

The Role Of Government Public Relations In Efforts To Prevent Early-Age Marriages

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Abstract.

Child marriages are still common in Indonesia. In reality, early age marriage will have a negative impact on the perpetrators and this will affect their personal and social life, so that if this is not anticipated it will be miserable for the perpetrators, who are children who are still early age. Therefore the role of government Public Relations is very demanding. This is a descriptive qualitative research. Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews with 9 informants consisting of 3 women who were married under the age of 18, 4 teachers and 2 public relations staff of government institutions. This research shows that the operational strategy, persuasive and educative approach, responsibility approach and collaborative approach related to the underage marriage prevention program must be properly implemented in order to carry out the duties and functions of Public Relations in government institutions, so that the program's main objectives can be achieved.

Keywords: Government public relations, early-age marriage, strategy, and approach.

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, underage marriages or early marriages are common in Indonesia, which makes this country one of the top 5 countries with the highest percentage of early marriages in the world, where 34% of women under the age of 18 have married (BPS, 2020).¹ In early marriages, the average age of the bride and groom is still under 16 years old and nationally the percentage has reached 26.9%. As many as 3.06% of Indonesian youth who are married under the age of 15 come from 40% of household groups with the lowest socioeconomic conditions in 2020 (BPS, 2020). Meanwhile, only 1.85% of 40% of the middle and 0.91% from the top 20% of the economic group. The same thing happened to young people who married for the first time at the age of 16-18. The majority (25.79%) came from the bottom 40% of the economic group. On the contrary, only 9.27% came from the 20% top economic group.² This phenomenon is partly caused by the view of families who come from the lowest socio-economic level, who generally have the view that girls do not need higher education, because later they will also work in the kitchen, and only boys need education. Finally, parents also find a solution by marrying off their daughter even though she is still very young. BPS noted that 3.22% of women were married under the age of 15 in 2020. Meanwhile, only 0.34% of men were married at that age. Then, 27.35% of women married at the age of 16-18 years. Meanwhile, only 6.40% of men are married in that age category (BPS, 2020). The large number of women who marry early will have a negative impact on several aspects such as the condition of underage pregnancies. BPS even noted that the number of women between the ages of 16-19 who had given birth reached 4.77% as of March 2020. It is known that the risk of pregnancy for women aged 10-19 years is higher than for women who give birth at an older age.

The problems encountered are usually eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections (UNICEF, 2020). In addition to problems during pregnancy, women who marry at a very young age also usually have problems when giving birth, because giving birth at a very young age is risky much larger, besides that babies born to very young women have a 50% higher risk of mortality and morbidity, in premature conditions, low birth weight (LBW) and experiencing bleeding during childbirth. In accordance with the Child Protection Act, the age of less than 18 years is still classified as a child. For this reason, the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN in Bahasa Indonesia) provides a marriage age limit

of 21 years for women and 25 years for men. BKKBN, as a state institution has the duty and authority to implement government programs in population control, one of which is family planning. To be able to carry out its functions in carrying out various outreach to the wider community, government institutions such as the BKKBN need a section or department that is specifically tasked with providing the public with sufficient information to be able to provide an understanding of a policy or program from the government (Lattimore, 2010) including information to minimize early-age marriage. Unfortunately, public relations in government agencies is still seen to be less active in carrying out its activity programs. Public relations officers need to have good skills and competence. In addition, institutional strengthening is also needed. Public Relations must have physical credibility.

Because a popular government without popular information or means to support the public relations objectives will not be achieved. Even though the BKKBN has long launched programs aimed at minimizing marriage at a young age such as the *GenRe* Program, the campaign to postpone the age of marriage or stop early marriage has not been able to reduce the number of marriages at a young age. The campaign has not been optimal due to lack of outreach to teenagers, schools and parents of students. This research is aimed at answering questions related to what programs have been implemented by BKKBN in outreach to minimize early marriage and what are the obstacles faced by BKKBN in carrying out its Public Relations duties and what are the efforts must be done by the institution to improve the quality of public relations. The results of this study will contribute to communication science, especially related to public relations, and will also provide input for public relations in government institutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Public Relations

According to Frank Jefkins (2004:10), Public Relations are all forms of planned communication, both inside and outside, between an organization and all its audiences in order to achieve specific goals based on mutual understanding. In connection with his duties related to communication, a Public Relations Officer (PRO) is required to be able to foster good relations with the public so that institutional goals can be achieved (Iriantara, 2005:3). Meanwhile, the more detailed Public Relations functions put forward by Cutlip & Center (2006:38), namely supporting the main activities of the institution, building good relations with the public, identifying matters related to public opinion, providing feedback and serving the public and providing advice to institution. The same thing was also expressed by Edward L. Bernay, (2002) in his book *Public Relations* (University of Oklahoma Press) who argued that there are 3 main functions of Public Relations, namely: a. Public relations must be able to provide enlightenment to the public. b. Public relations must be able to persuade the public to change their attitude. c. Public Relations must integrate the attitudes and actions of society.

Therefore, the most important aspect of the duties and functions of public relations is reciprocal two ways traffic communication), as stated by Rosady (2006: 18-19). Another opinion was put forward by Dimock Marshall (1996) who said that the purpose of Public Relations is divided into two, namely positively and defensively. An activity that is aimed at increasing the assessment and goodwill of the institution is a positive PR objective, while a defensive PR objective is intended to provide self-defense in the event of a negative public attack as a result of a misunderstanding. A more detailed definition of PR activities was put forward by H. Fayol quoted from Ruslan (2005:23-24), who argued that Public Relations activities, among others: a. Building corporate image and identity (positive institutional image and 2-way communication with various parties). b. Facing Crisis (including handling complaints and forming crisis management and Public Relations Recovery of Image) c. Promotion of Public Causes (campaigns for the public interest and support social campaigns).

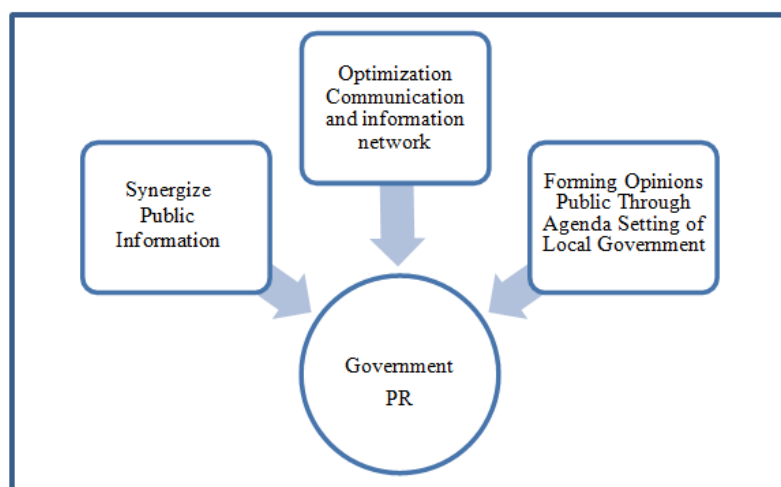
Government Public Relations

Article 11 Permendagri No. 13 of 2011 explains that 1) Public relations management is carried out through activities: assessing public attitudes and opinions, identifying organizational policies and procedures, planning policies, programs and communication activities to gain public understanding and support, 2) Public relations management, including: seeking, collecting, processing, verifying data and information,

compiling public relations programs and activities, planning and compiling a public relations budget; establishing operational standards and public relations procedures, planning and proposing the procurement of infrastructure to support public relations tasks, enhancing human resource capabilities in the field of public relations, forming a center for information management and documentation, disseminating information, and conducting guidance and supervision of the implementation of public relations. As stated by Lattimore (2010) that the most basic function of public relations in government is to help increase government responsiveness, as well as provide the public with adequate information regarding government programs. Means that government public relations is tasked with carrying out policy activities and public services by providing various information about government policies that bind the people or society. Furthermore, providing the best public service, with a straightforward bureaucracy to provide satisfaction to the people or society so that the world of government gets a positive image from the people or the public. Lattimore (2010) also emphasizes 4 public relations models, namely:

(a) the agency model or news agency which illustrates that information moves in one direction from the institution to the public, (b) the public information model, which is a model that illustrates that public relations will always provide information to the public, as implemented by public relations, (c) a 2-way asymmetrical model, public relations always uses research results to carry out measurements and public assessments, (d) a 2-way symmetrical model, which illustrates that institutions and the public adjust to each other. The first three models reflect that persuasion is emphasized in an effort to achieve institutional goals. While the fourth model emphasizes efforts to balance personal interests with the interests of the public or other groups. Dimock and Koenig in Rosady Ruslan (2001: 108) say that the duties and obligations of government agency public relations are: (a) Providing information related to public services, policies, (b) Instilling public confidence and trust and persuading the public to participate in carrying out institutional programs in various fields such as: social, economic, legal, political, as well as maintaining national security and order stability. (c) Honesty and openness are prioritized in providing services in order to be able to carry out tasks in a consistent and professional manner. Ruslan (2001: 110) argues that the main functions of government public relations are basically as follows: (a) securing the policies and work programs of the government it represents, (b) providing services, disseminating messages and information about policies, so as to be able to socialize the programs development programs, both nationally and regionally to the community, (c) to be a communicator as well as a mediator who is proactive in efforts to bridge the interests of government agencies on the one hand and accommodate public (community) aspirations or opinions, and pay attention to the wishes of the community on the other hand, (d) participate actively in creating a conducive and dynamic climate in order to secure stability and development programs, both in the short and long term. The role and function of government Public Relations can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Fig 1. Role and Function of Government PR



Source : Directorate General for Public Information and Communication (2018)

Meanwhile, regarding the activities carried out by public relations, Rosady Ruslan (2001: 112) suggests several routine activities that are usually carried out by government public relations, namely:

- a) Building and fostering mutual understanding between the policies of the heads of agencies/institutions and the internal and external public.
- b) As a service center and providing information or news sources, both from agencies/institutions and from the public.
- c) Documenting every publication activity and special events within the agency/institution, whether stored (documentation) in the form of print or electronic media.
- d) Collecting data and information originating from various sources, especially those relating to the interests of agencies/institutions or public opinion which are developing as research efforts and the need for analysis and development of future work plans and programs.
- e) Ability to create Public Relations/PR publication products, such as news clipping, speech writing concepts, news releases, press releases, internal PR magazines, brochures, company profiles, and annual publication reports.

In carrying out its duties and functions, government public relations refers to the pattern of public relations strategy as stated by Ahmad S. Adnanputra quoted by Ruslan (2006: 134) that the stages of public relations strategy activities are: (1) Operational Strategy, which is carried out through an approach to the public, through socio-cultural mechanisms and values prevailing in society from public opinion or the will of society. (2). Persuasive and Educative Approach, by creating two-way (reciprocal) communication by disseminating information from the organization to the public that is educational and provides information, as well as by taking a persuasive approach to create mutual understanding, respect, understanding, tolerance and so on. (3). Social Responsibility Approach, carried out by fostering an attitude of social responsibility to obtain mutual benefits. (4). The cooperative approach, in the form of fostering harmonious relations between institutions and various groups, both internal relations and external relations so as to create mutual understanding.

Early-age marriage

There are several definitions regarding early marriage or underage marriage. Article 81 paragraph 2 of Law Number 23 of 2002, explains that a child is someone who is not yet 18 years of age and when getting married, this includes underage marriage. Whereas early marriage according to the BKKBN is a marriage that takes place at an age below the reproductive age, namely less than 20 years for women and less than 25 years for men. Marriage at an early age is vulnerable to reproductive health problems such as increasing morbidity and mortality during childbirth, giving birth to premature babies and low birth weight babies and easily experiencing stress. According to UNICEF, early marriage is a marriage carried out by a couple or one of the partners who are still categorized as children or adolescents under the age of 19 years. Another international agency that also focuses on children's issues is the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which states that early marriage is marriage that is carried out officially or unofficially before the age of 18.

There are many factors behind the occurrence of early marriages like in Indonesia, including (Tamher and Noorkasiani, 2009) are:

1. Individual factors
 - a) This includes the physical, mental and social development that a person experiences. The faster this development is experienced, the faster the marriage will take place, thus encouraging marriage at a young age.
 - b) The level of education possessed by adolescents. The lower the level of education, the more it encourages young marriage to take place.
 - c) Attitudes and relationships with parents. Marriage at a young age can take place because of the attitude of obedience and/or resistance by adolescents to their parents' orders.
 - d) As a way out to run away from various difficulties encountered, including economic difficulties. It is not uncommon to find marriages that take place at a very young age, partly because teenagers want a higher economic status.

2. Family Factors

The role of parents in determining the marriage of their children is influenced by the following factors:

(a) Socio-economic families where due to the economic burden experienced, parents have the desire to marry off their daughters.

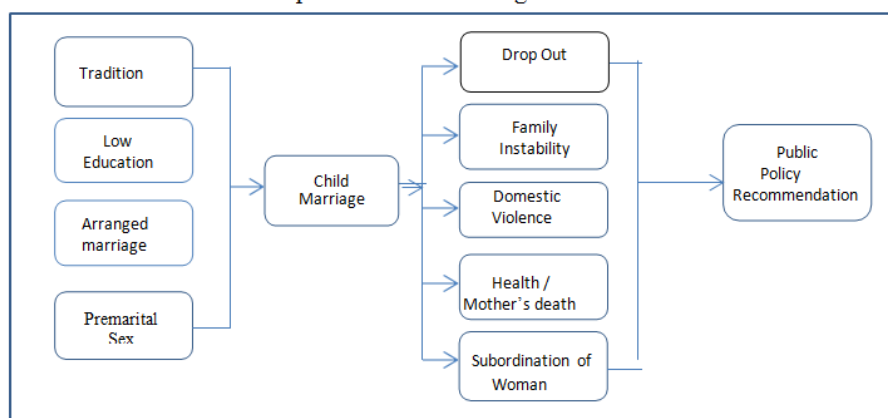
(b) The level of family education is low and is closely related to one's understanding of family life.

(c) Beliefs and or customs that apply in the family, such as increasing family social status, strengthening relationships between families, and or to maintain family lineage

(d) The inability of the family to deal with adolescent problems. Forced to marry off a child because she was pregnant out of wedlock.

Early-age marriages also have an unfavorable impact on the perpetrators. Field et al (2004) in Djamilah, Reni Kartikawati (2014) suggested several impacts of underage marriage, namely: (a) Drop Out (dropout), (b) subordination within the family, (c) risk of domestic violence (KDRT)), (d) lack of control over reproductive health, and (5) high chance of maternal death. In other words, child marriage has social, economic and health impacts both in the short and long term.

Figure 2
The impact of Child Marriage in Indonesia



Source: Djamilah, Reni Kartikawati (2014)

III. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Mulyana (2008: 145) argues that methodology is the process, principles, and procedures that we use to approach problems and seek answers. The nature of this research is descriptive by providing an objective description of a situation in solving and answering problems faced in the current situation or explaining phenomena, individual characteristics, situations or certain groups accurately. Descriptive research is a research method used with the aim of finding the widest possible data or information on research objects at a certain time (Hidayat, 2010). The purpose of this descriptive research is to make systematic, factual and accurate descriptions of the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena investigated. Metodologi. Data collection techniques were carried out by semi-structured interviews (Semi-structured Interview). This type of interview is also included in the in-depth interview category, which is more flexible in its implementation compared to structured interviews. The purpose of this type of interview is to find more open issues, where the parties invited to the interview are asked for their opinions and ideas. Sugiyono (2010) explains that in qualitative research, the sampling technique that is often used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique for data sources with certain considerations. These certain considerations, for example the person is considered to know best about what is expected, so that it will make it easier for researchers to explore the social object/situation being studied. In this study, researchers determined 9 informants to be interviewed. These ten informants are 2 public relations staff from BKKBN to gather information regarding the efforts that have been made by the public relations department to minimize underage marriages and what obstacles

are encountered in the field. The researchers also interviewed 3 women who were married under the age of 18 to find out what their experiences were until they finally had to marry at a very young age and whether they had never received direction and information regarding the impact of getting married at an early age.

Researchers also interviewed 4 teachers, 2 junior high school teachers and 2 high school teachers. This is intended because researchers want to dig deeper whether there are government representatives such as the BKKBN who collaborate with schools in implementing programs to prevent early marriage. Meanwhile the location of this research is in Jakarta for the reason that researchers want to see whether in big cities like Jakarta, there are still cases of underage marriages. Due to ethical reasons, namely the informant's objection to writing down their names, in this paper the researcher only writes down the informant's names in the form of initials (Hopf, 2004) The data analysis method used is the Miles and Huberman data analysis method (Sugiyono, 2010), namely the activity in qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continues continuously until complete, so that the data is saturated. Miles and Huberman explain that the analysis phase in qualitative research generally begins with data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. Sugiyono (2010: 249) explains that data reduction is a sensitive thinking process that requires intelligence and high breadth and depth of insight. After the data is reduced, the next step is presenting the data. In qualitative research, data presentation can be done in the form of brief descriptions, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and the like. The form of presentation of the selected data is in the form of tables. Sugiyono (2010) explains that the initial conclusions put forward are still temporary, and will change if strong evidence is not found to support the next data collection stage. However, if the conclusions put forward at an early stage are supported by valid and consistent evidence, then the conclusions put forward are credible conclusions.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of interviews with 3 women who were married under the age of 18, obtained data that while they were attending junior high school there had never been any directives or seminars on preventing early marriage. The three also explained that they had never heard of any activities aimed at guiding students to avoid early marriage. Of the 3 women interviewed, 2 said that they married young because they were 'married by accident' or got pregnant out of wedlock and one person said that their parents arranged an arranged marriage because that is the culture of the Betawi people. The following is data obtained from interviews with 3 women who were married under the age of 18.

Table 1. The results of interviews with 3 women who were married under 18 years

Age at the time Marry	Current age	Reason for Marriage	Marital Status	Reason for Divorce
Wife : 17 Husband: 19	20 years old 22 years old	Pregnant before marriage	Divorced after 1 year of marriage	a. Unemployed husband b. Lots of conflicts c. Economy problem d. Parental encouragement
Wife : 17 Husband: 18	20 years old 21 years old	Pregnant before marriage	Divorced after 6 months of marriage	a. Husband does not have a steady job b. Lots of conflicts c. Economy problem d. Wife experienced domestic violence e. Parental encouragement
Wife : 16 Husband: 23	19 years old 26 years old	Arranged by parents	Divorced after 2 years of marriage	a. Not allowed to continue school by the husband b. Lots of conflict c. Husband does not respect wife d. The wife does not feel properly treated as a wife e. Wife experienced domestic violence

Meanwhile, regarding the negative impact of underage marriage, the three women said that they had never heard in detail about this. They also said that at that time they still did not understand what life should be like after marriage. Therefore, after marriage, it turns out that many things that would never have occurred occurred, such as the treatment of husbands who were arbitrary and very contradictory when they were not

married. The husband who turned out to be lazy and did not want to work. Things like this turn out to be triggers for fights and eventually lead to divorce. When asked about seminars or briefings related to the negative impact of marrying at a young age, the three women interviewed said they rarely heard about this. There are no public service advertisements on television, which are often advertisements for family planning but do not provide information about the bad effects of marrying at a young age. "I have never heard of a seminar to prevent underage marriages. Until now, on TV or radio shows, I have never heard of any information about it. Even though this information must be given to the wider community so that they understand that early marriage is not good because the impact is not only on the young couple but also on the unborn child. At that time, because I was 17 years old, I did not understand anything about the life that must be lived after marriage. What's more, I'm still a 2nd grade high school student, so all I feel is a good teenage romance.

But it turned out that problems arose after we got married, starting with the problem of his bad qualities that had only been seen since we got married, namely being lazy and rude. These two things are always the trigger for our fights. My husband, who is lazy, doesn't want to look for work, just stays at home and prefers to invite his friends to play games, so economic problems arise." (IY- Informant who divorced after 1 year of marriage) This is in line with the statement of Field, et al (2004) which said that the effects of early marriage include causing a child to drop out of school, not to be treated as a proper wife, and to become a victim of domestic violence. As said by the informant, he rarely hears socialization or public service advertisements regarding the adverse effects of marriage at a young age. This is a question for the community, how is the performance of government public relations, especially the agency most responsible for population issues, namely the BKKBN. As stated by Lattimore (2010) that the most basic function of public relations in government is to help increase government responsiveness, as well as provide the public with adequate information regarding government programs. In this study, researchers also interviewed 4 teachers, namely 2 teachers from junior high schools and 2 other teachers from senior high schools. The four teachers said that so far there has been no cooperation between the government and the school regarding activities related to preventing underage marriages. There are activities that have been carried out in schools in the form of seminars, but these were held by educational NGOs. "So far there has never been any collaboration between schools and the government or instructions from the government for schools to hold activities to prevent underage marriages. Our school once held a seminar related to this on the initiative of an educational NGO.

But even then it was only in the form of a seminar and not an educative and persuasive long-term program. It is very difficult if we want students to understand the bad effects of early marriage without a program involving them. Especially now, teenagers can access various pornographic sites freely from mobile phones. Religious studies and moral education alone are not enough, there must be more concrete action from the government. The government must involve relevant stakeholders, not only schools, but also NGOs concerned with women's issues, NGOs concerned with children, even religious and community leaders, the Office of Religious Affairs, so that they also understand that it is not so easy to marry off minors. In addition, it must be supported by an intensive or continuous campaign. There must be an intensive campaign regarding the negative effects of early marriage, in all lines of media, because this will not only educate teenagers but also their parents. What I see right now, even campaigns to sort out organic, inorganic and plastic waste are much more intensively carried out, either through the media of television, radio, large billboards on the main road to public places. This is in stark contrast to socialization or campaigns for the dangers of early marriage which can damage this nation's generation." (KL- Junior High School Teacher) This is in line with what was stated by Ahmad S. Adnanputra as quoted by Ruslan (2006: 134) that in carrying out its public relations activities, government public relations must carry out the stages of public relations strategy namely operational strategy, persuasive and educative approach, social responsibility approach, and social responsibility approach. cooperation, which can be carried out by the government and stakeholders, among others, is the school. In this study, researchers also interviewed 2 staff from the BKKBN Public Relations Department.

The results of the interviews show that the central government has coordinated efforts to prevent early marriage in every region of Indonesia, but the implementation is left to the respective regional governments. The local government must have a collaborative program with various stakeholders such as schools, NGOs, government agencies, and must be able to embrace entrepreneurs. Because it is impossible for the central government to run its own program without support from other parties. This is in accordance with Ruslan's statement (2006) that collaboration is important to foster harmonious relations between institutions and various groups, both internal relations and external relations so as to create mutual understanding. In this regard, the BKKBN has recommended that local governments strengthen cooperation with schools, PKK women's organizations, women's NGOs and other stakeholders. Various activities can be carried out and of course they are not only useful but also delivered interactively and interestingly. The activities carried out must also be educative and persuasive, meaning that they can educate and invite the target to understand well the messages conveyed in the program (Ruslan, 2006). "Especially when it comes to teenagers, socialization and campaigns are not just making billboards, banners or flyers, but more concretely involving the target to participate in these activities. But unfortunately, the activities carried out in each region have not been maximized, so that it seems that it is only socialization or one-day seminar activities that are purely ceremonial in nature, even though the main purpose is not that. In the future we will change our strategy and approach, so apart from coordinating with regional parties, we will also carry out centralized campaigns such as what has been done by the government for the Work From Home (WFH) or "just stay at home" campaign, the "leave the plastic bag" campaign, the "dangers of smoking", and others. (EP- BKKBN public relations staff) From the results of the analysis above, it can be said that public relations programs from the government that are carried out with the right strategies and procedures will produce the expected results.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that public relations activities at BKKBN have been carried out in accordance with their duties and functions, but in relation to the prevention of underage marriage programs in each region it has not been optimal. Cooperation with relevant stakeholders such as schools, NGOs, religious leaders and the community needs to be continuously improved. BKKBN Public Relations has implemented operational strategies, educative and persuasive approaches, social responsibility approaches and collaborative approaches, in the form of fostering harmonious relations between institutions and various groups, both internal and external. For further research, the researcher suggests conducting research related to government PR for the prevention of early marriage with a different approach.

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