



Community Service Learning: Volunteering Tendencies of Freshmen and Sophomores in a Higher Educational Institution

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ABSTRACT

Preparing students in higher educational institutions for engaged citizenship remains underexamined. Through community service learning, the tendencies of freshmen and sophomores in services and volunteering must be examined. This survey examined students' rendered services, affiliations before service learning, and volunteering behavior predictors and their associations. Using Google Form, 250 participated. Seminars or orientation programs, tree growing or planting, and cleanup drives are common services rendered. Most are not affiliated with or involved in organizations or volunteering activities. The predictors significantly influence their tendency for future community service. Community services rendered and affiliations or experience prior to rendering community service are both associated with freshmen and sophomores' volunteering behavior. An institutional volunteering program must be developed, and a broader scope must be considered for future study.

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering serves as a crucial mechanism for fostering social cohesion and addressing the needs of communities on a global scale. It empowers individuals to make a beneficial impact on society while improving their growth through the acquisition of skills, social connections, and a sense of belonging. In the United States, for instance, the Higher Education Research Institute has documented a significant desire among entering college students to engage in community service, with record numbers expressing that helping others is a critical personal goal (Grimm Jr & Dietz, 2018). Although there is a significant level of interest, the actual engagement rates in volunteering have remained constant, suggesting a disparity between intention and action (Grimm Jr & Dietz, 2018).

This inquiry is especially pertinent as higher educational institutions endeavor to adequately equip students academically and as proactive, involved members of society. The decrease in the rate of college students engaging in volunteer work, as indicated by studies demonstrating a decline since the mid-2000s, emphasizes the immediate necessity for institutions to comprehend and tackle the obstacles that hinder students from turning their intentions into actions (Grimm Jr & Dietz, 2018; Hyde & Knowles, 2013). Present research emphasizes a notable lack of understanding regarding the enduring volunteering inclinations of students after their initial involvement in community service. Although numerous studies suggest that volunteering throughout college can result in improved personal and professional growth, there is limited research on transitioning from initial involvement to long-term volunteerism. An example is a study conducted in 2023 by Hu, Zhang, Wang, Chen, and Liu, which revealed that cognitive factors, such as comprehending the individual and societal advantages of volunteering, have a positive impact on students' attitudes and intentions toward volunteer service. However, these factors do not always result in actual engagement in volunteer activities.

Moreover, although students demonstrate a significant inclination towards community service, obstacles such as lack of coordination within volunteer groups or organizations and conflicting academic obligations sometimes impede their sustained engagement (Tao, 2022). This discrepancy indicates the necessity for additional research on how initial community service experiences can be optimally utilized to promote a culture of continuous civic engagement among college students. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the specific factors that either encourage or discourage sustained involvement in volunteer activities after their initial experiences (Asio, Sardina, & Olaguir, 2023).

Community service learning (CSL) can contribute to students' inclination towards volunteering. Butcher, Howard, McMeniman, and Thom (2003) acknowledge the significance of CSL in the learning process, highlighting the impact of students' service to the community. According to Afzal and Hussain (2020), implementing community service learning (CSL) in higher education enhances knowledge of diversity, improved social skills, and a heightened sense of responsibility among students. Examining the inclination towards volunteering among first-year and second-year college students, commonly known as freshmen and sophomores, is an important and relevant research topic, especially given the current educational landscape and societal demands. This study draws upon the theoretical framework that Husnina, Asmuni, and Ismail (2017) proposed to identify factors that predict volunteering behavior. As higher education institutions become more aware of the significance of civic engagement, it is essential to understand the predictors influencing students' tendencies to volunteer. This understanding can provide valuable insights for improving community service programs and promoting a culture of volunteerism on campuses (Hu et al., 2023; Cruce & Moore, 2007). However, CSL served as a moderating factor in the partial explanation of the association between increased social or civic involvement and motivation (Sze-Yeung Lai & Chi-leung Hui, 2020), so this study provides insight into freshmen and sophomores volunteers' backgrounds and volunteering behaviors in relation to their propensity to participate in future community service activities.

A survey of the volunteering tendencies among freshmen and sophomores is required due to the contemporary educational environment, characterized by growing constraints on students and evolving societal demands. As these students progress to higher years in college, they encounter distinctive obstacles that can impact their inclination or capacity to participate in voluntary activities. Gaining insight into these processes can assist educational institutions in developing focused interventions that promote volunteerism and enrich students' overall collegiate experience. Furthermore, the consequences of this research go beyond specific campuses. Higher educational institutions can enhance broader societal outcomes, such as enhanced community relations and increased civic participation, by identifying factors that predict volunteering behavior (Nichol, Wilson, Rodrigues, & Haighton, 2024; Hu et al., 2023). This study can offer practical insights that can be used to guide global policies and practices in higher education institutions.

Ultimately, investigating the volunteering tendencies of freshmen and sophomores after CSL is imperative and indispensable. Therefore, this study aims to assess the community service provided for the freshmen and sophomores, their affiliations or involvements prior to their service learning experience, and the predictors of their volunteering behavior. It determines associations between the community services rendered and the predictors of their volunteering behavior (PVB) and affiliations or experiences prior to community service and their PVB. This investigation offers an understanding of the volunteering tendencies of freshmen and sophomores, which contributes to the understanding of how to encourage civic engagement in higher education

further. Unlike most studies that focus on the beneficiaries' evaluation of the program or project provided to them, this study explicitly predicts the volunteering behaviors of freshmen and sophomores after CSL. Importantly, this study provides higher educational institutions with the essential knowledge to cultivate a culture of volunteerism that is advantageous to both students and the communities they serve.

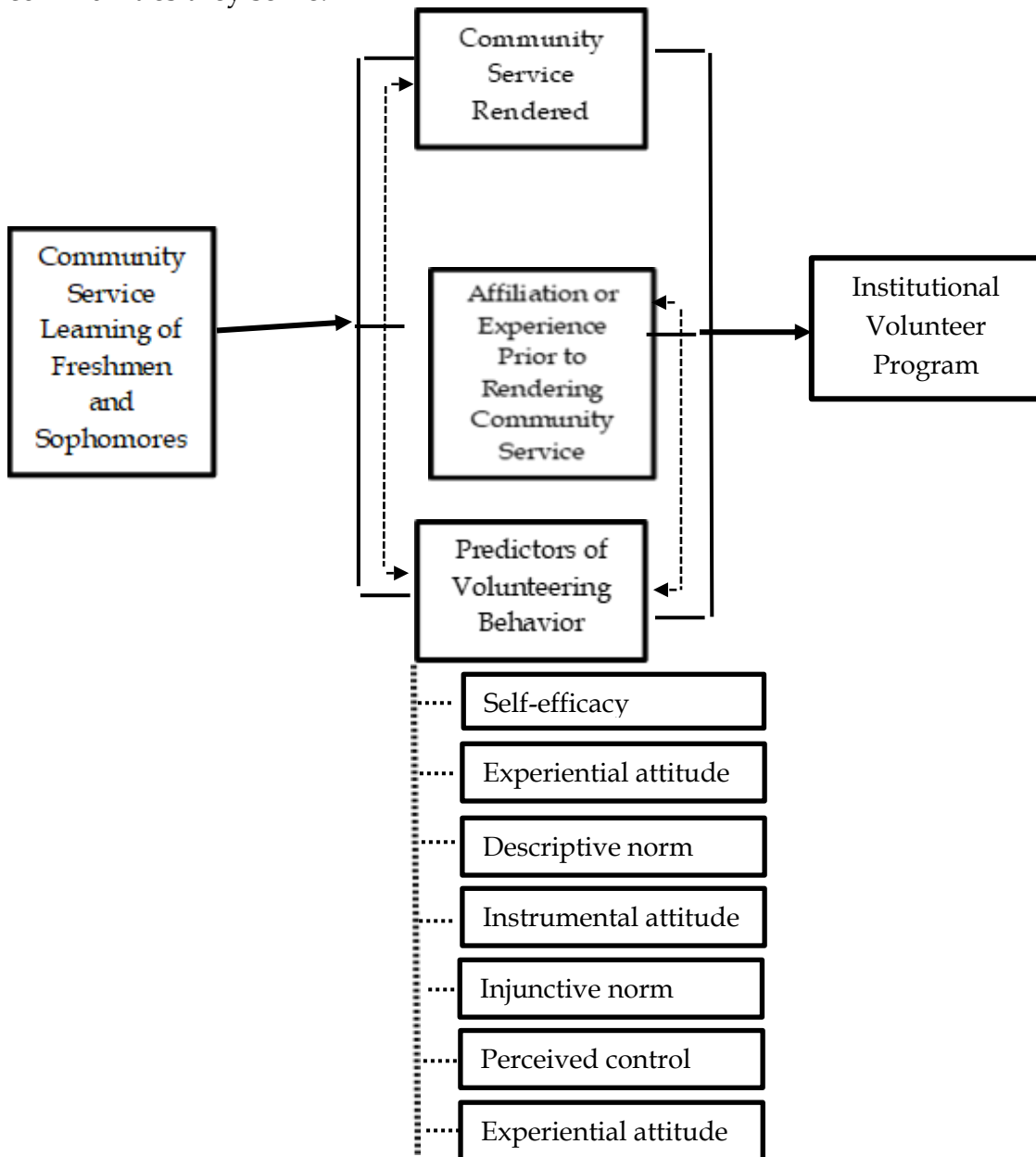


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

As embedded in the tertiary education curriculum in the Philippines, students must complete the National Service Training Program (NSTP) before they earn their degrees. In this study, while there are three program components, students enrolled in the Civic Welfare Training Service are the proponents. There are two semesters in a year to complete the program. The first semester focused on topics involving theories, concepts, and practices mandated in Republic Act No. 9163. The second semester delved into the students' exposure through community service learning (CSL) and conducting initiatives that benefit the communities in the forms of activities, projects, and programs (APPs). These APPs were assessed through rubrics. However, before implementing these APPs, proposals were presented to and evaluated by the course instructor and monitoring officers. After the implementation, the freshmen and sophomores sought and recorded feedback from the beneficiaries as part of their submitted documentation.

This study employed an online survey of freshmen and sophomores who completed the NSTP at The College of Maasin, Inc., Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines, in the school year 2023-2024. They were determined through simple random sampling, computed using a 5% margin of error from the 697 population. Two hundred fifty students agreed to participate in the survey. They came from seven bachelor's degree programs offered by the college. The content of the survey tool underwent a content validity test, while the Google Form passed a qualitative face validity test. The predictors of volunteering behavior were patterned from Husnina et al.'s theoretical framework. Links to the Google Form were distributed upon the college authorities' approval. But, before administering the tool, a pilot test was conducted with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.962, which is highly reliable in its internal consistency. This study used column charts and mode for descriptive statistics. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was integrated for the Kruskal Wallis test to present, analyze, and interpret the data appropriately after considering the assumptions and extremities in hypothesizing significant associations between the study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey's response rate is 90.58% (250 out of 276). The freshmen who responded were randomly identified from Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Bachelor of Secondary Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Accountancy, and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. However, the students from Bachelor of Science in Nursing consisted the sophomores.

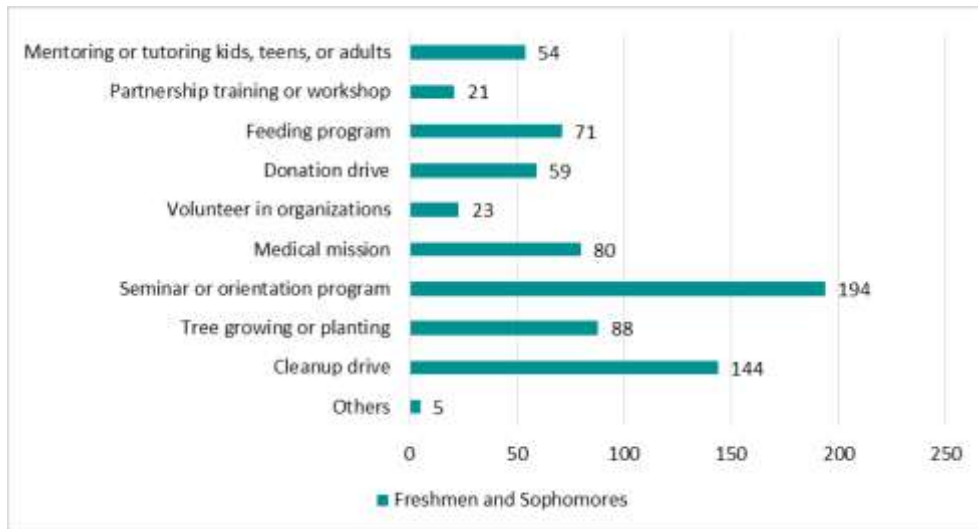


Figure 2. Community Service Rendered

As shown in Figure 2, freshmen and sophomores have served communities most through a seminar or orientation program ($f = 194$). It suggests that freshmen and sophomores are likely engaging in activities that provide information and guidance, possibly reflecting their need for orientation in their new academic environment.

The cleanup drive ($f = 144$) follows as the second most popular activity, indicating a strong inclination towards environmental service among the freshmen and sophomores. Other activities, such as tree planting or growing ($f = 88$) and medical mission ($f = 80$), follow. It relates to Moore, Warta, and Erichsen’s (2014) study that students serve to promote health and wellness and deliver education. Moreover, the least rendered service includes partnership training or workshop ($f = 21$), which may suggest that these activities are less accessible or appealing to the freshmen and sophomores cohort.

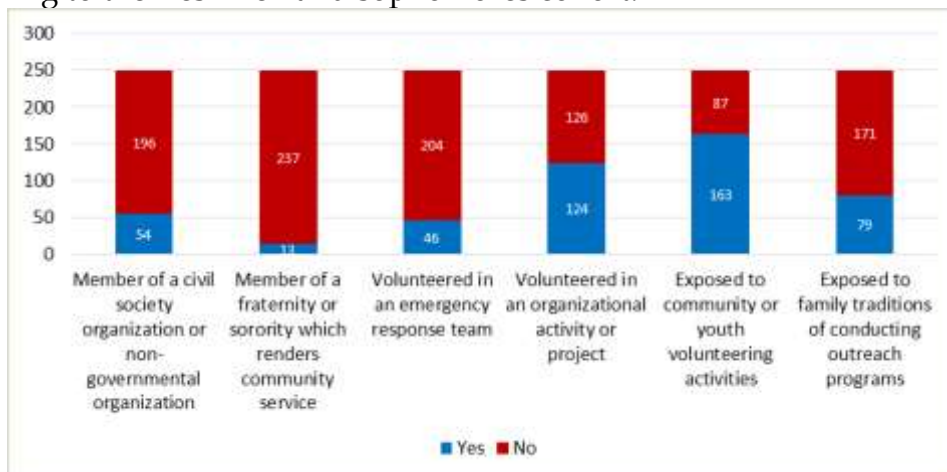


Figure 3. Affiliation or Experience Prior to Rendering Community Service

Figure 3 indicates that a significant number of freshmen and sophomores ($f = 163$) have prior exposure to community or youth volunteering activities, suggesting that many students come into their college experience with some level of community engagement. However, a substantial portion of freshmen and sophomores ($f = 237$) are not members of fraternities or sororities that engage in

community service, which may indicate a preference for independent or alternative forms of community involvement.

The lower frequencies of volunteering in emergency response teams ($f = 204$) and membership in civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations ($f = 196$) suggest that these avenues may not be as popular or accessible to freshmen and sophomores. The data indicates a trend where freshmen and sophomores are more likely to engage in community service through informal or less structured means rather than through organized groups. Interestingly, freshmen and sophomores who volunteered in an organizational activity or project come too close to those who did not ($f = 124$ versus $f = 126$)

Table 1. Predictors of Volunteering Behavior among Freshmen and Sophomores

Statement	Mo	Interpretation
<i>Experiential Attitude</i>		
1. I feel happy.	3	Significant influence
2. I sense a connection or emotional attachment to serve.	3	Significant influence
3. I feel spiritually satisfied.	3	Significant influence
4. I am a more sensitive person.	3	Significant influence
5. I feel a clear conscience.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence
<i>Instrumental Attitude (Cognitive)</i>		
6. I can express the range of my knowledge and skills.	3	Significant influence
7. I am appreciated by my supervisors or managers.	3	Significant influence
8. I have the independence to make decisions.	3	Significant influence
9. I can demonstrate my values.	3	Significant influence
10. I can acquire new information.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence

<i>Injunctive Norm</i>		
11. I have vacant hours to serve.	2	Little influence
12. I am allowed by my parents to be part of any activity.	3	Significant influence
13. I have actively involved teachers.	2	Little influence
14. I need a good social atmosphere.	3	Significant influence
15. I consider it a job training or preparation ground.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence
<i>Descriptive Norm</i>		
16. I am inspired by my relatives, who are advocates.	3	Significant influence
17. I know a person who can help me.	3	Significant influence
18. I have friends who volunteer.	3	Significant influence
19. I admire my family's advocacy to reach out.	3	Significant influence
20. I am convinced by my instructor.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence
<i>Perceived Control (Environmental factors)</i>		
21. I am involved in areas suitable to my skills.	3	Significant influence
22. I identify with the objectives of the initiative.	3	Significant influence
23. I am challenged through the activities.	3	Significant influence
24. I can manage people and situations.	3	Significant influence
25. I am aware of my strengths.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence

<i>Self-efficacy</i>		
26. I am certain that I will accomplish tasks.	3	Significant influence
27. I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	3	Significant influence
28. I can succeed at almost any endeavor I set my mind.	3	Significant influence
29. I am able to overcome challenges.	3	Significant influence
30. I can perform even during tough times.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence
<i>Role identity</i>		
31. I want to be a part of something noble as a student.	3	Significant influence
32. I must volunteer to conform to my degree program's essence.	3	Significant influence
33. I have to make sure my schedule permits.	3	Significant influence
34. I want to be involved in any mission to help others.	3	Significant influence
35. I enjoy leading or being led by volunteers.	3	Significant influence
	3	Significant influence

(Legend: **1** - No influence; **2** - Little influence; **3** - Significant influence; **4** - Highly significant influence; **Mo** - Mode)

As shown in Table 1, all predictors of the volunteering behavior of freshmen and sophomores have a significant influence on their tendency to volunteer after the community service learning experience. It validates the theoretical framework developed by Husnina et al. in 2017, indicating the contribution of these predictors to the volunteering tendency of the youth, in this case, the freshmen and sophomores. However, two items under the *injunctive norm* have only little influence in terms of having “vacant hours to serve” and “actively involved teachers”. Nevertheless, the more likely they are to engage in volunteer or community service behavior, the higher their behavioral intention to participate in any volunteer or community service (Hu et al., 2023) in the future.

Table 2. CSR and PVB Test Statistics^{a,b}

	Predictors of Volunteering Behavior (PVB)						
	EA	IA	IN	DN	PC	Se	RI
Kruskal-Wallis H	12.244	8.959	11.505	25.260	16.744	19.814	22.637
df	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Asymp. Sig.	.141	.346	.175	.001	.033	.011	.004

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: exp

(**CSR** = Community Service Rendered, **EA** = Experiential Attitude, **IA** = Instrumental Attitude, **IN** = Injunctive Norm, **DN** = Descriptive Norm, **PC** = Perceived Control, **Se** = Self-efficacy, **RI** = Role Identity)

As shown in Table 2, there is an association between CSR and PVB in terms of the tendency of freshmen and sophomores to volunteer after CSL. Most p-values indicate that CSR and DN (.001<.05), PC (.033<.05), Se (.011<.05), and RI (.004<.05) are not independent of each other. It suggests that CSR may influence the tendency of freshmen and sophomores to volunteer after CSL.

Table 3. AEPRCS and PVB Test Statistics^{a,b}

	Predictors of Volunteering Behavior (PVB)						
	EA	IA	IN	DN	PC	Se	RI
Kruskal-Wallis H	7.601	8.065	13.938	37.895	21.435	12.254	18.531
df	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	.269	.233	.030	.000	.002	.057	.005

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: exp

(**AEPRCS** = Affiliation or Experience Prior to Rendering Community Service, **EA** = Experiential Attitude, **IA** = Instrumental Attitude, **IN** = Injunctive Norm, **DN** = Descriptive Norm, **PC** = Perceived Control, **Se** = Self-efficacy, **RI** = Role Identity)

There is an association between AEPRCS and PVB on the tendency of freshmen and sophomores to volunteer after CSL, as demonstrated in Table 3. The majority of the p-values indicate that CSR and IN (.030<.05), DN (.000<.05), PC (.002<.05), and RI (.005<.05) are statistically related to each other. It suggests that the AEPRCS may influence the tendency of freshmen and sophomores to volunteer after CSL.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The freshmen and sophomores have served communities most through a seminar or orientation program. The high frequency of implementation of seminars and orientation programs indicates that freshmen and sophomores may prioritize activities that help them acclimate to their new environment and build a sense of community. Cleanup drive, tree growing or planting, and conducting medical mission follow as more frequent services rendered by these freshmen and sophomores. It implies the necessity of promoting educational awareness campaigns. It also can reflect the recent environmental and health conditions of the planet. The significant involvement in cleanup drives reflects a growing

awareness and commitment to environmental issues among young individuals. The lower participation in other specialized activities may highlight barriers such as lack of awareness, accessibility, or interest in these types of services. Freshmen and sophomores are actively seeking opportunities to engage in community service, particularly in areas that align with their immediate needs and interests.

Moreover, the majority of them, before community service learning, are exposed to community or youth volunteering activities. Prior experiences in community service play a crucial role in shaping freshmen and sophomores's willingness to engage in volunteer activities. The high number of students exposed to community volunteering indicates a foundational understanding of the importance of service, which may influence their future volunteering behavior. On the other hand, they are not affiliated with organizations nor exposed to activities that render community service before their community service learning experiences. The lack of affiliation with formal organizations like fraternities or non-governmental organizations may reflect a desire for more personal or direct forms of engagement rather than traditional group-based service. This insight can inform future community service initiatives by highlighting the need for accessible and appealing opportunities that resonate with the interests and experiences of freshmen and sophomores.

All predictors of the volunteering behavior of freshmen and sophomores have a significant influence on their tendency to volunteer after the community service learning experience. This result signals why freshmen and sophomores may volunteer despite the probability that items from any of the predictors can project a highly significant influence. However, having vacant hours to serve and actively involved teachers only has a negligible influence. Thus, their vacancy and teachers' active involvement in community services slightly affects their tendency to volunteer.

The community service rendered and the predictors of volunteering behavior are associated with each other. Also, the affiliations or experience prior to rendering community service among freshmen and sophomores are not independent of predictors of volunteering behavior as well. The study specifically focused on freshmen and sophomores, which provides insights into how early college experiences may shape volunteering tendencies. Also, it implies the need to investigate further that if they are related, the former may be caused by the latter or vice versa. Emerging studies must be conceptualized to deepen or broaden the exploration.

Most importantly, colleges and universities must incorporate community service learning strategies to cater to the learning needs and volunteering behaviors of freshmen and sophomores. They need to establish centers and institutionalize volunteer programs for freshmen and sophomores to ensure the continuity and sustainability of initial community service experiences. Furthermore, studies, including junior and senior tertiary students, on the investigation of their volunteering tendencies through and after community service learning must be considered for future reference.

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