



Applying Sexual Education to Elementary School Children in the Digital Native Era

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Volume 10 Nomor 2
October 2023: 223-240
DOI: 10.30997/dt.v10i2.9779

Article History

Submission: 03-07-2023

Revised: 06-10-2023

Accepted: 25-10-2023

Published: 31-10-2023

Keywords:

sex education, elementary school, implementation, digital native

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Abstract: In this digital native era, numerous cases of harassment, assault, and violence against women, including sexual harassment, have occurred within society. It is disheartening to note that not only adults but also children are vulnerable to becoming victims, resulting in negative impacts on them both physically and psychologically. These circumstances form the basis for researchers to investigate the implementation of sexual education for elementary school children. This study aims to: 1) understand the extent of teachers' and parents' understanding of sexual education, and 2) describe the implementation of sexual education at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. A qualitative research method was employed, utilizing a phenomenological approach and a qualitative descriptive case study design. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed triangulation of sources and techniques. Data analysis involved three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data were collected through interviews and documentation related to sexual education in elementary schools. The findings of the research indicate that both parents and teachers have a strong understanding of the importance of sexual education for children in the digital native era, considering the prevalence of such cases in society. This understanding serves as a foundation for anticipating and preventing negative outcomes. The implementation of sexual education at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta is commendable, as evidenced by classroom learning activities, supportive initiatives, adequate facilities and infrastructure, and collaboration with parents. These indicators demonstrate that the school is prepared and concerned about sexual education.



INTRODUCTION

The elementary school period is a highly effective phase for internalizing values in children. They are like mirrors, adept at imitating movements, lifestyles, and even mentalities of those around them. Children are always curious, and they enjoy asking a series of questions to anyone they believe can provide answers. They want to know about various topics they hear in their environment, including those related to sexuality.

However, recent reports in various media have revealed a dark reality: young children have become victims of abuse and sexual violence. What is even more alarming is that the perpetrators of these abuses are not strangers to the children but people close to them in their lives, such as neighbors, uncles, household helpers, and others (Wulandari et al., 2019). These cases of sexual abuse primarily involve harassment, rape, and violence against female victims, causing both physical and psychological harm to the children.

One of the contributing factors to the occurrence of violence and sexual deviations is the lack of sexual education for children and society. According to

(Nurfadillah, 2020), many parents and communities still consider sexual education a taboo and unsuitable topic for young children. However, the legal framework in this country, through the Indonesian Law No. 35 of 2014 Amendment to Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, Article 26 paragraph (1) point a, has affirmed that parents have the obligation to educate their children.

Indonesia, as a country with a majority of internet users, has the potential to disseminate sexual education through digital platforms. According to data from APJII, the number of internet users in Indonesia increased to around 210 million in 2022 (Dewi, 2022). However, the use of the internet also presents new challenges as children are exposed to modern technology from an early age, such as computers, smartphones, laptops, and video games, making them known as the digital native generation.

The significant changes in technology have redefined the current reality. These changes have influenced the planning approach to pave the way for new paths in education, resulting in a remarkable impact on the teaching and

learning environment today. The new Generation Z students are more technologically equipped compared to the older Generation X (teachers) in general, making teaching, mentoring, and leadership more challenging (Cilliers, 2017).

This digital native generation has unique characteristics, including dependence on the internet for various aspects of life. However, media exposure that indirectly presents messages related to sexuality can influence negative thoughts in children (Insiyah & Hidayat, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to provide proper and comprehensive sexual education, not only focusing on the physical aspects but also encompassing other aspects related to sexuality.

The current generation can be classified based on generational typologies. The Traditional Generation values authority, Baby Boomers prioritize their careers, Generation X focuses on work-life balance, Generation Y grew up in the technology era, and Generation Z are digital natives closely connected to the internet (Cilliers, 2017). Digital natives have characteristics such as quickly accessing information, engaging in multiple activities

simultaneously, enjoying visual media, learning in groups, learning when opportunities arise, appreciating feedback in the form of rewards, and making decisions relevant to their needs.

The digital native generation, currently undergoing primary and secondary education, possesses specific characteristics. They enjoy quickly obtaining information from various sources, are capable of multitasking, prefer visual media over text, enjoy learning in groups, seize learning opportunities, appreciate feedback in the form of rewards, and make decisions relevant to their needs (Vivianti, 2018)

Sexual education in the digital native N knowledge about sexuality. The role of teachers includes providing knowledge, guiding, facilitating information search, and motivating students. Parents and teachers must collaborate to provide proper sexual education to the digital native generation.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the personality and culture of individuals, aiming to humanize the younger generation and develop their potential (Al Asadullah & Nurhalin, 2021). He Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003

on the National Education System states that education is a conscious and planned effort to actively develop learners in various aspects of life (Article 1, paragraph 1). In this context, sex education is an endeavor to provide information about reproductive organs and all matters related to sexuality (Abduh & Wulandari, 2016).

According to Reich in (Thin Zaw et al., 2021) "*Sex education is described as education about human genital anatomy, reproduction, sexual relations, reproductive health, romantic relationships, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, contraception, family planning, body image, sexual orientation...*". In other words, sex education is a broad field that encompasses understanding of the functions of male and female reproductive organs, maintaining hygiene, development of genitalia during puberty, as well as issues such as menstruation, wet dreams, marriage, pregnancy, and others. Sex education is essential in providing understanding, awareness, and information to learners so that they can avoid negative behaviors related to sexuality.

The purpose of sex education is to change the societal perception that

considers it a taboo topic, especially when discussing it with children. Additionally, its objective involves shifting attitudes toward sex education, which is believed to potentially trigger early sexual behavior (Arianti & Cahyono, 2021). Through sex education, it is hoped that individuals can develop a healthier and wiser mindset when dealing with sexual issues.

Sexual education is actually much broader than what is imagined by the general public. In this context, parental openness in discussing sexuality is considered more important than treating the topic as taboo. In an observation conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta, it was found that a lower-grade female student pulled down her undergarments outside the toilet during a lesson. Since it was quiet, no one reprimanded her. This finding raises suspicions of a deficiency in sexual education. This has sparked the researcher's interest in conducting a study on the implementation of sexual education for students at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta in the digital native era.

This research aims to provide an understanding of imparting sexual

education to elementary school children and examining how sexual education is implemented at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The qualitative approach aims to understand the phenomena experienced by subjects, such as motivations, behaviors, and activities, through descriptive narratives using naturalistic methods (Moleong, 2018). The research focuses on the implementation of sexual education at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. The research subjects include the school principal, teachers, and parents of students at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. The research was conducted over a period of six months, from January 2023 to June 2023.

The data for this research consist of descriptions obtained from interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation regarding the implementation of sexual education for elementary school children at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta. The research sources are the subjects from whom the data can be gathered. In

this case, the data required for the research is obtained from two sources: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected directly from the research subjects through interviews and observations, while secondary data is obtained from existing documents and records related to the topic of the study.

The data collection techniques employed in this research include observation, interviews, and documentation of supporting data. The observational results are obtained from observing the behavioral activities of students after performing ablution, seeking permission to use the restroom, and the teacher's approach in delivering sexual education in various situations. The interviews conducted with the school authorities and parents aim to gather data regarding their understanding and implementation of sexual education. Additional data collected include journals, books, and documentary evidence such as photographs that support the research. To ensure data validity, the researcher employs data triangulation techniques, including source triangulation and method triangulation (Hadi, 2017).

Data analysis is a crucial step in research activities that greatly influences the accuracy and validity of research findings (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). To facilitate the understanding of the acquired data, researchers analyze the data by selecting and sorting relevant information to draw conclusions. Data analysis in qualitative research follows three stages according to the Mile and Huberman theory. The first stage is data reduction, where the researcher selects relevant information and eliminates unnecessary details from observations, interviews, and documentation. The second stage is data display, where the data is presented in narrative form with the addition of diagrams, tables, and other visual aids. The final stage is drawing conclusions, where the researcher evaluates and tests the validity of the data to arrive at conclusions that align with the research focus. Initial conclusions are tentative and may change unless supported by strong evidence in subsequent data collection stages. The final conclusion can be trusted if it is supported by valid and consistent evidence when the researcher returns to the field for further data collection.

RESULT & DICUSSION

Result

In conducting the analysis, the informants in this research include the school principal, three homeroom teachers, the UKS (School Health Unit) officer, and two parents of students from SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. Qualitative interviews were conducted based on the informants' perspectives on implementing sexual education for elementary school children. The interview results led to the identification of two topics: understanding of sexual education and the implementation of sexual education at the elementary school level.

The interview results demonstrate that having an understanding of sexual education is crucial for both parents and teachers. With this understanding, it is expected that teaching becomes more effective and easily accepted by children. Moreover, the implementation of sexual education at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta has been commendable, as several activities were found to support sexual education. These activities include providing education about puberty, delivering age-appropriate information

about sexuality, and promoting self-care by providing sanitary napkins and underwear in each female restroom.

Discussion

Understanding The Provision Of Sexual Education In The Digital Native Era For Elementary School Children.

In the current digital native era, it is essential for elementary school children to receive sexual education that aligns with technological advancements and their influence. The importance of sexual education in the digital native era requires understanding related to: awareness of technological developments, protection from online risks, strengthening parent-child relationships, and fostering a healthy understanding of sexuality.

The digital native era brings rapid technological advancements, and elementary school children are highly exposed to various information and content on the internet. Therefore, sexual education becomes essential to help them understand information accurately and critically, as well as develop critical thinking skills in facing sexual issues in the digital native world (Tut et al., 2021). Elementary school

children are vulnerable to online risks such as sexual exploitation and inappropriate content. Sexual education in the digital native era can equip them with knowledge about privacy, personal boundaries, and how to protect themselves while using technology (Ulfah, 2020).

Parents play a crucial role in providing sexual education in the digital era. They need to understand the influence of technology on children and learn together with them about safe and responsible internet usage. Sexual education can serve as a bridge of communication between parents and children, enabling them to discuss sensitive topics with better understanding (Arianti & Cahyono, 2021).

Sexual education in the digital native era should teach children about healthy sexual norms, consent, respecting privacy, and gender equality. They need to understand the difference between inappropriate sexual content and beneficial information (Suryadi et al., 2020). The importance of sexual education in the digital era requires an understanding of the following:

Firstly, awareness of technological advancements is crucial. In the digital native era, rapid technological progress exposes elementary school children to various information and content on the internet. It is essential to recognize that children are growing up in a digitalized age, and both teachers and parents need to understand this reality. Therefore, sexual education becomes important to help children understand information accurately and critically, as well as develop critical thinking skills to navigate sexual issues in the digital world (Tut et al., 2021).

Secondly, protection from online risks. Sexual education in the digital native era can equip children with knowledge about privacy, personal boundaries, and how to protect themselves while using technology (Ulfah, 2020). Elementary school children are highly vulnerable to online risks such as sexual exploitation and exposure to sexual content. Consequently, teachers may not be able to continuously supervise students in their gadget usage. However, teachers can collaborate with parents to monitor their children's online activities at home.

Thirdly, strengthening the relationship with children. Teachers and parents play crucial roles in providing sexual education to the digital native generation. They need to understand the influence of technology on children and learn together with them about safe and responsible internet usage. Sexual education can serve as a bridge of communication between parents and children, enabling them to discuss sensitive topics with better understanding (Arianti & Cahyono, 2021). By fostering open communication and trust, teachers and parents can create a supportive environment for children to seek guidance and navigate the complexities of sexual education in the digital era.

Fourthly, building a healthy understanding of sexuality. Sexual education in the digital native era should teach children about healthy sexual norms, consent, respecting privacy, and gender equality. Both teachers and parents must be able to lead by example and serve as positive role models for their children. They need to understand the difference between inappropriate sexual content and beneficial information (Suryadi et

al., 2020). By promoting healthy attitudes and behaviors towards sexuality, educators can help children develop a positive and responsible approach to their own sexuality and relationships. Through open and supportive discussions, children can better grasp the importance of mutual respect, boundaries, and consent in their interactions with others.

Based on the understanding of sexual education for children in the digital era, the Principal of SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta stated that sexual education for elementary school children is an educational process that provides knowledge, understanding, and basic skills to children aged 6-12 years about the body, gender, interpersonal relationships, and the changes that occur during puberty. The goal is to provide a healthy understanding of the body, respect for privacy, build healthy communication skills, and prepare them to face changes during adolescence. According to the 2nd and 3rd-grade teachers, they stated that sexual education is an educational effort that aims to understand the functions and roles of sexual organs as important factors in maintaining their

health and functionality. Sexual education in elementary school is provided to children aged 6-12 years. The topics taught at this level include simple understanding of characteristics of the body and gender. At a higher level, they learn about puberty, its characteristics, the differences between boys and girls, and how to cope with these changes. The goal is to provide a healthy and positive understanding of the body, sexuality, and children's personal development.

According to some opinions of female parents, AK's opinion states that parents need to be aware that an essential part of a child's basic needs is sexual education, and providing sexual education that can protect children from sexual abuse, harassment, and exploitation. The second opinion from NW states that parents must understand the importance of open communication with their children, creating an environment where children feel comfortable to ask questions, share, and discuss topics related to sexuality. This is key in helping them understand relevant information correctly and make healthy decisions. Based on the statements given, several

understandings held by parents of students are found, including: 1). Sexual education is a basic need, 2). Sexual abuse can provide protection from sexual crimes, 3). Open communication is crucial in providing sexual education, 4). Parents play a primary role as educators.

From the interview, it can be concluded that sexual education for elementary school children is an educational process aimed at providing knowledge, understanding, and basic skills about the body, gender, interpersonal relationships, and the changes during puberty. The goal is to build a healthy understanding of the body, respect for privacy, develop healthy communication skills, and prepare children to face changes during adolescence. With this sexual education, collaboration between schools and parents is expected, and children can have a positive and healthy understanding of their bodies, sexuality, and personal development.

Indeed, the understanding held by both teachers and parents of students highlights the paramount importance of imparting sexual education to children as a crucial foundation for their growth

and development. This imperative stems from the necessity to proactively address and mitigate the prevalence of adverse incidents within society. A well-founded comprehension of the significance of sexual education is anticipated to bolster its effectiveness and awaken public consciousness regarding its utmost relevance and significance.

The Implementation Of Sexual Education At SD Muhammadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta

SD Muhammadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta is a pioneering school dedicated to providing quality and innovative education to its students. As a pioneering school, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta exhibits several distinctive features that set it apart from other schools. Firstly, the school actively introduces and implements creative and progressive learning approaches. The teachers strive to create an inspirational and engaging learning environment for the students. Additionally, the school emphasizes technology-based learning by utilizing digital resources and interactive media. They endeavor to prepare the students to face the advancements of technology

in this modern era, enabling them to become intelligent and skilled individuals who can make wise use of technology.

The school is also proactive in developing inclusive and diverse educational programs. Teachers promote diversity and respect differences within the school environment. They also pay special attention to fostering students' character development and moral values, thereby cultivating a generation of individuals with integrity and responsibility.

The implementation of sexual education in elementary schools must be sensitive to the cultural, religious, and belief values present in the community. The primary goal is to provide age-appropriate, healthy, and positive understanding of the body and sexual development to children while respecting existing values and norms. Below are some common aspects in its implementation, including curriculum and materials, teaching methods, safety and confidentiality, parental involvement, handling sensitive questions and issues, as well as collaborating with healthcare professionals.

The curriculum used in this school is known as a pioneering curriculum, which emphasizes on developing students' competencies, applying innovative teaching methods, utilizing educational technology, and actively involving all stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the community. This pioneering curriculum fosters student-centered learning, where students are placed as active and independent learners. Learning takes place through projects, group work, experiments, simulations, and practical applications, enabling students to develop deep skills, knowledge, and understanding.

The sexual education materials that align with the pioneering curriculum in this school are usually delivered progressively according to each grade level. Below is the related sexual education content within the pioneering curriculum:

Table 1 Sexual Education Content Based on Grade Levels

Grade levels	Materials
Grade 1	Understanding the body and vital organs, recognizing the differences between males and females, and respecting personal and others bodily privacy.
Grade 2	Recognizing and understanding the basic

Grade 3	functions of the reproductive organs and the physical changes that occur in the body during growth and development. Identifying the physical differences between males and females, understanding gender roles in society, and grasping the concept of personal and environmental hygiene. Understanding human reproductive development, explaining the importance of maintaining reproductive health, and learning how to protect oneself from bodily abuse
Grade 4	Comprehending the physical and emotional changes during puberty, understanding menstruation in females and its care, and appreciating the significance of reproductive health and hygiene.
Grade 5	Understanding the concept of family, marriage, and the role of the family in society, explaining about pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care, and becoming familiar with the concept of domestic violence and ways to address or report it.

In sexual education at the elementary level, the approach is usually interactive and involves participatory activities. Teachers use engaging methods that suit the developmental stage of the children, such as storytelling, role-playing,

discussions, small group activities, or visual media like pictures and educational videos. To implement these approaches, complete and adequate facilities and infrastructure are necessary, including LCD projectors, laptops, comfortable desks and chairs, and clean classrooms. Based on interviews with teachers at the school, they tend to use visual media and incorporate learning through play as they find it effective for children. This is consistent with the findings of (Aminah et al., 2022) research, stating that the play-based learning method creates a fun learning environment because play is a child's world, making them more enthusiastic and interested without feeling forced to participate in the lessons. As a result, the learning objectives are achieved, and the student abilities develop more easily.

In its implementation, it is crucial for schools to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of students during sexual education. Personal information of students should be handled with utmost care, and students must feel safe and comfortable to ask questions and share their thoughts. Respecting and safeguarding the privacy of students is

essential to create a supportive and trustworthy learning environment in sexual education. This approach encourages open communication and enables students to engage actively in the learning process without fear of judgment or embarrassment. (Prahardika, 2017). Safety and confidentiality are crucial aspects in the implementation of sexual education in schools. Firstly, schools must prioritize the privacy of students. Personal information, such as private questions asked by students or their responses to sensitive topics, should be handled with great care. Teachers and educators should respect students' privacy and ensure that the information shared is not disclosed without permission or without considering its sensitivity. Secondly, a safe and comfortable environment should be created for students during sexual education. Students should feel that they can ask questions about sexuality without fear of being mocked or judged by their peers or teachers. An inclusive and supportive classroom will facilitate open and constructive dialogue between students and teachers regarding sexual issues. By creating

such an environment, students will feel more confident to participate and engage in learning. This positive atmosphere encourages active involvement, fosters understanding, and enhances the overall learning experience for students.

By prioritizing safety and confidentiality in sexual education, schools can create a safe, open, and supportive environment for students. This will help enhance the effectiveness of learning and ensure that every student can acquire essential knowledge about sexuality with confidence and without concerns about their privacy. A respectful and nurturing atmosphere in the classroom allows students to freely express themselves, seek information, and engage in discussions, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of sexual education.

The involvement of parents in their children's sexual education is crucial to provide the necessary guidance, understanding, and support in developing a healthy mindset and positive attitudes towards sexuality (Zazak Soraya, 2022). Forms of parental

involvement in providing sexual education include fostering open communication, providing accurate and age-appropriate information, teaching values and ethics, and supporting school-led education efforts. By actively participating in their children's sexual education, parents can play a vital role in promoting a safe and informed environment for their children to explore and understand the complexities of sexuality in a responsible and respectful manner.

Parental involvement in sexual education goes beyond merely providing information, it also involves creating a supportive environment where children feel comfortable opening up and asking about topics they may encounter during their growth and development. Teachers at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta also hope that when a student faces problems and feels hesitant to inform their homeroom teacher, they will be able to confide in their parents. This kind of open communication between parents, teachers, and students fosters a sense of trust and understanding, ensuring that children receive the necessary support

and guidance as they navigate through the complexities of sexual education.

Teachers need to be prepared to handle sensitive questions and issues that may arise during the learning process. They should possess adequate knowledge, a supportive attitude, and the ability to respond with sensitivity and wisdom. Given that many teachers and parents still find discussions about sexuality to be taboo or may feel unsure about how to explain things in a way that is easily understood by children, it is essential to provide them with proper training and resources to facilitate open and age-appropriate discussions about sexual education. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment, where teachers and parents can address these topics with confidence and clarity, is vital for promoting healthy and informed sexual education for children.

Collaboration with healthcare professionals in sexual education involves the cooperation between parents, schools, and healthcare providers to provide accurate information and advice, as well as support in delivering sexual education to elementary school children. Healthcare professionals, such as

nurses, doctors, or reproductive health counselors, possess specialized knowledge and experience in this field, enabling them to offer appropriate guidance tailored to the child's development. Examples of collaboration with healthcare professionals in elementary schools include conducting educational talks, individual consultations, providing materials and resources, and conducting training for teachers and parents. This collaboration ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to sexual education, addressing the specific needs and concerns of children at this stage of their development.

The activities that support the implementation of sexual education at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta include: 1). Classroom learning: Teachers convey the physical differences between males and females, 2). Emphasizing privacy: Teachers consistently remind students to maintain their privacy, 3). Discussing family dynamics: Teachers discuss various types of families and the importance of maintaining healthy relationships with family members.

This involves teaching values such as respect for others, active listening, and caring for one another, 4). Recognizing appropriate and inappropriate touch: Children are taught to recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, 5). Personal hygiene: Children are taught the significance of maintaining personal hygiene, including bathing, handwashing, and keeping certain body areas clean.

The second activity is conducted by midwifery students from ITS PKU Muhammadiyah, where they provide reproductive health education for around 120 5th-grade students (PKU, 2022). Other education sessions include prevention counseling for diphtheria, stunting, dental and oral health, as well as anti-bullying campaigns by the Polresta Surakarta.

The third aspect includes the facilities provided by the school, which are as follows: 1). Separate toilets for females and males, each equipped with mirrors to promote cleanliness, 2). In the female toilets, there are display cases containing underwear and sanitary pads, 3). Well-equipped classrooms with comfortable chairs, whiteboards,

and projectors to facilitate active student participation in the learning process, 4). A school health unit (UKS) room, facilitated by a doctor or healthcare professional.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the research at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta is that both the school and parents have shown significant understanding and concern regarding the importance of sexual education in the digital native era. They recognize that sexual education is vital for the future development of children, as it can help prevent potential cases of abuse or exploitation. With a comprehensive understanding of sexual education, unwanted situations can be anticipated and mitigated. The implementation of sexual education in the school has been commendable and well-prepared. Teachers are skilled and creative, and the school collaborates with healthcare professionals to optimize the delivery of sexual education for elementary school children. Overall, the research demonstrates a proactive and responsible approach to promoting a safe and informed environment for

students to learn about sexual education.

In the implementation of sexual education in the digital native era, it is crucial to ensure that the approach used respects privacy, provides understanding of consent, teaches safe technology use, and fosters healthy communication skills. By doing so, elementary school children can acquire a positive understanding, avoid risks, and be prepared to face the challenges of sexuality in the digital native era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We express our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed supervising lecturer from the elementary school teacher education program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, as well as to SD Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta, and all individuals who have played a significant role and contributed to the development of this article. Your valuable support and guidance have been instrumental in the successful completion of this work. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and cooperation.

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