

The Influence of Participation on The Empowerment of Participants in Sustainable Food Program During The Pandemic Era

Amiruddin Saleh^{1,*}, Nur Hanifah²

¹ Department of Communication and Community Development Science, IPB University, Jl. Kamper, Babakan, Kec. Dramaga, Kab. Bogor, West Java, 116801, Indonesia

² Center of Human Resource Development Community Research and Empowerment Institution, Jl. Raya Pajajaran, Kota Bogor, West Java, 16127, Indonesia

*E-mail correspondent: amiruddin_ipb@yahoo.co.id

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ABSTRACT

The imposition of large-scale social restrictions has an impact on decreasing participation in empowerment. On the other hand, participation is one of the principles of empowerment. The application of this principle will consequently make the community empowered. Through these stages of empowerment, the community can get out of its powerless condition. If empowerment is realized, the program deserves to be called an empowerment program. This study aims to analyze the influence of program participation on empowerment. The study used the census method on 35 respondents and was supported by qualitative data. Based on the research results, program participation in the planning stage has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power with. Program participation in the decision-making stage has a positive influence on power over. Program participation in the implementation phase has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power with. Monitoring and evaluation have a positive influence on power. Program participation in the outcome utilization stage has a positive influence on power within and power to.

Keywords: empowerment, pandemic, participation

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia uses the term empowerment to refer to jargon in the implementation of development. The government's solemnity in implementing empowerment in the development process is evidenced by the establishment of a Community and Village Empowerment Service as an institution that oversees empowerment-based development (Noor, 2011). In line with this, the Regional Government has included empowerment in work programs, one of which is the Thematic Village Program. Tangerang City is one area that has implemented the Thematic Village Program in 13 subdistricts. The Thematic Village is one of the efforts of the Tangerang City Government to overcome the problem of meeting basic needs by improving the quality of the environment and basic residential infrastructure. To achieve this, the program focuses on involving community participation and utilizing the potential and economy of the local community (Bappeda Kota Tangerang, 2021). Therefore, community participation plays an important role that must be considered in empowerment.

The pandemic situation can threaten the sustainability of empowerment activities, especially the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) rules, which have an impact on reducing community participation in empowerment activities. Based on the results of Witono's (2020), family participation in the Proud Kencana Program was only 67.81 percent in March and 47.83 percent in April. This figure is much lower than the participation rate from January to February, which reached 80.89 percent. Therefore, participation in the implementation of empowerment must be sought.

Participation refers to the community's involvement in development, including activities from the planning stage to program implementation. However, activities in planning and decision-making processes often occur only linearly. This phenomenon occurs in empowerment activities in Argorejo Village, Sedayu-Bantul. Deliberations and discussions were not conducted during the planning process. This important process is only the authority of the group leader, so members only accept decisions from the leader (Indardi, 2016). The problem of participation should receive in-depth attention because it is an essential component of the empowerment process. Including producing an analysis of the level of participation of members of SPR Muara Tigo Manunggal in activities (Rofi & Saleh, 2020). The emergence of community participation certainly needs to be sought so that the empowerment process can be run effectively (Hamid, 2018; Sasmita et al., 2022).

Participation studies are important for efforts to generate empowerment and self-reliance. Participation and empowerment are strategies with great potential to strive for economic, social, and cultural transformation, which will create people-centered development (Kuswanti et al., 2020b; Latif et al., 2019; Setyowati, 2019) Participation is a principle of empowerment. The subsequent application of this principle will empower the community (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2013; Saleh et al., 2022). Furthermore, Saleh et al. (2023) mentioned that an empowerment approach using development communication is needed to be able to create shared meaning that can result in community participation related to the success of the development process. Suitable empowerment activities can be created in stages according to applicable regulations. Participation can be measured in the following stages: planning, implementation, evaluation, and utilization of the results (Marharani, 2017). The community process in going through these stages will then push the community out of a state of helplessness so that the community can gradually be freed from the shackles of the problems they face. This means that empowerment is only possible if participation is implemented. If empowerment is realized, the program should be called an empowerment program (Firmansyah, 2012; Kuswanti et al., 2020a) or a development program (Saleh et al., 2020; Yuniarti et al., 2020). According to Suharto (2010), the level of empowerment is measured from power within, power to, power over, and power with. Empowerment consists of several stages. Participation refers to the involvement of the community in each stage of development, including planning activities for program implementation (Hamid, 2018; Sawitri et al., 2020). The willingness of participants to participate at each stage of the activity will help them have the power or ability to escape powerlessness. Based on Hilde & Purwatiningsih (2019) and (Purwanto & Widijatmoko, 2022), the high participation of participants at each stage of the program gives them the ability to access information and technology and to make decisions for themselves. This proves that program participation has an impact on empowerment. Concerning this statement, the results of Guswita et al. (2020) show that the empowerment of farmer group members has an assessment in a high category of farmer participation factor that contributes 70.5 percent.

Kampoeng Anggur is one of the thematic villages located in Cibodas District, Tangerang City. Through a group approach, several residents of RW 03 Kampoeng Anggur became self-supporting and actively participated in an empowerment program, namely the Sustainable Food Program. In 2018, the Kampoeng Anggur community formed a food cultivation group. Cultivation activities consisted of cultivating fish, grapes, vegetables, and bees. This program is intended for the people of Kampoeng Anggur who do not have regular working hours, so that they can use their free time to cultivate. Initially, cultivation products were only used for personal consumption by program participants. Cultivation groups continue to develop until cultivation products can be traded. This motivated program participants to remain active in cultivation activities during the pandemic. Therefore, it is important to examine the influence of program participation on the empowerment of participants in the Sustainable Food Program.

METHODS

This study uses a mixed-method approach using the census method. A census is used when the subject of the research has a small population. This method has also been used in research to make generalizations with minor errors (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Sugiyono, 2017). The study population was active participants in the Sustainable Food program in Kampoeng Anggur, Uwung Jaya Village, Cibodas District, Tangerang City, Banten. This research is one of the thematic villages that succeeded in carrying out empowerment programs in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The census method was carried out using a questionnaire administered to all participants of the Sustainable Food Program, totaling 35 members. A quantitative approach was used to measure a phenomenon processed through statistical tests (Azari & Rashed, 2021; Charli et al., 2022). Through qualitative data, the phenomenon under study can be thoroughly and completely described (Azari & Rashed, 2021; Firliandoko et al., 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022). Qualitative data help researchers provide a deeper understanding of the influence of these variables. Independent variables were measured by the level of respondents' participation in the Sustainable Food program in the pandemic era by analyzing the level of involvement (aspects of planning, decisions, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, and utilizing results). The dependent variable is empowerment, a novelty that describes the success of the Sustainable Food program, where the variable empowerment is measured from the following dimensions: power from within, power for, power over, and power with. The indicators of the two variables were arranged in a questionnaire (quantitative primary data). Prior to data collection, the questionnaires were used to determine the level of validity and reliability.

The results of the validity test with the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient showed that the questionnaire was declared valid program participation variables, as many as 18 items, and seven other statements were declared invalid. Among the seven invalid questionnaire statements, five were deleted and two were replaced. In the empowerment section, as many as 13 statements on the questionnaire were declared valid, whereas two other statements were declared invalid. All invalid statements in the empowerment section were replaced. The results of Cronbach's alpha reliability test showed that the questionnaire for participation in the program was perfect (reliability coefficient of 0.903). In the empowerment section questionnaire, a reliability coefficient value of 0.727 (high category) was obtained so that all sections in the questionnaire were suitable for use as research instruments. The results of the questionnaires were then supported by qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews. Secondary data in this research were obtained from literature studies, which involved review journals, reports, and government data relating to program participation and empowerment.

Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistical analysis, including frequency values, percentages, scores, and score averages, and inferential statistical analysis using simple linear regression and assumption tests. All the data presented were then analyzed to support the quantitative data. This stage is called data verification (Biggs et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of *Kampoeng Anggur*

Kampoeng Anggur is one of the thematic villages located in RW 003, Uwung Jaya Village. There are 819 heads of Families (KK) residing in Kampoeng Anggur. The total population of Kampoeng Anggur

in 2020 was 2, 284, consisting of 1,159 males and 1,125 females. Based on their education level, most Kampoeng Anggur residents had completed a 12-year compulsory education program or completed high school. There were 851 Kampoeng Anggur residents who had completed their education up to high school. Based on the type of work, most of the Kampoeng Anggur population works as private employees. This is because of the large number of industries established in Uwung Jaya Village. Based on data from the Tangerang City Communication and Information Office (2020), 26 large industries operate in Uwung Jaya Village, or 72.2% of the total industries operating in the Cibodas District. Large industries can absorb as many as 20 to 100 workers, while small industries can only absorb as many as 5 to 19 workers.

History of Kampoeng Anggur

In 2017, the Tangerang City Government launched a program oriented toward the formation of a thematic village. This program is contained in the RPJMD of Tangerang City 2019–2023 and is referred to as “Kampung Kita” (Bastian, 2020). Through thematic villages, the government tries to build a better and more organized environment (Tangerang, 2020). This program was motivated by the phenomenon of slum areas in several urban villages that have not been handled optimally. According to this phenomenon, the Tangerang City Government assigned Decree (SK) Number 663 of 2016 concerning slum areas in Tangerang City. The thematic village is an example of the implementation of empowerment-based development oriented towards the formation of potential in the region. Kampoeng Anggur is one of the thematic villages under the auspices of Dinas Sosial (Dinsos) which focused on forming an Independent Prosperous Village (KSM).

Kampoeng Anggur was inaugurated as an Independent Prosperous Village (KSM) in December 2020 by the Director General of Social Empowerment of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Before it was inaugurated, the Tangerang City Government had conducted socialization on the steps to form a thematic village conveyed by Ir. Bambang Irianto as the initiator of the concept of 3G Village (Glintung Go Green). This became the initial point of the environmental management movement in Kampoeng Anggur, which was accompanied by Ir. Bambang Irianto and Tangerang City Social Services.

The word "Anggur" describes the hope for the people of Kampoeng Anggur to continue to grow vines and produce the desired fruit. In line with this, the purpose of establishing Kampoeng Anggur is to create a society that cares about the environment through environmental management and the application of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (PHBS), which continues to grow in other aspects. The word "Anggur" in the name of this village is an acronym for community members who love to be grateful. The community implements gratitude for the blessings given by God by providing oxygen by planting plants in the environment.

Participation in Pangan Lestari Program

Program participation refers to an individual's involvement in a program. Member involvement in the program can be realized in various forms, including ideas, energy, and time, in each stage of program implementation. Program participation was measured based on the involvement of members in the planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and utilization of the results.

Planning: Planning discussion activities were carried out informally. Planning discussions are usually held during the evening of casual get-togethers. The activities were not scheduled specifically to discuss their planning. Usually, the leader inserts a discussion of cultivation activities into casual chat. Members who are involved in cultivation activities but are unable to attend the planning discussion will be given personal direction by the leader. Therefore, members can prioritize other interests when planning discussion activities.

The intensity of the casual gathering group is routine every night. This activity will certainly build bonds among group members. Through informal group gatherings, group members can get to know each other, such as their characters, activities, or other routine schedules. This condition will help the leader carry out group members in the division of tasks. In planning discussions, the leader discusses and informs the technical direction of the activities. The leader does not need to convey technical direction if the activities are carried out repeatedly by group members.

Casual gatherings can no longer be conducted during the pandemic. However, members know their group mates well, such as knowing their abilities, characters, and routines outside cultivation activities. This makes it less difficult for the group to adapt to the pandemic. During the pandemic, planning discussion activities were conducted using *WhatsApp*. The bond built between members makes most members feel awkward when communicating through *WhatsApp groups*. An explanation of the time, place, and details of the activity was provided by the leader through the group. The leader will brief members who are willing to participate in the activity through *personal chat* or face-to-face. Activities that require face-to-face contact are carried out by implementing the COVID protocol, such as wearing masks, maintaining distance, and avoiding physical contact.

Decision Making – This is caused by members who feel doubtful when they want to submit their criticisms and suggestions to the forum. Most members assume that the leader must have more knowledge, skills, and experience than the members. Only a small number of the members dared to submit their criticisms and suggestions. A low level of member participation in the decision-making stage does not stop leaders from involving their members in making decisions. Leaders continue to involve and encourage members to submit suggestions and criticisms related to their activities. If a person continues to be involved in the decision-making process, that person no longer objects to it. When a person continues to be involved in the decision-making process, that person has little self-confidence. If decision making is done face-to-face, all members are in the same place. These conditions encouraged members to respond quickly and spontaneously. When decision making is done *online*, members have the opportunity to evade it.

Implementation: This is due to the absence of a strong motive felt by members to always be involved in the implementation of cultivation. Members' participation in implementation is related to their expectations. If members have high expectations of cultivating activities, they will encourage their ability to realize their goals. This expectation can be in the form of certain benefits or rewards, especially if these benefits are related to compliance with basic needs (Nurbaiti & Bambang, 2017). Participation in implementation must be interpreted as an equal distribution of participant contributions, whether of labor, funds, or other forms that are equal to the benefits that each participant will receive (Theresia et al., 2014).

Cultivation members receive benefits in the form of knowledge, skills, experience, relationships, and satisfaction with the cultivation results. However, the sales of cultivation activities were not greater than the results of their main professional activities. Members are also not required to attend every series of activities, so that members can be actively involved if there are no activities in their main profession. This means that members are still able to carry out activities in their main profession to earn their monthly income. The leader never creates a problem if the members are unable to attend. The leader understands that members may have other interests outside of cultivation activities.

The pandemic forced the group to make adjustments. All stages of cultivation activities were carried out by only two people. The number of members in the work was limited to maintaining health protocols. In addition, several members were transferred to *Corona* (Sigacor) officers to divide their focus and time. The reduced number of members allows the group to adjust to the temporary division of tasks in the implementation of cultivation. Nevertheless, the intensity of cultivation activities during the pandemic has been increasing. This is because of the increase in free time for members to carry out activities at home. If cultivation activities were usually carried out 2-3 times a week, cultivation activities during the pandemic were carried out almost every day. However, the activity is carried out by limiting the number of members involved in one activity as well as the implementation of health protocols, such as the use of masks and avoiding physical contact.

Monitoring and evaluation: This is caused by the perception of group members who feel it is inappropriate to criticize their fellow group members. This is related to group norms. When there is a discrepancy between the plan and its implementation, members immediately inform the leader. When viewed from a social structure in the group, members consider that the leader deserves criticism or suggestions regarding the process of cultivation activities. In addition, members believed that finding solutions is more important than conveying shortcomings in cultivation activities. According to the members, criticisms should be accompanied by suggestions and solutions.

The lack of initiative and courage among members to offer criticism and suggestions often places the burden on the leader to initiate conversations about the problems that arise during cultivation activities. The problems discussed were events that were passed by the group. The leader conveys the condition accompanied by the solution in the hope that the experience can be used as a lesson for other members

facing a similar situation. Initially, delivery was carried out only by the leader. Over time, members dare to share their experiences with the obstacles and problems they face. This experience does not have to be derived from the Kampoeng Anggur group alone. Some of the obstacles and problems presented were sourced from the experiences of fellow cultivators in other areas. Through this activity, the leader hopes that members can get used to conveying their thoughts in the forum, including thoughts related to criticism and suggestions for cultivation.

Utilization of results: The benefits felt by members are caused by equal opportunities for each member to be involved in every stage of the activity, so that members gain knowledge and skills of cultivation activities as a whole. This opportunity allows members to learn and practice every step of the cultivation activity they follow. The existence of the opportunity for each member to participate in every stage of the activity makes members feel firsthand about the effort that has been made. Thus, members are better able to appreciate and feel the impact or benefits received by participating in cultivation activities.

There were differences in the utilization of cultivated products before and during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, cultivated produce was distributed to the people of Kampoeng Anggur in the form of harvested produce that could be directly consumed. During the pandemic, members distributed grape and vegetable seeds to residents who were willing to learn about cultivation. In addition, group members provide cultivation education to residents who receive seeds. This is done so that residents can use their leisure time at home for cultivation. During the pandemic, the demand for educational activities continued to increase. Some members were invited to provide cultivation education in other areas. The pandemic makes many people want to take advantage of their free time at home.

Participants' empowerment in Pangan Lestari Program

Empowerment refers to the condition of a person who has power over himself or herself. Empowerment can be achieved through the process of conducting empowerment activities. Empowerment can be measured through four concepts of power that show the degree of a person's empowerment: power within, power to, power over, and power within.

Power within: Power within is measured based on participants' assessment of their desire to achieve better living conditions through the application of cultivation science, practicing activities independently, meeting food needs through cultivation activities, and improving economic conditions. Cultivation activities in Kampoeng Anggur were carried out by applying the elements of learning-by-doing and self-selection. The process is carried out by providing opportunities for members to learn about cultivation activities by practicing them directly. Through this process, learning becomes more easily attached to members. Members will be more accustomed to carrying out cultivation activities so that the impact can be seen. The impact in question is an increase in the knowledge and skills of the cultivating members. After experiencing the learning process through learning by doing, members will be able to assess their abilities (self-selection) so that awareness arises to set steps in achieving a better life. Members' awareness of achieving a better life is evident during the pandemic. The pandemic caused some members to experience difficulties, such as reduced work activities, so the wages received also decreased. This condition encourages members to make more effort and maximize the cultivation activities that are followed for a better life.

Power to: Power to be measured based on program participants' assessment of their efforts to improve access and capacity by participating in training outside the group, broadening their horizons related to cultivation activities, and expanding relationships. Leaders have been active in informing cultivation members of training and mentoring activities, but often members do not get the right time to participate in these activities because members are busy with other things. In addition, several trainings or mentoring sessions held on a large scale set a quota of participants for each region. Therefore, not all members can participate in training or assistance from the outside. Existing limitations make members able to take the initiative to increase their capacity by learning independently through Google, YouTube, or other platforms. Some members can also take advantage of the relationship between cultivation groups in other areas to share with their fellow cultivators. It is difficult for members to expand their relationships during a pandemic. The pandemic has limited visits from outside, so the opportunity for members to add relationships is decreasing. The opportunity to interact and build relationships with parties outside of Kampoeng Anggur is only through cultivation education. However, this can only be done by a few members who have the ability to provide education and who still have the opportunity to add relationships.

Power over: Power over is measured based on the participant's assessment of the participant's responsiveness in dealing with obstacles, including the participant's ability to identify problem points and take action to overcome problems. Groups often receive experiences from other people's stories as provisions if they face similar obstacles one day. This causes members to only be able to solve similar problems and to feel confused when faced with new problems. Through the experiences of others, members only focus on what action to take when facing a problem and not on how other people find the solution. In addition, the leader is always willing to help members who have difficulty in completing their tasks. This can also be observed when the group is facing a pandemic. The leader provided complete instructions regarding the adjustment of group activities during the pandemic. Therefore, members are the only parties to follow instructions.

Power with power is measured based on the participant's assessment of his attitude in a group, including adjusting the work system in the group, establishing good relations with group friends, and helping group friends during cultivation activities. The group environment was built to create a cooperative climate through the division of tasks. In the division of tasks, the leader always gives one job to be completed by at least two people to provide opportunities for members to build interactions and cooperation. The assigned members must fill in their gaps and help each other. In line with this, the function of the group is to encourage cooperation between individuals because individuals cannot live alone in society (Hamid, 2018). Therefore, the division of tasks is needed to combine the abilities that exist in each individual.

Table 1. The influence of program participation on empowerment

Program Participation	Regression coefficient of empowerment			
	<i>Power Within</i>	<i>Power To</i>	<i>Power Over</i>	<i>Power With</i>
Planning	0,840**	1,542**	0,078	0,747*
Decision making	0,136	0,031	0,425*	0,022
Implementation	0,186*	0,515**	0,004	0,200*
Monitoring and evaluation	0,054	0,762	0,405*	0,357
Utilization of results	1,082**	0,996**	0,262	0,519

*significant at $\alpha \leq 0,05$; ** significant at $\alpha \leq 0,01$

Based on the information in Table 1, planning has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power to. Decision making has a positive influence on power over. Implementation has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power with. Monitoring and evaluation have a positive influence on power. The utilization of the results has a positive influence on the power within and power to. According to Mardikanto & Soebiato (2013), empowerment is a process that includes a series of activities to strengthen weak people so that they get out of a state of powerlessness. Therefore, the involvement of members in each process will empower members.

Planning discussions are carried out to provide directions such as describing the activities to be carried out, the place and time, tools and materials, and the implementing parties. By discussing the description of the activities to be carried out, members can estimate the results of cultivation to motivate them to develop their capacity as much as possible and to have a desire to be better. Discussions related to the parties involved will also provide an overview for members collaborating. The aspects discussed in the planning will be realized through the implementation and utilization of the results. The participation that members have given in the implementation provides a real picture of what they have been trying to do. Member participation in implementation is a member's real effort to obtain desired results. Therefore, through this implementation, members provided an overview of the results to be obtained. Member involvement in implementation helps members see opportunities. Opportunities have an impact that makes a person strive to lead a good life and gain access to opportunities to use existing resources to improve their lives.

Decision-making is an approach to dealing with problems. Decision-making is related to the knowledge of the main things related to the problem that occurred, the presentation of facts and data relevant to the problem, problem-solving analysis, and looking for alternative solutions (Hamid, 2018). The active involvement of members in decision-making will enable them to learn the process and ways of thinking in determining something. Members become accustomed to and understand when they face problems.

This gives members the power to find trouble spots so that they can get various options to solve their problems, similar to the monitoring and evaluation stages.

Monitoring and evaluating substances is always associated with errors in cultivation activities. This error is likely to have encouraged the emergence of obstacles to cultivation. The leader never submits an evaluation to show the members' mistakes; the leader also simultaneously provides the right example or solution for the mistakes made by the members. In this study, an evaluation is conducted to determine the suitability between planning and implementation. Through the evaluation stage, members of the group can explore the reasons for non-compliance and compile improvements as preventive actions that the group can take when facing similar conditions (Hamid, 2018). The evaluation in the Pangan Lestari Group is carried out in the form of sharing experiences. Obstacles faced by members of the group and solutions submitted through the forum. Through evaluation, it was found that members of the group also have control to take certain actions if they have similar conditions.

Implementation is the stage that provides a real representation of the things that members have been trying to achieve. Members' participation in the implementation stage is a real enterprise for members to obtain the desired results. Therefore, the implementation provided an overview of the results. The participation of members in the implementation stage helps members see opportunities. The opportunities will provide experience for members who have the desire to change (power within) for a better life. The implementation will encourage members to use their capability and ability to realize the results. This condition can stimulate members to increase their capability and ability, so that the result of cultivation has an improvement (power to). The members also found an impact of teamwork and collaboration experiences during implementation.

Utilization of results cultivation is a form of material, such as funds and crops. The funds earned will be used for further activities and distributed to members. The crops will also be distributed to the members of the group and the villagers of Kampong Anggur. The good quality of crops makes members gain the trust to provide education about cultivation. Education is a form of utilizing the knowledge and skills of members. The result can motivate members to have a better life, which is followed by the development of ability. Participation is the response to a given stimulus. Participation is an action related to the expected benefit, which can provide an opportunity for members to develop their abilities and access (Handini et al., 2019). The utilization of the results is related to the economic conditions. According to Rosidi & Sumardjo (2020), the economy is significantly correlated with participation in CSR programs.

CONCLUSION

Planning exerts a significant and positive influence on power through; decision-making significantly and positively impacts power over; implementation significantly and positively influences power from within and power through; and monitoring and evaluation significantly and positively affect power over. Planning has a very pronounced and positive impact on power from within and power to; implementation has a very pronounced and positive impact on power to; and the utilization of results has a very pronounced and positive impact on power from within and power to.

Empowerment consists of several stages. Participation refers to the involvement of the community in each stage of development, including planning activities for program implementation. Planning has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power to. Decision making has a positive influence on power over. Implementation has a positive influence on power within, power to, and power with. Monitoring and evaluation have a positive influence on power. The utilization of the results has a positive influence on the power within and power to. According to the results of this research, participation in planning, implementation, and utilization of the results has a significant impact on empowerment.

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