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ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

The main object of this paper is to investigate issues affecting women seeking academic leadership. The participants of the study were women academics and researchers attending an international research conference on women and leadership. The chosen methodology was a quantitative survey instrument with some qualitative open-ended questions based on an instrument developed for an earlier study already undertaken in Turkey. The surveys were statistically analysed with the open-ended questions allowing a further exploration of the issues from the respondents' perspectives. The results grouped around the themes of work and family, role conflict, attitudes and experiences towards gender discrimination in academic leadership issues, are reported in this study.

Key Words: Academic Women, Leadership, Academic Management, Role Conflict, Work and Family Life, Gender Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to investigate issues affecting women seeking academic leadership in universities. Some differences have been identified in the participation of women in leadership positions in different settings and focussed our attention on possible reasons for these differences.

In Turkey the participation rates of women in academe increased from 35 % in 1999 to 39 % in 2006.,with 27% of professors, 31% of associate professors and 31% of assistant professors being female (OSYM, 1999: OSYM, 2006). Although this percentage is higher than most countries, there are barriers to academic women achieving seniority and leadership. Several Turkish studies which explore gender in higher education have identified these barriers (Ozkanli, 2006, Ozkanli, 2000a). One of the important barriers to Turkish academic women's' advancement is conflict between career and family roles, especially at the assistant professorship stage (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000b, 315). It has been found that academic women generally do not consider there is institutionalised gender discrimination in academic promotion or management, although older and often more senior women consider that male academics are advantaged in academe (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000c). This absence of perceived institutionalised discrimination may explain the higher proportion of women in professorial positions in Turkey compared with other nations.

Research in Turkey (Ozkanli and Korkmaz 2000, Acar 1983, Koker, 1988) has indicated that academic women usually do not seek administrative positions and leadership because of perceived work/life role conflict rather than institutional discrimination. These women usually point only to the presence of an overload of demands placed on them by ever increasing obligations of their family roles as the reason for their withdrawal from the competition for administrative positions and leadership (Ozkanli, 2006).

In Australia there has also been an increased representation of women within universities over the past two decades. Academic women's participation rate has risen from one-fifth of all academic staff in the mid 1980s to two-fifths of all academic staff nearly two decades later . In part this is due to structural changes in the system such as the move to a unified national system of higher education which brought the female dominated areas of teacher and nursing education into universities, and in part a result of equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation, policy

and practices. However, gender equality has not been reached and universities continue to operate as highly gendered organizations . Women remain concentrated in discipline areas that are considered traditionally female (health, education and social sciences) so that there are both horizontal and vertical gender differences in the academic workforce in Australia .

Women remain under-represented at senior levels with men accounting for more than eighty percent of the most senior academic positions in Australian universities . There have been gains at the vice chancellor (university rector or president) level. During the period 1996 to 2003 the proportion and number of women vice chancellors in Australia increased from 5% (2) to 27% (10) of all vice chancellors. At the deputy vice chancellor, pro vice chancellor and dean position level however the gains are considerably lower. There were 19 (19%) women in 1999 at these levels and by 2003 there were 27 (21%) . In 2004 only sixteen percent of Australian professors were women .

Given the legislative framework for affirmative action and equal opportunity that has been in place for over two decades and the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC) Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities , the outcomes for women at the more senior levels in the institution remain disappointing.

Carrington and Pratt (2003:8) suggest that

> For aspiring senior female academics the masculine culture of the collegial processes of university leadership has been repeatedly identified as the major hurdle they face in their career advances. Nevertheless the complex interplay between gender divisions in the home and in the workplace is a key factor underlying the career disadvantages faced by those with family.

It has been suggested to understand women's continued under representation at senior levels in organisations that the commonly held assumptions of discrimination and bias need closer scrutiny. Studies undertaken by Probert and by Winchester et al suggest that the Australian academic promotion processes, which have been subject to change as a result of affirmative action and equal opportunity initiatives, are no longer the barrier they once were. Probert suggests that women's lower human capital in critical areas such as doctoral qualifications coupled with the impacts of general demographic trends including divorce and separation and the impact of older children's needs help explain women's absence at more senior levels .

Morley states that, despite the changing political economy of higher education, the devaluing of women has become normalised. Women are more likely to be in junior positions and their qualifications worth less in the labour market. Even in Scandinavia, long looked to as a leader in the area of gender equality, women constitute fewer than twelve percent of the professoriate in Norway and eleven percent in Sweden . Valian states that 'in every field and subfield, in almost every cohort and at almost every point in their teaching and research careers, women advance more slowly and earn less money than men'. Inglis has also highlighted that academic careers of women follow a more diverse path than their male counterparts. Women are more likely to have entered the academy later and had a more diverse career path than their male counterparts and are less likely to seek promotion.

An international research conference on academic women and leadership provided both the opportunity and access to a substantial group of academic women to further investigate perceived barriers for women in attaining senior leadership roles in universities.

1. Methodology

The study setting was the Inaugural International Women and Leadership Conference 2006 held in Fremantle, Western Australia in November 2006. Eligible participants were those conference attendees who were currently academics or researchers in any university. We employed a quantitative survey instrument which included some open-ended questions. The survey was based on an instrument developed for an earlier study undertaken in Turkey (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000). The Turkish instrument was translated into English and adapted for the international conference context in Australia. The open-ended questions were added to provide an opportunity to follow up some of the emerging issues identified in the Turkish study.

The surveys were included in the conference packs and the conference convenor encouraged those attending the two day conference to complete the survey during the conference. Completed surveys were collected by the end of the conference. Questionnaire data were statistically analysed with all continuous data tested for normality and appropriate tests conducted. The open-ended questions allowed a further exploration of the issues from respondents' perspectives. Content analysis was used to develop themes and categories of meaning from the open ended question responses.

2. Results

The results of the survey are presented below in four areas:

1.the demographic data about conference participants;
2.women academic's roles in their households and role conflicts;
3.attitudes to discrimination and the demands of university work; and
4.women's leadership seeking behaviours and attitudes.

2.1 Demographic data

There were 98 speakers and attendees at the conference and 59 of these were currently university academics or researchers who were invited to respond to the survey. Attendees came from Australia (four states and one territory of Australia provided the majority), Canada, Philippines, India, Malaysia, Turkey, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Of the 40 women who responded (response rate of 67.8%), 37 provided their ages. Their average age was 47 (SD = 8.6), with the age range 29 to 68. In terms of academic level, 19 % of the conference respondents were currently professors, 19% associate professors, 3% senior lecturers, 8% senior research fellows, 19% lecturers and 16% research fellows. Women in other positions or adjunct (emeritus or honorary) roles comprised 16% of respondents.

When we examine the respondents' employment status, 47.5% held tenured/continuing appointments, mostly full-time and 37.5% were contract staff with slightly more part time (20%) than full time positions (17.5%). Of those who reported their educational level (n=39), 61.5 % had completed doctorates and another 15.4% were currently undertaking doctorates. Of those with doctorates their average age at completion was 41.1 years (SD 6.9 years). Although there were different average ages of completions for different levels (the average age for doctorate completion for professors was 42.7 years, associate professors 38.8 years, lecturers 39.5 years, senior research fellows 39 and research fellows 44 years) these differences were not statistically significant. While participants had been at their current academic levels for an average of 4.9 years, scrutiny of the data showed two outliers at 26 and 18 years. When we removed the outliers the mean was 2.9 years at level (CI 95%, 2.2-3.6 years).

2.2 Women academics' roles in their households and role conflicts

One of the conference themes had been the Nature of Women's Work and the survey probed several areas relating to this issue. Almost three quarters of conference respondents had children (72.5%) with 10.3% having one child, 44.8% with two children, 31% with three children and 10.3 % with four children. No participants had more than four children. Two thirds of respondents (67.5%) were currently living with a husband or partner (married 50%, defacto 17.5%), and one third had no current partner (20% single, 7.5% divorced, 2.5 % separated and 2.5% widowed). Of those living alone, 38.5% had children whilst 89% of married/defacto women had children.

Women with doctorates were more likely to live with a partner (75%) than less qualified women (60%). The reported education qualifications of current husbands/partners showed that one third (34.6%) of the respondents husbands or partners had no university education, whilst only 27% of husband/partners had higher degrees. There was a highly significant difference (p=0.009) in the partnering of these women based on their educational level. More highly educated partners (postgraduate qualified) were likely to have highly educated (doctoral qualified) women as partners. However, women with doctorates were just as likely to have husbands or partners with lower qualifications than their own.

Women's work and family roles were also investigated. Attendees were asked about who undertook the major responsibility for household work – their partners, themselves or whether it was shared equally with their partner. Almost two thirds (63%) of conference respondents reported sharing household work equally with their partner, another one third (33.3%) took the major role and only 4% of partners undertook the major role. These results were the same whether there were children in the household or not. When we explored who undertook the major work associated with childrearing (excluding financial responsibility) the results presented a different and less equal picture of household roles. Of the 29 women who reported having children, 23 responded to the childrearing roles question. Here only 43.5% of husbands/partners or other parent shared childcare equally, 43.5% of women respondents took the major role and only 13% of husbands/partners or other parent took the major role. Others who responded 'not applicable' may have done so because of the older (independent) age of their children. So whilst the housework for this sample was more often shared, 87% of women were engaged in childcare (principally or equally), compared with 56% of husbands/partners/other parent. The correlation between sharing housework and child work is substantial and significant (r =0.63, p= 0.008). If

husbands/partners shared household work, they were also likely to share child care work.

With significant household and child rearing demands the opportunity to have paid or unpaid help was investigated in the survey. Less than half of the respondents (42.5%) reported having any paid household help with their average amount being was 15 hours per month but the mode was 6 hours per month (minimum 1- maximum 60, SD=17.44 and highly skewed). When the two outliers of 60 and 56 hours were removed the mean was 9 hours per month (SD =6.8 hours) but the distribution was still skewed. The mean paid help varied by level with professors and associate professors reporting a higher level use for household help (71.4 %) than senior lecturers, lecturers and senior research fellows (25 %) 'Others' also had lower use of household help (33.3%). The differences are statistically significant (p= 0.032). When we looked at the type of help received 15 had paid help only, two had both paid and unpaid help and one had unpaid help only with 22 women having no household help (57.5%).

When we examined the effect of pregnancy and/ or children on PhD, 35% of the respondents reported that being pregnant or a parent affected them in undertaking or completing their doctorate. When elaborating on the impacts of being pregnant or a parent, 12.5 % of the respondents reported that this situation slowed their PhD completion down, 7.5% withdrew from the doctorate program, 5% delayed the starting of their PhD, 5% reported negative impacts on family and marriage and 5% stated the negative impacts on themselves. However 5% of the respondents explained the positive effects on themselves and their children.

Among respondents 68% were pregnant and/or raising a child/children during the rest of their time as an academic. They stated that being pregnant or a parent affected their career in different ways with 17.5% reporting work/life balance difficulties and role conflict because of increased work load, 15% of the respondents reporting reduced time for research, and 10 % of the respondents felt that their career progress and academic promotion had been delayed. Besides, 12.5% of the respondents reduced their working hours and preferred part-time work. The negative effects on themselves such as reduced sleeping times, stress and feeling physically tired were mentioned by 7.5% of the respondents and 7.5 % wrote of the difficulties in attending/participating in some committees, work-shops, development seminars, conferences and overseas sabbaticals. They also reported less involvement in decision-making processes and academic management /leadership at work. Because they gave priority to children's schooling, 7.5% mentioned reduced mobility and being tied to their current work location.

Respondents' experiences of role conflict were also investigated in the study with 79% of those who responded (n=38) reporting that they experienced role conflict between their private and academic lives. This was experienced as a conflict of time by 87.5% and a conflict of expectations by 71%. Of those who responded to both questions (n=31) 20 or 65% reported experiencing role conflict in both time and expectations with 29% experiencing only problems with time.

The respondents reported using the strategies below to help manage their working and daily life responsibilities: For example, 75% of the respondents used and preferred flexible working hours and 65% of the respondents worked from home at some times. There were 45% of respondents who reported that they worked part-time as a balancing strategy whilst 10% of the respondents worked longer hours (after normal office hours and weekends at home/office) to balance the two roles. However 10% preferred working only at office and separating work and family time. Some women (7.5%) reported becoming more efficient and effective in planning their work.

2.3 Attitudes to discrimination and the demands of university work

The attitudes and experiences of these women academics and researchers around gender discrimination were also investigated. Respondents were provided with 9 statements and asked to respond to these on a 5 point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree). The proportions responding to each statement and a mean "score" for each statement are provided in Table 1.

Very strong views were expressed about discrimination in academic life, work loads and career progress. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there is gender discrimination in academic life that men are advantaged in academic life and that women have to work harder to both achieve recognition and progress their career. The view that there is gender discrimination in academic life (p=0.691) and that men are advantaged (p=0.417) was shared by

respondents regardless of their academic level. Reversing the question and asking whether women were advantaged in academic life produced consistent results with 88% of women disagreeing with the statement irrespective of level (p=0.516).

Academic level did not affect the view that women needed to work harder to achieve recognition (p=0.738) but all professors or associate professors agreed or strongly agreed that women must work harder than men to progress their careers. This diversity of opinion, whilst not producing a significant difference by level (p=0.088) did indicate some differences between opinions of those in upper and lower academic levels about career progression.

There were widely differing responses to the statement *"In my job I have an acceptable workload"* with 55.6% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 44.4% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing and no neutral responses. There was no significant difference in respondents views by academic level (p=0.697). Two further statements probed issues related to job pressure and changing jobs and showed a similar pattern of responses to the workload question. Whilst over half of the respondents indicated that they felt their job had an acceptable level of pressure over a third did not, a situation which was not affected by academic level (p=0.949). Likewise 39% strongly agreed or agreed that they often thought about changing their job whilst 47% didn't, responses which were not significantly affected by academic level (p=0.234).

2.4 Leadership seeking behaviours and attitudes

All respondents provided their current management roles with only 20% reporting holding a current management position (ranging from pro-vice chancellor, head of school or department, research group manager and other management positions) and 80% reporting no current management role. Respondents were then asked whether they had ever left a university management position because of their concern about role conflicts with their daily life. There were 18% of respondents (n =7) who reported leaving a university managerial position due to role conflicts. Of the 32 respondents not currently in a management position, 5 reported that they have left

Table 1. Gender discrimination and University work:

Statements	n	Mean	SD	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
There is gender discrimination in academic life.	35	4.12	1.4	5.7	11.4	5.7	31.4	45.7
Men are advantaged in academic life	35	4.2	0.01	2.9	5.7	5.7	40	45.7
Women are advantaged in academic life	35	1.6	0.88	54.3	34.3	8.6	0	2.9
Female managers must work harder than their male counterparts in order to achieve recognition	36	4.03	1.13	5.6	5.6	11.1	36.1	42
Female academics must work harder than their male counterparts in order to progress their career	36	4.42	0.97	2.8	2.8	8.3	22.2	63.9
In my job I have an acceptable workload	36	2.89	1.43	27.8	16.7	0	50.0	5.6
I often think about changing my job	36	2.92	1.44	19.4	27.8	13.9	19.4	19.4
In my job I have an acceptable level of pressure	34	3.06	1.26	16.7	19.4	11.1	47.2	5.6

a management position due to role conflict. (16%) and 2 staff currently in management positions (research group manager and 'other management') also reported having left a (previous) position due to role conflict. One third of all respondents reported that they had refused or not applied for a university managerial position because of their concerns about role conflict with their daily life. Over a third of women (35.5%) not currently in managerial positions reported having refused or not applied for such positions whilst 2 women currently in managerial positions reported refusing or not applying for other managerial positions due to role conflict concerns.

Committees are one aspect of the academic role which provide leadership opportunities and 61.5% of respondents reported being on committees with 74% of committee members on 1 to 3 committees. When academic level is considered, 79% of senior women (professors and associate professors) were on committees compared with 53% of senior lecturers, lecturers and research fellows but the difference was not significant (p=0.329). The average hours spent on committees was 6 hours per month (SD 6.9) but this was a highly skewed distribution. On average professors and associate professors spent more time per month on committees (7.8 hours), compared with Senior lecturers/lecturers (5.3 hours) and research fellows and 'others' (1.66 hours) but the difference was not significant (p=0.328).

Responses to the statement that *"I have no problems managing staff because I am a female manager*" were normally distributed with 38.3% reporting they had no problems and 29.4% strongly agreeing/agreeing with the statement (mean value=3.09, SD1.19). More senior staff more frequently said that they had problems because they're women managers than less senior women but this difference was not significant (p=0.39).

Respondents were asked whether *'if they had their time again would you choose to be an academic"* with 87% responding in the affirmative. Responses to the subsequent open ended question *"Why?"* were coded in multiple categories for a number of respondents. The affirmative responses were notable in the highly emotive language with 'love', 'passion', 'thrilled' and 'excited' frequently employed. Half of respondents (50%) gave the reason for their positive response as being that they loved/liked the stimulation, challenges, changes, and excitement of their job, that they have a passion for their job and loved the personal growth opportunities of being in a learning environment. A quarter (25%) wrote that they loved and enjoyed teaching, and 22.5 % wrote that they loved and enjoyed their research. Among respondents 10% reported enjoying personal autonomy, self management, independence and sense of freedom, and 7.5 % of the respondents reported flexible working hours, working from home and part-time work as opportunities to balance family and work. One tenth of the respondents wrote that the new opportunities for progressing and travelling to conferences, meeting interesting people provided reasons for their choice of academe. In the survey, 12.5% of the respondents mentioned the poor working conditions and 'excessive bureaucracy' in their workplace.

4. Discussion

Women's representation in higher education employment remains low The reported academic levels of respondents (19% professors and 19% associate professors) reflect the predominantly Anglo Celtic origins of conference participants and are similar to the 16% and 18% respectively found in Australian universities (Windchester et al 2005). This is well above the representation of women in most continental European and Scandinavian countries (Martin 1999, Morley, 2003b) but well below the 27% of professors and 31% of associate professors found in Turkish universities (OSYM 2006). The 37.5% of respondents in untenured positions is also reflective of the Australian higher education scene where government policy has been to reduce tenure rates and increase contracts to at least one third of academic positions. This policy has seen increasing numbers of women in contract and casual roles which in turn reduces their access to ongoing leadership roles (Chesterman 2004). As West (1995 in Christman 2003) has noted in relation to women obtaining tenure 'women faculty are still suffering from a climate of unexpectation'. Many women in our study reported delaying commencement or completion of their doctorates because of their pregnancy or children. With the average age of doctorate completion by respondents at 41.5 years, women remain late contenders for senior academic positions and this supports the work of Probert (2005) which identified women's lower human capital as a contributing factor in their lower representation in senior university levels.

Davidson and Cooper (1992) found that women in senior roles were less likely than males to have children or be in a long term relationship. However, this is not supported by the finding in the present study which found that women with doctorates were more likely to live with a partner (75%) than less qualified women (60%). Most women respondents in this study were also mothers (72.5%) with the average number of children per mother being 2.4. This represents a

significant commitment and workload by these academic mothers with 30% having 3 or 4 children compared to the 1.4% of women at Ankara University who have more than two children (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000b). How the workload relating to child rearing and housework is distributed among this study sample is also unexpected with 63% reporting that their husbands or partners undertook an equal share of housework. However when it came to sharing the child rearing workload 87% of women respondents were engaged in childcare (principally or equally), compared with 56% of husbands/partners/other parent. The finding that if husbands/partners shared household work, they were also likely to share child care work is also interesting.Perhaps this greater partner contribution to domestic work has facilitated the larger family size of the study women. This is very unlike Turkish data which reports that the gendered 'division of labour' remains with only 20% of husbands sharing family work equally with their academic wives (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000b). It is possible that the smaller role played by Turkish husbands in the home contributes to the smaller family size as women struggle to balance home and work responsibilities. This uneven distribution of the domestic workload in Turkey may also explain why women in Turkey do not seek leadership roles as frequently as their male counterparts (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000b).

Role conflict has been defined as a conflict caused by contradictory or incompatible expectations associated with a particular role (Bovée et al, 1993:508) and the role conflict between several contemporaneous roles such as work and non-work lives is uncompromising (Voydanoff, 1988; Rain et al., 1991). Time constraints are the basis of the qualification "uncompromising" (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985:77). Women in our study overwhelmingly reported experiencing role conflict in terms of both time and expectations. These respondents however did not focus on changed domestic arrangements or household help to manage their role conflict, as Turkish academic women did (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000b). Instead they identified job autonomy strategies which included flexible working hours, working from home and part time work to help balance their academic and personal lives.

One of the significant impacts of perceived role conflicts was on women's participation in senior management positions within universities. Almost one in five (18%) reported having left university managerial positions and over a third (35%) of women had refused or not applied for managerial positions because of perceived role conflicts. This provides new insight into why women are underrepresented at these senior levels and supports the Turkish work of Koker (1988). This evidence of women not applying for leadership or managerial positions provides support for Carrington and Pratt (2003:7-8) suggestions which explain women's under representation at senior levels. They concluded that the 'complex interplay between gender divisions in the home and the workplace' underpinned the disadvantage of women with family responsibilities. It may be the case that women see that managerial and leadership positions are more male-friendly than female-friendly and provide less opportunities for the job flexibilities (flexible hours, working from home and part time work) they require to manage their family and caring responsibilities. This reflects the description of university cultures as chilly towards women and technocratic, patriarchal, hierarchical and gendered . Universities can also be sites of 'men's specific organisational or departmental cultures, including the 'gentlemen's club', 'the family firm', 'the men's room', or 'the boys' gang'" .

Despite affirmative action legislation and equal opportunity programs in Anglo Celtic countries, women in this study still perceived that discrimination occurs. In a review of the impact of affirmative action for women in higher education in Australia, Noble and Mears (2000) noted that EEO policies have not translated into equal opportunities for women. The strong perceptions of these women that gender discrimination occurs (77%) and that men are advantaged (86%) in universities supports research that gender discrimination remains a barrier to managerial advancement (Tharenou 2005). Other research that shows that women have to out perform men to be considered equally competent (Carli 1999), is supported by the findings in this study with most women reporting that women academics have to work harder than men to gain recognition or progress their career . Chesterman, Ross-Smith and Peters , in their study of executive cultures found that whilst there was support for academic women leaders from many males there was criticism by others of what was seen as a 'typical' female style of leadership. Some of the male leaders in their study had also noted that women moving into leadership roles were treated more harshly and had greater expectations placed on them than their male counterparts. However, these results contrast with the Turkish study where 70% of women reported no perceived gender discrimination and only one quarter thought men were advantaged (Ozkanli and Korkmaz, 2000a). This absence of perceived institutionalised discrimination evidenced through explicit objective appointment and promotion criteria may explain the higher proportion of women in

professorial positions in Turkey compared with other nations.

Notwithstanding the problems of role conflict, contract employment and gender discrimination these women remained enthusiastic about their career choice to become academics. They identify four of the five enriched job dimensions in a model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980) as motivating their career choice. The four were Skill Variety, (employee uses a broad range of skills and talents), Task Identity (the wholeness of the job undertaken), Task Significance (the degree of impact on the lives or work of others), and Autonomy (reflecting the individual's freedom to schedule and adapt work methods). The fifth dimension, Feedback which provides an indication how effectively the individual fits into the organisation was not overtly identified.

This study has found that women academics and researchers value their academic lives and the flexibility that many find in the job to help them balance their work and home lives. However role conflict is a fact of life for many of these women, despite relatively equal sharing of home duties, and does influence their progression into leadership and managerial positions within the university, despite having met the academic requirements of doctorate completion. Their lower participation at more senior levels in Anglo Celtic university settings compared with that found in Turkey suggests that affirmative action and EEO policies have been less effective in changing women's participation in senior management in universities than explicit objective institutional criteria for promotion and appointment combined with a national commitment to women's equality.

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