

Youth-Unemployment and Criminality in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the public perception of the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria. Questionnaire was administered on participants which comprised 1200 members of diverse groups drawn from three major cities; Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna in three main ethno-geographical regions of the country using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The finding established a significant causal link between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria. The study also found that a combination of multiple factors was responsible for the vast youth unemployment situation which has raised the specter of serious and street crimes in the country. The culminating effects on the affected unemployed youths were social disgrace, labeling and loss of self-esteem which devoured their moral characters thereby creating impaired safety and security in the society. The study concluded that youth unemployment was not only an individual problem but also a societal malfeasance which portend a real danger and threat to the socio-economic stability of the country.

Keywords: Criminality, Gainful employment, Worklessness and Youthunemployment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a grievous social problem which constitutes a threat to any nation. The loss is not only just economic, but socio-psychological since unemployment promotes tension and sense of hopelessness in human societies (Oyebade, 2008). For young people, the effects of unemployment may be particularly scaring. This is because, it tempts or provokes the youths to resort to anti-social behaviours which are inimical to their communities. As the intermediate population group in any country, the youths are basic resource for nation building and the significant means and ends of socio-economic development. Apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, they out-number the middle aged and the aged (Onyekpe, 2007). Youths also represent an important stakeholder in the society and constitute a major part of the labour force. Through their creative and innovative capacity, a nation makes giant stride. However, in the absence of regular income and means of livelihood to ensure life sustenance, the frustration of unemployed youths could be transformed into criminality in the society.

In Nigeria, the manpower structure of the country today, clearly reveals a massive unemployed youths. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) reported from the statistical data supplied by the National Manpower Board and National Bureau of Statistics that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 60 percent of the total population of the country and from this, 64 million of them are unemployed while 1.6 million are under-employed. Relatedly, Doreo (2013), also indicated that the unemployment rate in the country is growing at the rate of 16 percent per year with the youths impacted most and accounting for three times the general unemployment. In effect, the huge youth unemployment situation has forced a large number of the nation's most productive manpower to be redundant. A vast majority of these youths are energetic and possess the capacity for work, yet they are found roaming the street daily and searching for jobs that barely exist (Obaro, 2012).

The present situation of youth unemployment in Nigeria is a reflection of general decadence that has plagued the country for long and a consequence of several factors. Most notable among these factors are; over dependence on oil revenue to the neglect of agricultural sector, implementation of high sounding unviable policies, high profile corruption among the politicians and bureaucrats and the type of education that is being given in secondary and tertiary institutions, which is oriented towards wage employment and bereft of entrepreneurship development (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010; Murphy, 2008; Alanana, 2003 and Fapohunda, 2003). Successive governments in the country have introduced various programmes to fight youth unemployment in order to curb criminal behaviours. It is on record that all the attempts made by governments have not made any significant impact on youth unemployment (Omorodion, 2010).

Thus, the impunity in the commission of crime is linked to youth unemployment in the face of economic insecurity and work-worried life in which most of the youths have found themselves in the country. Given the prevailing intensity of youth – unemployment and upsurge of criminality, it is surprising that only very few studies have documented the relationship between the twin social phenomena in Nigeria. Furthermore, many of the previous studies have focused predominantly on the effect of general unemployment on the nation's economy. Thus, this study aims to investigate the causes of youth unemployment and types of criminal behaviours committed by the unemployed youths in the country. It further explores the effects of criminality on jobless youths and communities and the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualising Youth Unemployment and Criminality

The role that work plays in the life of people may easily be understood when compared with unemployment. According to Ogunbameru (2004), most people work to earn a living, to make money and to confer a sense of achievement. In other words, being employed makes one happy, wanted and needed in the society. The converse is unemployment. It not only dehumanizes the affected individual directly, but also turns him or her into liability in the society. According to Uddin (2013), youth unemployment could be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any or cannot find the type of job that they are trained to do and which they will be proud of as their area of expertise. Such a situation has a pronounced socio-economic consequence which may weaken and damage the moral fabrics of the affected youths and societies (Rao, 2006). In this connection, the symbolic relationship between youth unemployment and criminality exists, because it is one of the cheapest options, the young people can choose in intolerable circumstance in societies where social values are defective.

Consequent upon the intensity of youth unemployment in Nigeria, some of the youths tend to lose their moral conscience in order to meet the basic necessities of life. These categories of youths often see themselves as forgotten generation and are psychologically dejected for being unable to contribute productively to the society. This situation has increasingly encouraged criminality among youths such as armed robbery, murder, assassination and arson (Ogbebor, 2012). Criminality in any society is a legal wrong and behavioural act which deserves public condemnation. According to Paranjape (2012), it is essentially a part of social behaviours which emanates out of the relationship of individual in the society. Considered from this view point, a man or woman resorts to criminal act out of his or her intelligence and free will. The paradox of it, is that no one is born a criminal, but it is the circumstance that makes him or her so, not because he or she wants to be a criminal, but rather forced to lend to criminality.

Within this sort of context, youth-unemployment and criminality constitute an intertwined social problem which are mutually reinforcing. They are both symptoms of social disorganization in the society (Rao, 2006). Unemployment has affected the youths from a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups both the less educated and well read among them. As such, the rising wave of criminality, which has devastating effects on the society is traceable to various factors such as unemployment, poverty and greed among others (Ololo and Meisamari, 2012). Buttressing this view, Ademola and Olajubutu (2009) argued that unemployment has been identified as one of the major causes of social vices including armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thuggery, kidnapping and many more. Anderson (1999) observed that when the wider economy fails, many people particularly the youths go underground and take to crime. They seize such negative opportunity because they see it as an avenue to seek revenge on a system that has provided them nothing but frustration. Thus, most of those who engage in criminality in Nigeria are mostly young, educated persons who complain about hunger and unemployment. (Obaro, 2012).

Further observations also indicate that violent crimes committed in Nigerian societies of contemporary times involve the youth in most cases (Nwogu, 2012). For instance, an analysis of most of the apprehended criminals in the country shows that a large chunk of the young people that engage in criminal activities are those without gainful employment. Figures supplied by the Nigerian Prisons Service to the National Bureau of Statistics (2009) indicated that in 2006, the number of people aged 16-35 years, in convict prisons was 49.8% and in 2008, the number almost doubled, increasing astronomically to 92.5% within a period of 3 years. Ogbebor (2012) reaffirmed that over 70 percent of Nigerian prisoners these days are young people and majority of these persons are youths. Also available statistics from the Nigeria Police crime-records showed that, between the periods of 2005-2009; 16, 925 robbery suspects were arrested by the police and majority of them were youths (Cleen Foundation Crime Report, 2010).

Presently, kidnapping is now a major criminal enterprise for the unemployed youths in the country. Nigeria Police Crime Records and Statistics have shown that from 2006 to first half of 2012, a total of 2,184 cases of kidnapping were recorded over the past four and half years (Police Crime Statistical Records, 2012). This heinous crime has become a lucrative but unhealthy trade in form of kidnapping for ransom by the unemployed who are mostly youths (Cleen Foundation, 2010). The failure of the government both at the three tiers of government (Local, State and Federal) to provide adequate employment opportunities have lured some of the youths into criminality in the country. Thus, Nigeria is currently suffering from a growing crime-problem which is progressively threatening its sovereignty, security and development (Ilemika, 2011).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The strain theory, propounded by Robert Merton, is used as theoretical framework for this study. The theory was developed by Merton (1957) using Durkheim's concept of anomie. Merton posited that when a legitimate means, for example (job employment) of acquiring a culturally defined goal (money) is limited by the structure of society, the resulting strain may lead to crime. As such, strain theory explains criminality as a result of blocked

opportunities or impediments which are put on the way of people consciously or unconsciously by the society or government. This leads to social disorganization, which makes the individual (unemployed youth) to try in achieving the societal goals (employment) through deviant means (criminality). To such individual, any institutionalized means is legitimate as long as the end justifies the means.

Furthermore, Merton (1957) postulated that individuals adapt to the inconsistency between means and goals in a society that socializes everyone into wanting the same thing, but provides opportunities for only some. Merton suggested that, except for the conformist, who accept the culturally defined goals and socially means of achieving them, others take to innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion as modes of adaptation to achieve societal goals. Innovation which is the adaptation strategy most associated with criminal behaviours, explains the high rate of crime committed by poor individuals (the unemployed youths) in the society who lack access to legitimate means of achieving the societal goals of wealth. Applying this theory, the vexed problems of youth unemployment account for the criminality phenomenon in the Nigeria polity.

2.3 Study Hypothesis

Based on the comprehensive review of the literature and broad objective of the study, the hypothesis generated and tested for the purpose of the study is stated as follows:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between youth employment and criminality in Nigeria

H₁: There is a significant relationship between youth employment and criminality in Nigeria

2.4 Research Method

2.4.1 Study Areas

This study was carried out in three different ethno-geographical locations, namely: Kaduna, Enugu and Ibadanto give adequate representation of the three main ethnic groupings in Nigeria. The choice of the selected cities was influenced by the strategic positions which they occupied as administrative headquarters in the old regional governments in Nigeria. They also represented major foci as commercial nerve centres of economic activities with diverse socio-cultural characteristics and heterogeneity of people in the country.

2.4.2 Population, Sample and sample techniques

The population of the study included ten (10) diverse groupings: Bankers, Business Executives, Religious Priests, Prison Correctional Officers, Police and Civil Defence security, Engineers, Lawyers, Civil servants, Artisans and unemployed youths who were randomly selected in order to have multiform opinions on issues related to the intertwined social problems of youth unemployment and criminality. A sample of 1200 respondents was selected as participants using purposive sampling technique. In each of the selected cities, availability and willingness to respond were the overriding factors used as criteria for inclusion in the sample.

2.4.3 Method of Data Collection

Primary data for the study were collected using questionnaire as the major research instrument. Out of the 1200 copies of the questionnaire self administered by the researcher, 1050 copies were retrieved and found usable for analysis with a response rate of 87.5%. The main part of the questionnaire comprised 30 questions to be answered in Likert scale format, which was used to measure pertinent constructs of the study. Each item of the construct was presented with five alternative responses ranging from (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with numerical value of 1-5. The questionnaire also asked of the biographical details of the respondents. The questionnaire survey followed all the required ethical procedures with an information cover page describing the motivation for the study as well as assuring respondents of the confidentiality of the study. Secondary data were extracted from police crime diary and statistical records to complement the information collected from the questionnaire.

2.4.4 Method of Analysis

The data gathered from respondents through the use of questionnaire were analyzed by using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Analysis was carried out with the generation of frequency and simple percentage distribution, mean score value and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested using parametric statistical analysis, Pearson Correlation to assess the link between youth unemployment and criminality.

3. RESULTS OF FINDINGS

Findings on the socio-demographic composition of the respondents showed that ages of respondents ranged between 20 and 54 years with a mean age of 35.3 years and standard deviation of 7.8 years. The occupational distribution of participants showed almost same representation with unemployed youths and police having 13.5% respectively, civil defence security, business and commercial (12%), prison correctional officer (10%), engineering (10%) law (10%) civil servant (10%), artisan 10%, religious priest (8%) and banking (7.0%). The gender of respondents revealed a disproportionate representation, where male accounted for 66.7% of the sampled population, while female respondents constituted 33.3% in the study. This presents a ratio of 2:1 across the gender group skewed in favour of males. Religious affiliation depicted that majority (65.6%) were Christians,

25.9% were Muslims while 8.5% respondent's belonged to other religion group.

Regarding the marital status, majority (67.7%) of the respondents were married, 23.7% were single and 8.5% were divorced. This showed that most of the respondents were married. Findings also indicated that a significant proportion (78.6%) of the respondents had at least first university degree or Higher National Diploma. This finding attested to literacy level of the participants that only a few proportion of the sampled population (21.4%) possessed below tertiary education certificate.

Questions were asked on causes of youth unemployment. Data in Table 1 showed the responses of participants. The findings of the mean score values were derived from the Likert numerical scale of 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with long term dependence on oil revenue to the neglect of agriculture having the highest mean score value of 4.25, which is higher than the standard mean response average of 2.5 at 5-point rating scale. From the analysis, an overwhelming majority, (90%) of the respondents agreed in both strong and mild terms that over dependency on revenue from oil to the neglect of agriculture is one of the major contributory causes of youth-employment. A negligible (9.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, while (1.0%) of the total sampled population were indifferent. Furthermore, results showed the standard deviation of opinion of respondents was .837 and skewness was -.548, which indicated that the opinion is dispersed to higher side of the respondents. The value of Kurtosis was -.278 which was platykurtic, supported the over-dependency on oil revenue to the detriment of agriculture.

The respondents' view relating to squandermania and high-profile corruption of politicians and bureaucrats as the cause of youth unemployment had mean score value of 4.15 which was higher than the average mean of 2.5 at 5- point rating scale. The variation in opinion and skewness were put at .816 and -.557 respectively. These depicted that the opinions of respondents were scattered at higher side. A significant finding is that majority (85%) of the respondents also agreed in both strong and mild terms that squandermania and high profile corruption of the politicians and bureaucrats were part of the major contributory causes of youth-unemployment. The calculated value of the Kurtosis -.557 which implied that the distribution of the view was platykurtic, thereby, indicating a major cause of youth unemployment.

Table 1: Causes of Youth Unemployment

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Poor dispersal and diversification of economic base	10% (10)	40% (420)	6.0% (63)	30% (315)	14% (147)	2.50	1.24	.852	-.562
Lack of skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development	28% (294)	40% (420)	3.0% (32)	10% (105)	19% (199)	3.48	1.37	.835	-.644
Lack of foresight, bad planning and ineptitude execution on the part of the nations' administrator	25% (262)	45% (472)	3% (32)	17% (179)	10% (105)	3.50	1.43	.832	-.648
Poor industrial growth and implementation of high sounding unviable policies.	30% (315)	48% (504)	2.0% (21)	17% (179)	3% (32)	3.80	1.46	.715	-.633
Long term dependence on oil revenue to the neglect of agriculture	60% (630)	30% (315)	1% (11)	8% (84)	1% (11)	4.25	.837	-.278	-.548
Squandermania and high profile corruption of politicians and administrative bureaucrats	40% (420)	45% (472)	3.0% (32)	8.0% (84)	4.0% (42)	4.15	.816	-.286	-.557

Source: Field survey, 2014.

On the variable, poor industrial growth and implementation of high sounding unviable policies, the mean score value of respondents was 3.80. Similarly, a significant bulk, 78% of the respondents agreed in both strong and mild terms to this indicator as a major cause of youth-unemployment in Nigeria. The standard deviation and skewness were 1.46 and -.633 respectively, showing that the respondents' opinion was on the higher-side. The calculated value Kurtosis which was -.715 also indicated that the distribution of respondents' opinion was platykurtic, thereby suggesting the indicator as a contributory cause of youth-unemployment.

With regards to the construct, poor dispersal and diversification of economic base as cause of youth employment, the mean score value of the respondents was just average (2.50). Worthy of note is that five (5) out of ten (10) respondents, that is (50.0%) agreed both in strong and mild terms to this indicator. The standard deviation and skewness were 1.24 and -.562 respectively indicating that the respondents opinion was neither on the higher nor lower side, with the average mean indicator. However, the calculated value of Kurtosis (.852) depicted that the distribution of respondents' opinion was platykurtic, thereby suggesting a relatively contributory cause of youth-unemployment.

It is also important to note that there were no significant lines of differentiation in the pattern of result of variables such as lack of foresight, bad planning and ineptitude execution of policy on the part of the nations' administrator and lack of skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development with mean score values of 3.50 and 3.48 respectively. Standard deviation and skewness were recorded as (1.43 and -.648) and (1.37 and -.644) respectively. On the two variables, the total sample of respondents' opinions were dispersed towards the higher side of the standard rating scale of 2.5, while the calculated values of Kurtosis portrayed the distribution of views as platykurtic, depicting the two variables as major contributory causes of youth-unemployment.

Exploring the types of criminal behaviours committed by the unemployed youths, data presented in Table 2 showed that robbery had the highest mean score of 4.52 (sd=1.30) and commercial sex hawking (prostitution) having the least mean score value of 2.56 (sd=.712). From the analysis, breaking and entering has mean score value of 4.25 (sd=1.26), cyber crime had mean score value of 4.15 (sd=.961), pick-pocketing and theft were with mean score of 4.10 (sd=1.36), kidnapping having mean score value of 3.0 (sd=.635) and vandalism has mean score value of 2.67 (sd=.840). The picture that emerged from these findings portrayed robbery, breaking and entering, internet fraud, kidnapping, pick – pocketing and theft, as the most pervasive and persistent criminal behaviours exhibited by the unemployed youths in Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Types of Criminal Behaviours Committed by Unemployed Youths

Types of Criminal Behaviour	Min.	Max.	N	Mean	Sd
Robbery	1	5	1050	4.52	1.30
Breaking and Entering	1	5	1050	4.25	1.26
Pick-pocketing and theft	1	5	1050	4.10	1.36
Cyber Crime	1	5	1050	4.15	.961
Kidnapping	1	5	1050	3.0	.635
Vandalism	1	5	1050	2.67	.840
Commercial sex hawking (prostitution)	1	5	1050	2.56	.712

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Data in Table 3 indicate that the effects of criminality on the jobless youths were social stain, disgrace and labeling (30%) and indecency in words and deeds (7.4%). At the same time, the effect of communities were suffocated safety and undermined security (27.0%), erosion of social values (21.0%), hopelessness and wastage of lives (8.0%) and destruction of properties and sabotage (6.6%). These findings are negative indications that criminality is a destroyer of character and damager of the moral fabric not only of the individual unemployed youths but the society at large.

Table 3: Effects of Criminality on Jobless Youths and Communities

Effects of Criminality	Frequency	%
Social stain, disgrace and labeling	315	30.0
Suffocated safety and undermined security	283	27.0
Erosion of social values	220	21.0
Hopelessness and wastage of lives	84	8.0
Indecency in words and deeds	78	7.4
Destruction of properties and sabotage	70	6.6
Total	1050	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria

Pearson Correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis of the link between youth unemployment and criminality. Data presented in Table 4 show that the mean score value of youth unemployment was 73.01, while that of criminality was 70.21. The correlation co-efficient was 0.92, which showed a strong relationship between youth unemployment and criminality ($r=0.92$, $P<0.05$). The result indicates that the null hypothesis as postulated for the study was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Thus, a significant relationship between youth unemployment and criminality was found.

Table 4: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Youth Unemployment and Criminality.

Variables	N	X	SD	r	P	R
Youth unemployment	1055	73.01	7.62	0.92	0.000	Sig.
Criminality	1055	70.21	7.76			

Source: Field survey, 2014.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study contributed to the understanding of the link between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria. The result of the study offered empirical support for the existence of a positive and statistically significant association between the two intertwined variables of youth unemployment and criminality. The findings bore semblance to the study of Ololo and Meisamari (2012) and was also in harmony with the result of prior study of Ezie (2012) which indicated that the accelerated levels of crime such as armed robbery, street crimes, prostitution and all facets of violence could be attributed to the incidence of youth unemployment. To a very large extent, the study mirrored the views of Nwogu (2012) that the unemployment condition of the youths resulted into various crimes when they could not get jobs. This category of people becomes frustrated and ready tools in the hands of those who want to use them to cause confusion in the polity (Obaro, 2012). They grab this opportunity because they see it as an avenue to seek revenge on a system that provided them nothing but frustration. The culminating effect as argued by Aregbesola (2008) is that youth unemployment is a waste of human resources in the country. Thus, government effective policy on job creation and provision of an enabling environment is important if the problem of youth employment is to be tackled.

By and large, the analysis suggested that the major contributory factors of youth unemployment in Nigeria are: long term dependence on oil revenue to the neglect of agriculture, squandermania and high profile corruption of politicians and bureaucrats, poor industrial growth and type of school educational curricula, which lacked vocational acquisition and entrepreneurship development. These findings were in accord with those of Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, (2010); Murphy, (2008); Alanana, (2003); and Fapohunda, (2003). Similarly, the findings of the study have shown that poor dispersal and diversification of economic base, lack of foresight, bad planning and ineptitude execution on the part of the nations' administrators have contributed to the rising profile of youth unemployment in the country. By implication, these findings are suggestive of the need to re-examine the whole nature of the Nigerian society in order to understand and surmount the root causes of youth unemployment and criminality in the country. They are also indicative that unless these contributory factors are check-mated, the country cannot create job spaces for the teeming population of unemployed youths.

Furthermore, empirical evidence from the study did confirm that the type of criminal behaviours pervasive among the unemployed youths in Nigeria are serious crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, cyber crime and entering and breaking amongst others. This finding is in line with the position of Rao (2006) that youth unemployment is a destroyer of character and damager of the moral fabric, not only of the affected youths, but the society at large. The result therefore suggests that impunity in the commission of crime by the youths exists because it is the cheapest option they can take to in the face of desperation to ensure life-sustenance.

5. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the public perception of the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in Nigeria. It suggests that the increasing wave of criminality which has a devastating effect on the economy is traceable to youth-unemployment. The study empirically substantiated that most people who engage in criminal activities are mostly young educated persons who complain about hunger and unemployment. The inability of successive governments both military and civilian to provide a window of opportunities in terms of gainful employment lured the youths to criminality. Based on these findings, the study concluded that unemployment has a significant correlation with criminality among the youths in Nigeria.

However, as with all research studies, this study is not without any limitation. Data were collected on perceptual scale from participants using mostly non-probability sampling. Future research should look at more objective data collecting techniques to ensure data-precision to remove bias. Despite this limitation, the study has offered a good insight into the understanding of youth unemployment and criminality in a reforming and developing nation like Nigeria.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, the findings of the study have led to the following recommendations. Youth unemployment is a multi-dimensional problem that needs to be addressed on a macro basis. As such, the government should pursue the diversification of the economy with the objective of creating self-employment schemes in the country through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Government must also intensify its National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NAOS) to provide unemployed youths between the ages of 15 and 35 years with basic vocational skills that are needed in the economy. Microcredit schemes should be facilitated to empower the unemployed youths to go into self-employment enterprise. Support services in terms of entrepreneurial training should be given to them to enhance skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development.

Back to land programme must be rejuvenated to provide self employment in agriculture for school leavers with college diploma and university qualification in agriculture and allied disciplines. This is to encourage the growth and development of the agricultural sector to be the mainstay of the economy so as to be able to feed the nation, diversify and reduce the over reliance on the oil sector, to the neglect of the agricultural sector. Concerted efforts must be made by government to redesign the secondary and tertiary institutions curriculum to impart young secondary school leavers and university graduates with employable vocational skills that are relevant to the needs of the economy. Education planning must also be structured to take cognizance of self employment and self-sustainability with the possibility of the youths engaging in self-run enterprises.

Government must also target the youth intensive sectors such as information communication technology, entertainment and hospitality industries to address the problem of youth unemployment. Unemployment allowance should be paid to youths that have graduated from tertiary institutions without work. This will limit the environmental stress that can predispose them to criminality.

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