions ($F = 0.811$, $p = 0.368$), showing that program continuity is a shared responsibility. These findings highlight that experience and institutional role are critical for effective planning and evaluation, while gender does not create differences. Leveraging experienced staff and leadership, alongside targeted professional development and mentoring, can strengthen program implementation and assessment, ensuring consistent sustainability. Future research could examine leadership styles, organizational commitment, and attitudes toward sustainability to further optimize community extension practices in higher education.

Table 10*Relationship Between Employees' Motivation and Engagement in Community Extension Programs*

Intrinsic Motivation	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Awareness	.557**	0.000	Highly Significant
Participation	.660**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills Development	.710**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation			
Awareness	.564**	0.000	Highly Significant
Participation	.655**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills Development	.634**	0.000	Highly Significant
Altruistic Motivation			
Awareness	.560**	0.000	Highly Significant
Participation	.613**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills Development	.677**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Motivation—*intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic*—significantly influences employees' engagement and effectiveness in community extension activities. Intrinsic motivation is strongly linked to awareness, participation, and skills development, with the strongest effect on skills, showing that personal fulfillment drives engagement. Extrinsic motivation, through rewards and recognition, and altruistic motivation, through the desire to help others, similarly enhance involvement and competency. These findings align with established theories (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and prior research on workplace motivation and communication, highlighting the importance of institutional support, recognition, and fostering a service-oriented culture. Overall, addressing all three motivational dimensions maximizes employee participation, skill development, and the sustainability of extension programs.

Table 11*Relationship Between Employees' Motivation and Sustainable Best Practices in Community Extension Programs*

Intrinsic Motivation	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Implementation Strategies	.571**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.631**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.556**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation			
Implementation Strategies	.643**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.621**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.606**	0.000	Highly Significant
Altruistic Motivation			
Implementation Strategies	.523**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.593**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.526**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Employee motivation—intrinsic, extrinsic, or altruistic—is strongly linked to the effectiveness of community extension programs in implementation, sustainability, and monitoring. Intrinsic motivation drives personal commitment, improving planning, execution, and evaluation ($r = 0.571$ – 0.631 , $p = 0.000$). Extrinsic motivation, through rewards and recognition, enhances engagement and long-term program success ($r = 0.606$ – 0.643 , $p = 0.000$). Altruistic motivation fosters socially responsible action, ensuring programs are thoughtfully implemented and maintained ($r = 0.523$ – 0.593 , $p = 0.000$). Together, these forms of motivation highlight the importance of cultivating a supportive environment that integrates personal fulfillment, external incentives, and altruistic values to sustain effective community extension initiatives.

Table 12*Relationship Between Employees' Engagement in Community Extension Program and Sustainable Best Practices in Community Extension Programs*

Awareness	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Implementation Strategies	.572**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.583**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.544**	0.000	Highly Significant
Participation			
Implementation Strategies	.705**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.693**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.692**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills Development			
Implementation Strategies	.699**	0.000	Highly Significant
Sustainability	.725**	0.000	Highly Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	.679**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

The correlation results show that awareness, participation, and skills development are key to effective community extension programs, particularly in implementation, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation. Awareness correlates positively with implementation strategies ($r = 0.572$), sustainability ($r = 0.583$), and monitoring and evaluation ($r = 0.544$), suggesting that well-informed employees plan and execute programs efficiently. Participation shows stronger correlations implementation strategies ($r = 0.705$), sustainability ($r = 0.693$), and monitoring and evaluation ($r = 0.692$) indicating that active engagement fosters collaboration, accountability, and practical experience essential for program success. Skills development has the highest correlation with sustainability ($r = 0.725$) and similarly strong links with implementation strategies ($r = 0.699$) and monitoring ($r = 0.679$), highlighting that trained employees are better equipped to meet program demands and ensure long-term outcomes.

These findings align with research showing that effective human resource practices enhance engagement, performance, and sustainability, including organizational, community, and environmental outcomes (Alherimi et al., 2024). Awareness provides knowledge, participation ensures commitment, and skills development strengthens capacity. Institutions aiming to improve extension programs should foster informed, engaged, and skilled

employees to achieve higher program quality, better community outcomes, and robust evaluation.

Table 13

Program Plan to Enhance Employees' Motivation, Engagement, and Sustainable Best Practices in Community Extension Programs

KRA	Objective	Key Activities	KPI	Persons Involved	Timeline
Employee Motivation	Strengthen participation through altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation	- <i>Altruistic</i> : Hearts in Action, Give Back, Give Hope volunteer drives- <i>Intrinsic</i> : EMPOWERCONNECT, Impact Journals, Neighborhood Meet & Greet- <i>Extrinsic</i> : Hands that Serve, Hearts that Shine awards, performance-based recognition, Collaborate & Conquer competitions	20% ↑ employee participation; 90% strongly motivated; 100% activities recognized; ≥3 altruistic programs/year	Community Extension Director (A), Coordinators (R), HR (A&R), Deans & Dept. Heads (C)	Quarterly/Annual
Employee Engagement	Enhance awareness, skills, and participation	- <i>Awareness</i> : Awareness in Action communications & updates, leadership briefings, online calendar- <i>Skills</i> : SkillForward workshops, mentoring, skill-application projects- <i>Participation</i> : Hands-On Heroes, Impact Through Expertise, Buddy for a Cause	95% awareness; 10% quarterly ↑ volunteers; ≥4 trainings/year; 90% participation logs submitted	Community Extension Dept. (A&R), Deans (A), Training Heads (A&R), Comm. & Marketing (R), Partners (C)	Monthly/Quarterly
Sustainable Best Practices	Improve program implementation, monitoring, and sustainability	- <i>Monitoring</i> : Data for Decisions, Community Voices, Impact Tracker, feedback integration- <i>Sustainability</i> : Empower, Govern, Sustain; Clear Accounts, Stronger Communities; Voices in Action; Skill Sharpeners; Action Lab; Project Pulse	2 needs assessments/year; 3 new partnerships/year; 100% extension plans submitted; 90% community satisfaction; 100% compliance & use of monitoring tools	Community Extension Committee (A&R), LGUs/NGOs (C), Project Leaders (R&C), Finance (A&R), M&E Committee (A&R), Program Implementers (R), Research & Development (A&R), Community Reps (C)	Semi-Annual/Annual

The EMPOWER program is designed based on findings showing strong links between employee motivation, engagement, and sustainable practices in community extension. Motivation—altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic—is addressed through structured volunteer opportunities (Hearts in Action, Give Back Give Hope), engagement programs (EMPOWERCONNECT, Impact Journals), and formal recognition systems (Hands that Serve, Hearts that Shine, inter-department competitions). These initiatives aim for a 20% increase in participation, 90% strong motivation, and formal recognition of all activities. Engagement is promoted via Awareness in Action communications, SkillForward workshops, and participation programs like Hands-On Heroes and Buddy for a Cause. Expected outcomes include 95% awareness, 10% quarterly increase in volunteers, four professional development trainings per year, and high participation logging. Sustainable best practices focus on monitoring, evaluation, and community-led governance through tools like Data for Decisions, Community Voices, Impact Tracker, and programs for financial transparency and skill-based community development. Semi-annual needs

assessments, partnership generation, and project evaluation ensure responsiveness and impact. Overall, the plan operationalizes key findings through a quarterly cycle of motivation, engagement, and sustainability initiatives, aligning employees, administration, and community partners toward effective, lasting community extension programs.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study reveals that the institution benefits from a young, predominantly female workforce whose high intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation drives meaningful community engagement. Employees demonstrate strong awareness, active participation, and skill development, while sustainable best practices are widely recognized, fostering long-term program stability and accountability. Differences in motivation and engagement are mainly linked to years of service, with minimal variation by sex or position, indicating a broadly shared commitment to community extension. The positive correlations among motivation, engagement, and sustainability underscore the critical role of human factors in effective program implementation. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive training and development program to enhance competencies, sustain motivation, and strengthen sustainable practices, ensuring that community extension initiatives remain impactful, inclusive, and aligned with long-term development goals.

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