



Prosocial Behaviour and Employment commitment in the Public Sector Organisations: A Conceptual Study of Bayelsa State government Agencies

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Abstract

Prosocial behaviour, which entails optional behaviours that are designed to benefit others, has continued to be identified as a central behavioural mechanism that boosts the attitude of the workers and the organizational performance. This paper conceptualises the concept of prosocial behaviour in defining employment commitment in the context of the public sector organisations and specifically in the context of Bayelsa State government agencies in Nigeria. Although prosociality has increasingly become the focus of scholarly attention, little conceptual analysis has been done as to its distinct contribution to subnational public sector in developing economies. Based on the Social Exchange Theory, Affective Events Theory and the Public Service Motivation Theory, the paper hypothesises that prosocial behaviour positively affects affective and normative commitment due to the mutually dependent reciprocal social evaluations, positive emotional experiences and a feeling of moral obligation to values of public service. The article constructs an overall theoretical framework and provides propositions to be verified subsequently in an empirical study. The research helps to bridge the gap in the literature on organizational behaviour and the administration of the state by placing prosocial behaviour as a strategic asset to enhance employee commitment and delivery of the services to the citizens. The policy implications on enhancing commitment in the public sector organizations in developing economies are discussed.

Keywords:

Prosocial Behaviour, Employment Commitment, Public Sector Organisations, Social Exchange, Public Service Motivation, Nigeria.

1.1 Introduction

Organizational requirements in the public sector are growing to demand efficiency, accountability and better service delivery within the public sector amidst the prevailing fiscal limitations and

other complicated institutional structures. In the emerging economies, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and absence of performance-based rewards also cause these difficulties to be further exacerbated, which tend to undermine motivating the staff and organizational performance (Akinyemi and Ogunleye, 2023). Low employee morale, poor organizational attachment, and deteriorating commitment to values of the public service are often encountered in the public sector, which has an adverse impact on service delivery and performance of the organisation (Olaniyi and Olamide, 2022).

The psychological attachment and the loyalty of employees towards the organization define employment commitment that has been widely known as a key factor in determining organizational performance (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023). Dedicated employees will tend to have discretionary effort, match personal interests with organizational goals, and have tougher grit in the event of misfortune (Adebisi and Olorunfemi, 2022). Nevertheless, continuance commitment mechanisms tend to maintain commitment in most public sector organizations as opposed to affective or normative commitment. This translates into poor employee engagement and poor service orientation.

Prosocial behavior-voluntary actions which help others- is a critical, but under researched element of promoting high employee commitment in public sector organizations (Ibrahim and Olusegun, 2023). Such behaviours extend past the job requirements and encompass behaviours like assistance to fellow employees, knowledge sharing and inter-unit cooperation. The prosocial behaviours are highly compatible with the ethos of public service in the situation of a public sector organization, especially when dealing with such an environment as Bayelsa State, which is relational in nature and where collective welfare is the primary concern. However, the prosocial behaviour role in promoting employment commitment in the public sector organizations is not well covered despite its potential, especially at the subnational level in developing countries such as Nigeria.

The conceptualization of prosocial behaviour, which is voluntary behaviour and whose motive is to benefit other people, is a concept that we will use in this paper as a critical aspect in the development of high commitment amongst employees working in the public sector. Although prosociality has become an influential topic in organizational behaviour studies, little has been done to investigate its impact on the level of employee commitment in subnational organizations that operate in developing economies, like that of Nigeria.

This gap is what this paper seeks to address through the development of a conceptual framework that would connect prosocial behaviour to employee commitment in government agencies in the Bayelsa State using Social Exchange Theory (SET), Affective Events Theory (AET), and Public Service Motivation Theory (PSM). This way, it presents a new idea about the significance of prosocial behavior in the development of affective, normative and continuance commitment in the public sector organization.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the low morale of the employees, weak organizational attachment, lack of commitment to the value of public service, and absenteeism have a history of being experienced in public sector organizations, and in this case, state government agencies within the Bayelsa State. Although administrative reforms aimed at redesigning administrative structures, accountability systems, and performance appraisal systems have been put in place, these efforts have in most cases yielded scanty results regarding employee dedication and service delivery.

The issue of employee disengagement and inability to work extra discretionally is long-lasting in the Bayelsa State government agencies. Most of the employees remain within the job simply because they are secure in their positions or because they have no other source of employment and not because they are contented with the organization emotionally or morally inclined. This type of continuance based commitment is more cost-oriented and revolves around the need not to incur costs of quitting the organization as opposed to the need to comply with the personal value and the organizational goals (Olaniyi et al., 2022). This leaves the organisations in the public sector with compliance-based behaviour as opposed to proactive and engaged service provision.

The available literature on the issue of employment commitment in Nigeria has been majorly based on extrinsic variables like remuneration, promotion policies, leadership styles, and working conditions. Although these elements cannot be denied, they ignore the prosocial forces that influence the way employees engage and commit to the organization in daily organizational relations. The lack of prosocial behaviour literature is a key shortcoming especially in the context of the public sector where interpersonal co-operation and collective effort are essential elements that can drive an organization towards its objectives.

In addition, a lot of the current empirical and conceptual studies of prosocial behaviour have been performed within the context of the private sector or the Western world, which restricts its applicability to the context of the public sector organisations in the emergent economies. Such a gap in the literature is a limitation to theoretical perspective as well as policy formulation since managers in the public sector can only keep dwelling on structural reforms without paying attention to the behavioural and relational processes that determine the commitment of employees. This paper aims at filling this gap by coming up with a theoretically based framework which correlates prosocial behaviour with employment commitment within the government agencies in Bayelsa state.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between prosocial behaviour and employee commitment within the Bayelsa State government agencies in Nigeria. The study aims to develop a conceptual framework linking prosocial behaviour to affective, normative, and continuance commitment in public sector organizations. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the role of prosocial behaviour in enhancing affective commitment among employees of Bayelsa State government agencies.

2. To investigate the impact of prosocial behaviour on normative commitment, focusing on how prosocial actions reinforce moral obligation and a sense of duty to remain with the organization.
3. To analyze the indirect effect of prosocial behaviour on continuance commitment, by increasing employees' social embeddedness and strengthening psychological costs of leaving the organization.
4. To develop a comprehensive conceptual framework that links prosocial behaviour to employment commitment in Bayelsa State government agencies, focusing on affective, normative, and continuance pathways.
5. To provide recommendations for policymakers and managers in public sector organizations on how to promote prosocial behaviour to enhance employee commitment, improve service delivery, and foster a positive organizational culture.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically, as it addresses critical gaps in the literature on prosocial behaviour and employee commitment, particularly in subnational public sector contexts. By focusing on Bayelsa State, Nigeria, the paper offers valuable insights into the role of prosocial actions in enhancing employee commitment and improving public service delivery in developing economies. The study's significance is outlined in the following areas:

Theoretical Contributions

1. **Extending Employment Commitment Theory:** This study expands the three-component model of commitment (affective, normative, and continuance) by integrating prosocial behaviour as a key determinant of commitment. It conceptualizes prosocial behaviour as a crucial factor influencing affective and normative commitment, which has been underexplored in public sector contexts in developing economies like Nigeria.
2. **Integrating Multiple Theories:** The paper integrates Social Exchange Theory (SET), Affective Events Theory (AET), and Public Service Motivation Theory (PSM) to provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional theoretical framework. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how prosocial behaviours influence employee attitudes and commitment in public sector organizations.
3. **Contextualizing Prosocial Behaviour in Developing Economies:** By examining Bayelsa State government agencies, this study contributes to organizational behaviour and public administration literature, focusing on the subnational level in an emerging economy. This offers a new perspective on how prosocial behaviour influences employment commitment in public sector organizations in regions where resources and performance incentives may be limited.

Practical Implications

1. **Improving Employee Commitment in Public Sector Organizations:** The study offers practical insights for public sector managers in Bayelsa State and other similar regions. By promoting prosocial behaviour, public sector managers can enhance employee engagement, align employees' values with organizational goals, and foster a commitment-driven culture that leads to improved public service delivery.
2. **Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Public Service Delivery:** The study provides actionable recommendations for policymakers, such as fostering ethical leadership, creating team-based work structures, and institutionalizing prosocial values through performance management systems. These recommendations aim to build a more committed and engaged workforce, particularly in Bayelsa State, where public sector organizations are confronted with bureaucratic inefficiencies and political challenges.
3. **Strengthening Public Service Motivation:** This paper contributes to the understanding of Public Service Motivation (PSM) by linking prosocial behaviour to normative commitment in public sector organizations. The findings suggest that fostering a prosocial work environment can strengthen employees' moral obligation to remain loyal to the organization, which is critical in environments where employees' intrinsic motivation is central to public service goals.

Contributions to Developing Economies

The findings of this study hold significant relevance for public sector organizations in developing economies like Nigeria, where financial incentives are often insufficient to maintain employee commitment. This study highlights the role of prosocial behaviour as a cost-effective mechanism to improve employee engagement and service delivery without the need for significant financial outlays. By encouraging prosocial actions within public sector organizations, Bayelsa State and other similar regions can improve organizational resilience, employee satisfaction, and ultimately enhance public service outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The conceptual clarification of key constructs

2.1.1 Prosocial Behaviour

Prosocial behaviour is the voluntary act that is discretionary being done to assist others. These behaviours extend the scope of official duties and involve behaviours such as assisting others within the organization, sharing, interdepartmental collaboration, and performing selfless actions that enhance the welfare of the organization and its employees (Adebisi and Olorunfemi, 2022).

The prosocial behaviour is of particular relevance when considering the case of the public sector organization since, in such a case, work tends to be relational, and the actions of the employees are directly linked to the common good. The concept of prosocial behaviour is an important tool of improving organizational resilience and problem-solving in the Bayelsa State where service

delivery is largely reliant on the interdepartmental cooperation and teamwork. Through prosocial behaviour, it is possible to create trust, reciprocity and social support that will strengthen organizational commitment and enhance overall organizational performance.

2.2 Employee Commitment

Employment commitment refers to the sense of attachment of the employees to the organization including the emotional attachment, the sense of the moral obligation and the cost-based attachment towards the organization. According to the Three-Component Model of Commitment Allen and Meyer (1990) tend to believe that there are three dimensions of commitment, including:

Affective Commitment: This is the emotional connection the employees have to the organization based on the identification of the goal and organizational values of the organization.

Normative Commitment: This is the moral or ethical desire that employees have to stay with the organization which is usually associated with the public service motivation.

Continuance Commitment: The attachment that is aroused by the perceived costs of exiting the organization and this includes job security and financial dependency.

Affective and normative commitment are particularly significant in the public sector as they help to integrate the personal values of the employees with the organizational mission of a public service, creating a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the overall interest of the group (Eze and Nwachukwu, 2023). Nonetheless, in the government agencies of Bayelsa State, a great number of employees express continuance commitment instead of affective or normative commitment, which indicates the low level of engagement and discretionary efforts.

Theoretical Foundations

3.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) by Blau (1964) is the theory that social interactions are founded on the reciprocity principle according which people exchange resources (e.g., help, support, knowledge) in the perspective to get something back. The employees in organizations practice prosocial behaviour like assisting others or sharing resources because they believe that they will be rewarded socially or psychologically by the action which might include things like respect, social acceptance, and organizational support. These incentives enhance the psychological attachment of employees to the organization hence improving the level of employment commitment (Adebisi and Olorunfemi, 2022).

Prosocial behaviour in relation to the government agencies of Bayelsa State agency also helps to create a positive exchange environment, as it strengthens trust, mutual obligation and social support, which further facilitates affective and normative commitment.

3.2 Affective Events Theory (AET)

Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) proposed Affective Events Theory (AET) which focuses on the ways in which employees feel and behave in their work places. AET states that positive work events (including interactions that are prosocial) can result in positive emotions such as gratitude, pride, and feeling of belonging that accumulates over time and affect the affective commitment of

employees. Prosocial behaviours in organizations that work in the public sector are highly relational, which means that they can generate positive emotional experiences that will increase the level of emotional attachment that employees have toward their organization and enhance their commitment to organizational goals and values (Olaniyi and Olamide, 2022).

3.3 The Public Service Motivation Theory (PSM)

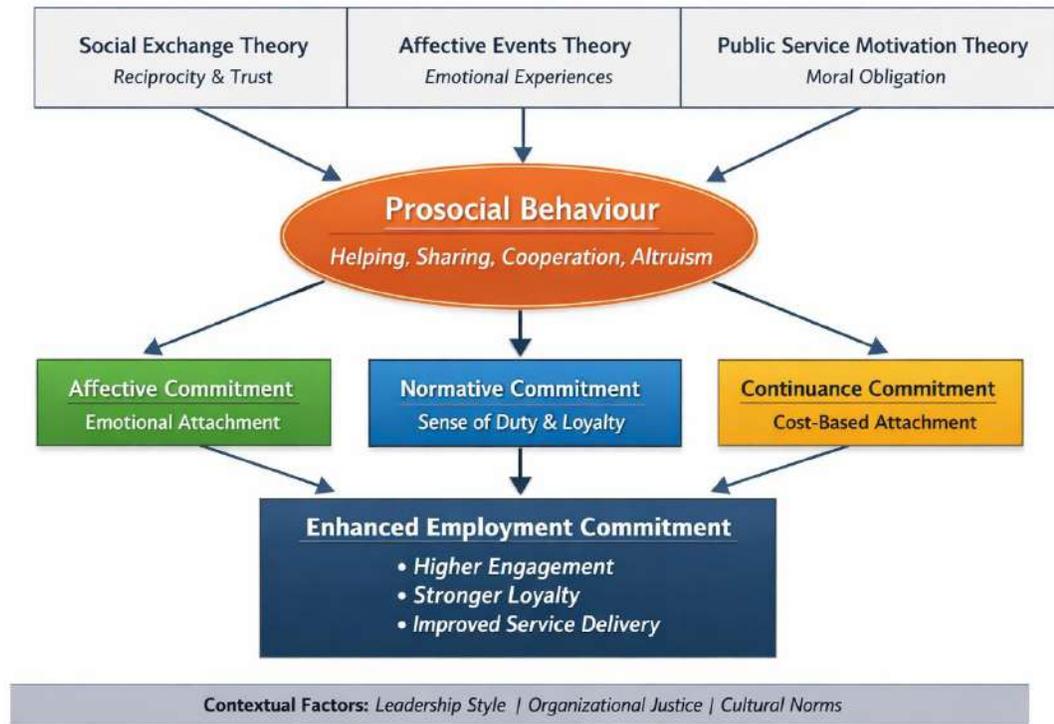
According to Public Service Motivation Theory (PSM) proposed by Perry and Wise (1990), workers within the public sector companies are influenced by the altruistic values, commitment towards the common good and a feeling of contributing to the welfare of the society. Prosocial behaviour is considered a direct expression of PSM-employees who are involved in prosocial activities have a moral obligation to do something that benefits the common good. This, in its turn, strengthens normative commitment, since employees who experience it as morally right to remain in the organization and keep serving the public (Ibrahim & Olusegun, 2023).

In the Bayelsa State that has strongly oriented the work in the public sector in accordance with communal values and collective good, the prosocial behaviour enhances moral obligation of employees and boosts their normative adherence to the company and its community service agenda.

Integrative Conceptual Framework.

This paper suggests that prosocial behaviour is a relational and moral process which increases employment commitment in government agencies in Bayelsa State by both the affective and normative processes. The social exchange processes, emotional experiences, and values of the public services mediate the relationship. The concept model may be illustrated in the following way:

Conceptual Framework Linking Prosocial Behaviour and Employment Commitment in Bayelsa State Government Agencies



Source: Research Desk (2026)

Discussion

5.1 Role of Prosocial Behaviour in Enhancing Employment Commitment.

As established in this paper, prosocial behaviour that involves voluntary acts that aim at the good of others plays an important role in influencing employment commitment in government agencies within Bayelsa State. Based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET), the research postulates that prosocial behaviors like helping coworkers, exchanging information, and cross-functional collaboration are the source of mutual social interactions that build a desirable work environment. Respect, social acceptance, and organizational support are the psychological rewards that an employee anticipates when he or she indulges in prosocial behaviours (Adebisi and Olorunfemi, 2022). Such rewards, in their turn, enhance their commitment of the affective nature, which produces a psychological connection with the organization and makes them long-term engaged. Prosocial behaviours are especially effective in Bayelsa state where the orientation of public service work has been accomplished in accordance with the collective welfare. Such activities strengthen the emotional and moral associations between employees and their organisation resulting in increased engagement and commitment. The employees that assist other employees or engage in interdepartmental work are also more likely to have an emotional attachment to the goals and values of the organization. Since affective commitment depends on the emotional connection the employee has with the organization, the prosocial behavior being projected on the employees leads to the creation of a sense of belonging and pride in serving the common good. This emotional relation is consistent with the results of Affective Events Theory (AET) that

postulates that positive emotional experiences of prosocial interactions have direct effect on work attitudes, in particular affective commitment (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996).

5.2 Normative Commitment and the Moral Obligation of Public Service.

Although affective commitment is vital, normative commitment is also of great essence in promoting employee loyalty in the public sector. The Public Service Motivation Theory (PSM) offers great information on the beneficial effect of prosocial behaviour in promoting normative commitment. The workers in the government are altruistically motivated and they want to make a difference to the society as well as to share the values of the public service. Prosocial behaviours-volunteering to assist others or supporting them in difficult projects-strengthen the moral commitment of employees to remain with the organization and keep serving the good of the people (Perry and Wise, 1990).

When it comes to the Bayelsa State where communal values and collectivism are highly integrated, prosocial behaviors are regarded not only as desirable but even as an ethical responsibility. Normative commitment often makes employees who are involved in prosocial behaviours internalize organizational values and have a stronger sense of responsibility which makes them loyal to the organization. This is more applicable in the organizations of the public sector where the agency is meant to serve the common good. The more the employees in Bayelsa State engage in helping and cooperative behaviours, the more they tend to develop a stronger sense of ethical responsibility towards the other employees, the agency and the community in which it serves.

5.3 Prosocial Behaviour and Continuance Commitment.

Although prosocial behaviour is mostly linked with affective and normative commitment, its effect on continuance commitment is also less, but significant. Continuance commitment is a result of the employee being aware of the expenses of walking out of the company like losing either the job security or a stable income (Meyer and Allen, 1991). In most organizations in the public sector, workers are rather attached to their jobs based on external aspects like job security, absence of any other job, and financial reliance than due to emotional commitment and moral obligation.

Nevertheless, even in the case of prosocial behaviour, the indirect and positive effect on continuance commitment may be achieved through enhanced social embeddedness of employees in the firm. This causes the employees to be more networked and be in stronger relationships within the organization as they undertake the helping behaviours and interpersonal cooperation, and it becomes difficult to leave. This has strengthened social capital that amplifies the psychological cost of quitting jobs because employees who are integrated in social networks will stay longer in their jobs in order to keep such social ties. Also, prosocial employees can develop a sense of duty to remain in their position especially when they perceive their work to belong to a larger group effort.

Although prosocial behaviour by itself might not be a key cause of continuance commitment, it leads to the process of socialization into the organization, making the employees feel more part of

it and attached, which can lessen their desire to leave the organization (Eze and Nwachukwu, 2023).

5.4 Prosocial Behaviour and Employee Engagement: A Relationship with Organizational Outcomes.

The existent positive correlation between prosocial behaviour and employment commitment has major implications on the state of employee engagement and organizational performances in the public sector organizations. Prosocially engaged employees have higher likelihood to deliver positive organizational outcomes like high productivity, enhance worker cooperation and customer service orientation. The result of this engagement is an increase in the level of quality of service and better service delivery as a critical outcome of any government agency, more so in a developing economy such as Nigeria.

Within the context of the Bayelsa State where resource-limited public sector agencies tend to be slow in promoting work performance, the prosocial environment can be used to promote the performance of the employees despite the lack of material incentives. Indicatively, when employees sense involvement in the responsibility of assisting others or work together across departments, they will help in achieving team-related objectives, addressing problems, and innovative ways of solving complicated problems more easily. In addition, since prosocial behaviour helps in increasing job satisfaction, employees would be more motivated to perform beyond what they have been mandated to do in their job descriptions.

5.5 The Role of Leadership in Promoting Prosocial Behaviour.

The role played by leadership in promoting prosocial behaviour cannot be overestimated. The prosocial behaviours in the public sector organizations are made possible by ethical leadership, which is marked by integrity, transparency, and emphasis on a sense of the common good (Adebisi and Olorunfemi, 2022). Prosocial behaviours that leaders demonstrate to include those that assist employees, those that enable collaboration, and those that express sincere interest in the well-being of employees set a normative standard which helps to induce employees to adopt comparable behaviours.

Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) can be quite useful in Bayelsa State government agencies, where bureaucracy can occasionally kill initiative and creativity. When leaders serve their staff and the common good, they establish a workplace atmosphere where employees are willing to cooperate, share knowledge, and be dedicated the organizational values. This may enhance the influence of prosocial behaviour on employment commitment especially in the government where in most cases ethical considerations and values of serving the people motivate them.

5.6 Prosocial Behaviour as a Strategic Resource for Organizational Success.

The present paper has placed prosocial behaviour as a strategic behavioural resource and can be deliberately exploited to increase employee dedication and enhance delivery of public services. The creation of a culture of prosociality by the managers in the public sector in Bayelsa State will allow increasing employee engagement, aligning the values of employees with the organization goals, and contributing to the overall performance of the organization. When promoting prosocial

behaviour, organizations in the public sector will probably have an enhanced collaboration, increase in trust, and positive climate in the organization resulting in a higher level of job satisfaction and long-term commitment.

5.7 Limitations and Contextual Factors.

However, as much as the role of prosocial behaviour has been identified in improving the level of employment commitment, the contextual factors that affected the relationship were found not to be ignored in the Bayelsa State. The way in which prosocial behaviour influences commitment can be affected by the leadership styles, culture within the organization, as well as the local socio-cultural norms. To illustrate the example, in the regions where communal values and collectivism are stressed, prosocial behaviour can be more influential on normative commitment. In a more individualistic setting, on the other hand, prosocial behaviour might be less directly connected to moral obligation, and more directly to reciprocity and social exchange.

Besides, the bureaucratic rigidity, the political influence, and the deficit can also be the barriers to the successful promotion of the prosocial behaviour. As it was mentioned earlier, although prosocial behaviour is one of the major factors contributing to commitment, it should be fostered in a more comprehensive supportive environment, which comprises ethical leadership, organizational justice, and employee recognition.

Recommendations

According to the discussion, the recommendations are as follows:

Encourage Ethical Leadership: Public sector organizations must invest in the leadership development programs which focus on servant leadership and ethical decision-making. This can promote the pro social behaviour in the employees and it can provide a supportive working environment.

Nurture a Culture of Prosociality: Organization programs ought to encourage teamwork, cooperation, and knowledge transfer systems that are organized in both a formal and an informal way to foster prosocial interactions among the employees.

Make Prosocial Values Institutional: To realize the performance management systems, employee recognition schemes, and team-based work designs that focus on helping behaviour and cooperation, organizational managers of the public sector should institutionalize prosocial values.

Enhance Social Exchange Relationships: Facilitate mutual social exchange relationships that give employees the psychological payoff (e.g., respect, organizational support) to their prosocial behavior that strengthens their organizational identification.

Contextualize Engagement Strategies: Understand the cultural background and the local values in Bayelsa State in formulating policies to improve prosocial behaviour. The personalization of the strategies according to local norms and values will probably result in their better effectiveness in enhancing employee commitment.

Conclusion

This theoretical paper suggests that prosocial behaviour is a very important contributor to employment commitment within the public sector organizations. Prosocial behaviour reinforces the psychological relations that support employee engagement in the government agencies within Bayelsa State by increasing affective commitment by enhancing emotional attachment and normative commitment by moral obligation. The results indicate that promoting a culture of prosociality (by means of ethical leadership, teamwork, and social exchange processes) could be useful in increasing the level of employee commitment, enhancing service delivery and contributing to the long-term organizational success. The future studies ought to be conducted empirically to test the proposed framework and further confirm the role of prosocial behaviour in enhancing employment commitment in the public sector.

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