

# Organizational Image and its Relation with Leader-member Exchange and Organizational Justice in Schools

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## Abstract

This study aims to reveal the relationship between organizational image and leader-member exchange (school principal-teacher) and organizational justice in schools. 213 teachers working in secondary schools in Hatay, who were selected via the disproportionate cluster sampling method, constitute the sample of this research. The research data were gathered by using the “Organizational Image Scale”, the “Leader-Member Exchange Scale” and the “Organizational Justice Scale”. The Structural Equation Modeling Analysis and descriptive analysis were implemented in the research. Measurement modelling has shown that variables are statistically positively and significantly correlated to each other. A structural model has been suggested in conformity with the theoretical framework. According to the outcomes of structural equation analysis, organizational image positively affects the leader-member exchange. Teachers’ perceived organizational image positively affects perceived organizational justice with the partial mediating effect of leader-member exchange. The findings of this study were discussed and some recommendations were given.

**Key Words:** Organizational image, leader-member exchange, organizational justice, teacher, school

## Introduction

It is known that employees believing that they work in a hostile work environment are not proud of working in such an environment as they lose their job satisfaction, work motivation, organizational commitment, and psychological contract and intend to leave the organization (Paşamehmetoğlu & Yeloğlu, 2014). If employees have a high perceived organizational justice, their positive attitudes and behaviors as key factors for organizations are enhanced (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). On the contrary, if employees perceive injustice in the practices in work places, they have negative feelings and attitudes towards their colleagues, managers, and the organization as a whole. This disturbs the positive work environment and well-being within the organization (Eren, 2015). It is essential to reveal the variables related to perceived organizational justice and to determine the effects of these variables on perceived organizational justice. In this context, the image of schools as institutions transferring values and shaping characters is believed to have an impact on the relationships between administrators and teachers as well as teachers’ perceived justice.

## Organizational Image

Image refers to the thoughts of individuals about an object, person or organization (Genç, 2012). Organizational image refers to the beliefs about how members of the organization and other

individuals view the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) define organizational image as the entire beliefs that the members of the organization and groups outside the organization have towards the organization. Birkigt, Stadler, and Funck (1995) emphasize that organizational image is related to how the organization reflects its organizational identity, which expresses itself, to the masses. In other words, the image of the organization is the social reflection of the organizational identity that defines the picture of the organization (Şenturan, 2014).

The organizational image that reflects how the organization is perceived and viewed (Şenturan, 2014) should not be considered separately from the stakeholders of the organization. Indeed, stakeholders can affect or be affected by the success of the institution (Freeman, 1984). Corporate image, subsequently, becomes a stakeholder's overall perception of the organization, at least partially based on its ability to meet or provide for his/her particular needs and interests (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997). The allocation of time and resources to fulfil the wishes of the stakeholders that may affect the direction and legitimacy of the organization contributes to the strengthening of perceived organizational image among the stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). If corporate image is positive, employees' motivation (Altun, 2019; Büyükgöze, 2012), empathy, performance, and organizational commitment is enhanced (Altun, 2019). Therefore, a strong and positive perceived image emerging over the years can have an impact on the organizational behaviors management of managers and employees. Smidts, Pruyn and van Riel (2001) report that members may feel proud of being part of a well-respected company, as it strengthens their feelings of self-worth.

### **Leader-Member Exchange**

It is widely agreed that leadership is a relationship that is jointly produced by leaders and followers (Howell ve Shamir, 2005). The leader-member exchange, a modern leadership theory, focuses on joint relationships between the leader or the manager and employees (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura, 1999). Leaders develop different quality relationships with their employees (Hooper ve Martin, 2008). In other words, this theory suggests that the bilateral relationships between subordinates and superiors are different and the leader does not treat all subordinates in the same way (Graen and Schimann, 1978). As a result of these bilateral relations between the leader and the members, two separate groups of members are formed. Members having quality interaction with the leader are called in-group members (in-groups) while members having a weak and more formal relationship with the leader are called out-group members (out-groups) (Liden & Graen, 1980; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The leader-member exchange theory encourages leaders to put aside the distinction between the two groups and endeavour to make all members a part of the in-group by building trust and respect (Northouse, 2013). In-groups are more compatible in the work environment and have higher productivity, job satisfaction, and work motivation (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007).

The leader-member exchange has four dimensions: affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect (Liden and Maslyn, 1998). The affect dimension contains friendship and affection between the leader and the member (Wilhelm, Herd ve Steiner, 1993). The contribution dimension refers to the leader's support for its members outside of their job descriptions. The actions of the leader and the member to defend each other's behaviour are explained by the loyalty dimension. The professional respect dimension includes the prestige of each individual within and outside the organization (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Emotions are crucial in the leader-member exchange. Leaders make an endeavour to understand employees' feelings and thoughts and use empathy to build trusting relationships (Squires, 2010). Leaders or managers are more easily accepted and respected by them. It is obvious that the quality of interaction with the manager shapes perceived organizational justice, which has a serious impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Polat (2009) emphasizes that the main role in building a sense of justice in schools belongs to the school principal. Previous studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gürboyoğlu, 2009; Tziner, Felea, & Vasiliu, 2015; Zeb, Abdullah, Othayman, &

Ali, 2019) show that the leader-member exchange and perceived organizational justice are positively associated. Wayne, Shore, Bommer, and Tetrick (2002), on the other hand, reveal in their studies that fair managers can create positive social interactions. It can be argued that the leader-member exchange and organizational justice variables have a two-way relationship.

### **Organizational Justice**

Organizational justice is the reflection of perceived justice on the work environment, in other words, perceived justice regarding the work environment (Greenberg, 1990). It consists of three components: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Greenberg, 1990). Distributive justice refers to the perceptions of employees about whether the resources or outcomes are fairly distributed according to their performance (Moorman, 1991). Procedural justice refers to the perceptions of employees about the correctness of procedures used by the organization while making a decision (Scandura, 1999). Interactional justice, on the other hand, is concerned with how the information is communicated to the subordinates by the managers and whether the subordinates treat managers and colleagues in a courteous manner with respect and dignity (Eren, 2015). Perceived justice of employees about the fairness of procedures in the organization is closely associated with the impression that their managers take care of them and respect their rights (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). The fairness of the school principal in distributing rewards and punishments, applying rules to all members equally, being selfless when communicating and interacting with school members, and acting in accordance with the rules of courtesy enhances the sense of justice in the school (Polat, 2009). One of the main duties of leaders is to positively shape the approaches of human resources towards the leader and the organization (Dilek, 2005).

### **Research Objective**

The focus of this study is to reveal the relationships between the organizational image, which is thought to strengthen perceived justice by contributing to meet the psychosocial needs of the employees, and the leader-member exchange and perceived organizational justice. The literature on management presents no detailed study on how the organizational image of schools affects the social interaction and perceived organizational justice between principals and teachers. Also, in this study, the role of leader-member exchange in explaining perceived organizational justice of organizational image has been revealed. It has been deemed important to overcome these deficiencies in the literature and to present a different perspective on the effect mechanisms of organizational image.

This study examines organizational image, the leader-member exchange, and organizational justice in tandem. In addition to expanding the theoretical knowledge on these variables, a model has been proposed for the relationship between these variables, with support from the relevant literature. The following hypotheses have been proposed and subjected to testing.

H1: Organizational image positively affects the leader-member exchange.

H2: The leader-member exchange positively affects perceived organizational justice.

H3: Perceived organizational image positively affects perceived organizational justice.

### **Method**

#### **Research Model**

Teachers' views on research variables were collected through scales. In this study, the relationship between perceived organizational image, the leader-member exchange, and perceived organizational justice is revealed. Therefore, this study was designed in the relational survey model (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012) in which the relationship between variables and if any, its direction and degree, are determined.

## Population and Sample

Teachers working in secondary schools in the province of Hatay constitute the population of this study. 43 secondary schools were selected by disproportionate cluster sampling, and scales were distributed to the teachers in these schools. It was seen that 213 of the returned forms were valid and thus, the valid forms were evaluated.

## Data Collection Tools and Procedure

There are three different five-point Likert-type scales in the forms distributed to teachers: organizational image, the leader-member exchange, and organizational justice scales.

The "Organizational Image Scale" developed by Gioia and Thomas (1996) and adapted into Turkish by Şahin (2014) was used to measure perceived organizational image. The scale is one-dimensional and consists of nine items. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was computed as .96.

The "Leader-Member Exchange Scale", which is used to measure the level of school principal-teacher interaction, was developed by Liden and Maslyn (1998) and adapted into Turkish by Öztürk (2015). It consists of four dimensions: affect, contribution, loyalty, and professional respect, and three items in all dimensions. The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient was found to be .86 in the affect dimension, .86 in the contribution dimension, .92 in the loyalty dimension, .95 in the professional respect dimension, and .95 in the total scale.

To measure perceived organizational justice, the "Organizational Justice Scale" developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993) and adapted into Turkish by Şahin (2014) was used. This scale contains three dimensions including distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice and 20 items. In this scale, the distributive justice dimension was measured with five items, the procedural justice dimension with six items, and the interactional justice dimension with nine items. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .96 while it was .78 in the distributive justice dimension, .94 in the procedural justice dimension, and .95 in the interactional justice dimension.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to the scales used in the study. Thus, the compatibility of the factor structures of the scales with the data of this study was obtained. In Table 1 below, fit values produced as a result of CFA for each scale are given.

<i>Scales</i>	<i><math>\chi^2</math></i>	<i>sd</i>	<i><math>\chi^2/sd</math></i>	<i>p</i>	<i>IFI</i>	<i>TLI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Organizational Image	10.03	5	2.00	.00	.99	.98	.99	.06
Leader-Member Exchange	20.48	11	1.86	.03	.99	.98	.99	.06
Organizational Justice	120.97	62	1.95	.00	.97	.96	.97	.06

Table 1. The goodness of Fit Values for the Scales

Table 1 reveals that the ratio of  $\chi^2/sd$  ranges between 1 and 2 for the leader-member exchange and organizational justice variables and thus indicates the goodness of fit. The relevant value is 2 for the organizational image variable and indicates an acceptable fit. The *RMSEA* values for the variables of the study are above 0.05 and thus indicate acceptable fit values (Meydan ve Şeşen, 2015). *IFI*, *CFI*, and *TLI* values are also above 0.95, indicating goodness of fit (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2011).

## Data Collection

Ethical approval was obtained for the study from the ethics committee. Before the data collection tools were applied, the teachers were informed. Volunteer participation was taken as a basis in the study.

## Analyses

The extreme values of the data were cleared. Then, it was determined that the data showed normal distribution and there was no multicollinearity problem between variables (tolerance > .20, VIF < 10). Validity and reliability analyzes were implemented for each scale used for obtaining data in the study. After the scales were determined to be valid and reliable, the model to be tested was created. The sub-models of the study were tested by IBM AMOS. Indeed, Şimşek (2007: 19) emphasizes that the scales used in the measurement of the variables in the proposed model should be valid and reliable before conducting a path analysis to latent variables.

## Findings

### Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics and correlation values for the variables are presented in Table 2.

<i>Variables</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>Ss.</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
1. Image	3.27	.88	.06	1		
2. LMX	3.53	.78	.05	.49**	1	
3. Justice	3.65	.87	.06	.50**	.75**	1

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

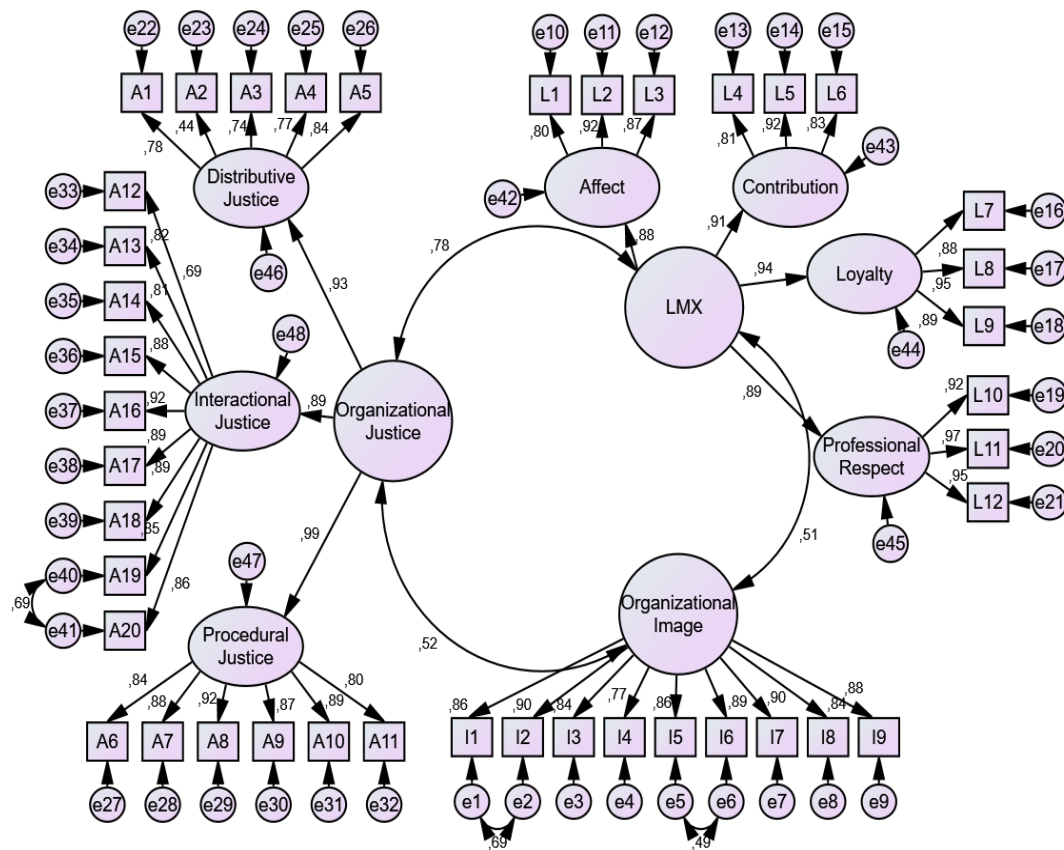
Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation values

Notes: Image: Organizational Image, LMX: The Leader-Member exchange, Justice: Organizational Justice

The mean scores in Table 2 reveal that perceived organizational image is moderate (3: Partially agree) while the leader-member exchange and perceived organizational justice are partially high (4: Agree). The correlation coefficients indicate a moderate-level, positive, and significant relationship between perceived organizational image and the leader-member exchange ( $r = .49$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and perceived organizational justice ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The leader-member exchange and organizational justice variables are also positively and significantly related ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## Measurement model

The measurement model for the relationship between latent variables in this study is presented in Figure 1.

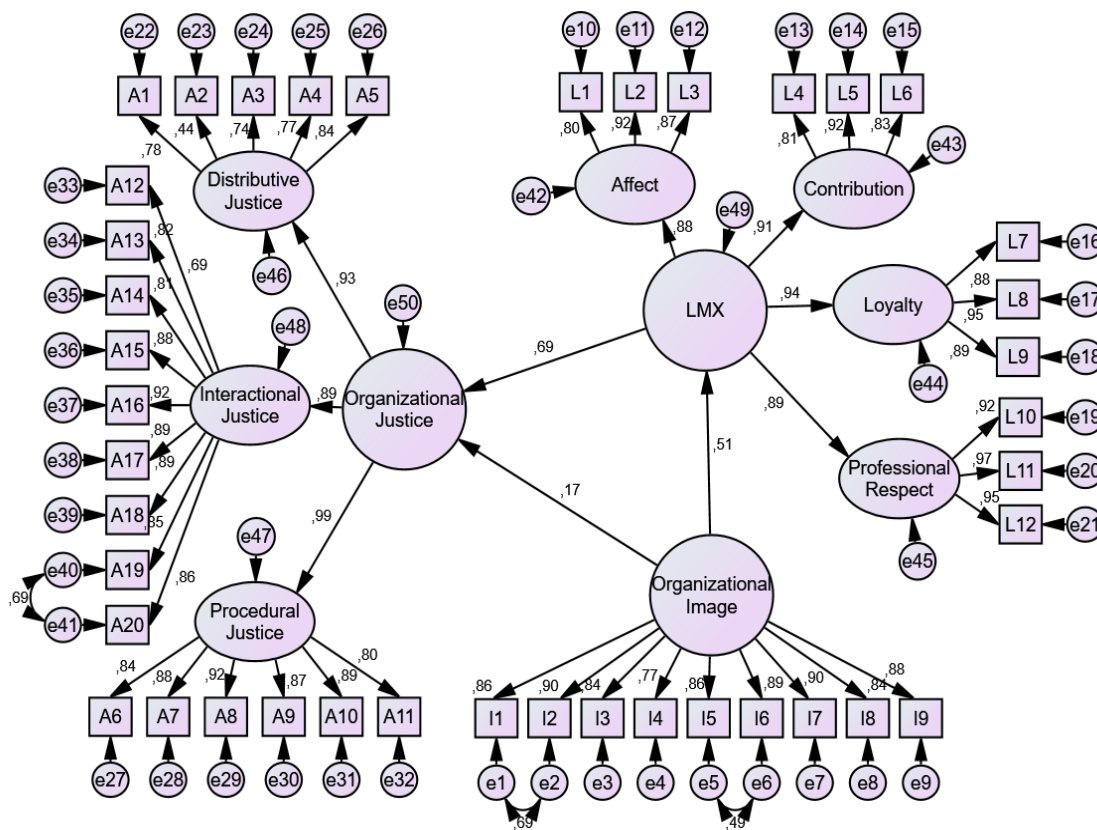


**Figure1. Measurement Model**

The measurement model in Figure 1 reveals that error covariance was added between items I1 and I2, A19 and A20, and I5 and I6, and the errors of these items were associated with each other. The measurement model reveals that the scales used in the measurement of research variables have an acceptable level of fit with the data ( $\chi^2 = 1570.04$ ,  $sd = 766$ ,  $\chi^2 / sd = 2.05$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $IFI = .92$ ,  $TLI = .91$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ). The fit values reveal that the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio is greater than 2 and the RMSEA value is greater than .05. IFI, TLI, and CFI values are above .90. Therefore, these fit values are at an acceptable level.

### Structural Model

In line with the tested hypotheses, one-way paths were drawn between variables, and a structural model was presented. As a result of the path analysis, it was seen that there were no statistically insignificant path coefficients. Figure 2 presents the structural model that produces the best fit values.



**Figure 2. Structural Model**

The structural equation model in Figure 2 reveals that perceived organizational image positive affects teachers' leader-member exchange levels ( $\beta = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and perceived organizational justice ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). 1 unit of perceived organizational image contributes an increase of .51 units to the leader-member exchange and an increase of .17 units to perceived organizational justice. The leader-member exchange positively affects perceived organizational justice ( $\beta = .69$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, perceived organizational image has a positive effect on perceived organizational justice with the partial mediating effect of the leader-member exchange ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). 1 unit of perceived organizational image increase indirectly provides an increase of .35 units for perceived organizational justice.

## Discussion

Teachers' practices and behaviors are affected if they believe their schools are positively viewed by outsiders. Hatch and Majken (1997) argue that organizational image, which is the reflection of organizational identity, is shaped by culture. In previous studies (Öztürk, 2015; Yener Aydın, 2017), it was found that organizational culture is positively associated with the leader-member exchange. This implies that perceived image shaped by culture is positively related to the school principal-teacher interaction. The images of schools increase the quality of the interaction between the school principal and the teacher. Perry and Mankin (2007) emphasize that organizational image varies depending on how managers approach employees. Organizational image and the behaviors of the leader towards the employees are associated with one another. The positive perceptions about the character, actions, symbols, and signs of the organization over time create organizational image. This positive perceived organizational image is appreciated by teachers. Therefore, it is clear that such consequences strengthen the interaction between teachers and their school principals.

The high level of leader-member exchange increases the responsibilities and contributions of the employees within the organization. It is also known that high-quality exchange creates mutual trust, support, and loyalty between the managers and subordinates (Asgart, Silong, Ahmad, & Abu Sama, 2008). The leader's support contributes to building trust in organizations. One of the outcomes of trust is organizational justice (Polat, 2007). In other words, perceived organizational justice of individuals with high levels of trust is enhanced (Polat, 2009). Also İşcan ve Sayın (2010) have found that organizational justice is affined to trust. Therefore, the quality interaction between the school principal and the teacher activates psychological states such as trust and commitment. Teachers with such feelings perceive that their school principals behave fairly. This study reveals that the interaction between school principal and teacher also increases teachers' perceived justice. Previous studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gürboyoğlu, 2009; Tziner et al., 2015; Zeb et al., 2019) support that the leader-member exchange increases perceived organizational justice. In leader-member exchange theory, the quality of the employees is important for the leader to group his/her employees as an in-group or out-group (Northouse, 2013). Therefore, this theory emphasizes that the leader approaches his/her subordinates fairly. Employees perceive that their leaders treat them fairly and their perceived justice regarding the functioning and practices in their organizations is strengthened.

Ertürk (2018) reveals that organizational identity and organizational justice variables are moderately and positively related. It is known that organizational image is related to how the organization reflects its own organizational identity to the masses (Birkigt et al., 1995). In this context, it should be noted that perceived organizational justice, which has a significant relationship with organizational identity, may also be related to organizational image. It was also found that organizational image increases perceived organizational justice both directly and indirectly through leader-member exchange. To maintain the positive image perception of the school, the principal should show more sensitivity while approaching school members. In this context, Saygın (2016) emphasized that it is important for the school principal to make their subordinates feel better about their own situation. If school principals behave sensitively and delicately in their actions and procedures, this is likely to strengthen their interaction with teachers and thus, teachers are likely to believe that they are treated fairly (Demir, 2021). For, in such an environment, teachers believe that their school principals are able to make the most appropriate decisions about the institution and the members of the school.

## Conclusion

In line with these findings above, it is suggested that:

- It is important for the school principal to successfully reflect the strengths of the school to the external environment in terms of creating a positive organizational image.
- The attitudes and behaviors of school principals and teachers who perceive a positive external image are also positively affected.
- School principals and teachers pay attention to cooperation and solidarity in their interactions with each other. Perceived sincerity and goodwill perception are mutually reinforced.
- This study is important original research in educational organizations because of its contributions to the field as it sheds light on the relationship between organizational image and organizational justice, presents the relationships between research variables in a holistic approach, and creates a wider framework for the explanation of concepts.

This study has some limitations. First of all, it is necessary to reveal the relationship between perceived organizational image and organizational justice in different studies. Based on



the findings of this study, one may notice that organizational image affects perceived organizational justice more indirectly. Therefore, it is clear that a mediating variable plays a role between organizational image and organizational justice variables. For example, a key variable such as organizational trust can be added as mediating variable. Another limitation of this study is that it was designed only in a quantitative method. A natural consequence of this situation is that it is not possible to examine the relationship between variables in depth. Yet another limitation is that previous studies showed that there is a two-way effect between leader-member exchange and organizational justice. Scholars can focus on determining which of these two variables has more power over the other. The reasons for this can be examined in the designed research.

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