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## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AKHLAQ LEADERSHIP IN ELEMENTARY ISLAMIC EXCELLENT SCHOOLS IN MALANG INDONESIA

### Abstract

This study aims to introduce a moral leadership style involving four schools and four leaders at the Integrated Islamic Primary School (SDIT) Malang. Data is collected by interview, observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed with descriptive qualitative analysis. The results showed that there were significant differences in the practice of moral leadership according to understanding, appreciation, and experience. Researchers found that community development was the most common dimension of leadership practiced by the principal. This was followed by a demonstration of justice, sincerity, respect and service attitude. The implication is that experienced principals often apply moral leadership compared to less experienced principals or people who are almost retired. Therefore, the selection of principals must be based on their achievements, not seniority in education services.



*Akhlaq Leadership, The Selection of Principals School, Leadership Styles*

### مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إدخال أسلوب القيادة الأخلاقية الذي يشمل أربع مدارس وأربعة قادة في المدرسة الإسلامية المتكاملة الابتدائية (SDIT) مالانج. يتم جمع البيانات عن طريق المقابلة والملاحظة والوثائق. تم تحليل البيانات مع التحليل النوعي الوصفي. أظهرت النتائج وجود اختلافات كبيرة في ممارسة القيادة الأخلاقية وفق الفهم والتقدير والخبرة. وجد الباحثون أن تنمية المجتمع هي البعد الأكثر شيوعاً في القيادة التي يمارسها المدير. تبع ذلك إظهار العدالة والإخلاص والاحترام والموقف من الخدمة. وهذا يعني أن الرؤساء ذوي الخبرة غالباً ما يطبقون القيادة الأخلاقية مقارنةً بالمديرين الأقل خبرة أو الأشخاص الذين تقاعدوا تقريباً. لذلك، يجب أن يستند اختيار الرؤساء على إنجازاتهم وليس على الأقدمية في الخدمات التعليمية..

*القيادة الأخلاقية، اختيار مدير المدرسة، أساليب القيادة*



## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan memperkenalkan gaya kepemimpinan akhlaq yang melibatkan empat sekolah dan empat pemimpin di Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu (SDIT) Malang. Data dikumpulkan dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis dengan analisa kualitatif deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada perbedaan yang signifikan dalam praktek kepemimpinan akhlaq menurut pemahaman, apresiasi, dan pengalaman. Peneliti menemukan bahwa pengembangan masyarakat merupakan dimensi kepemimpinan akhlaq yang paling umum dipraktekkan oleh kepala sekolah. Hal ini diikuti oleh demonstrasi keadilan, ketulusan, rasa hormat dan sikap melayani. Implikasinya kepala sekolah yang berpengalaman sering menerapkan kepemimpinan akhlaq dibandingkan dengan kepala sekolah yang kurang berpengalaman atau orang yang hampir pensiun. Oleh karena itu, pemilihan kepala sekolah harus didasarkan pada prestasi mereka, bukan senioritas dalam layanan pendidikan..

 *Kepemimpinan Akhlaq, Pemilihan Kepala Sekolah, Gaya Kepemimpinan*



<http://ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/abjadia/article/view/3271>

## INTRODUCTION

In essence, the system and organization of Islamic schools is similar to public schools (although most of them necessitate being a Muslim as a requirement from students) with an emphasis on Islamic moral conduct. As such, these schools can be categorized as “public school plus.” This means that religious courses on Islamic history, Islamic jurisprudence, or Islamic theology are not the main subjects of the curriculum like that of pesantren and of most madrasah. Instead, there is an emphasis on how religion can inspire good moral conduct in the daily lives of the students.

Islamic schools were created to cater to the Muslim middle class in urban areas. These schools are equipped with good facilities such as air-conditioned classrooms, libraries, labs, and computer facilities. As a modern institution, these schools are administered by professionals in management as well as curriculum development. Teachers, staff, and managers are recruited in a competitive and professional manner by considering their skills and competency levels.

Principal contribution to the schools has been said by previous researchers such as Edmonds (1979), Gray (1990), Purkey and Smith (1983) and Teddlie and Stringfield (2000). Hence, there is a variety of statements from them about the relationship between school leadership and achievement. For example, Gray (1990) research findings concluded that there is no evidence that effective school led by the weak leadership. As well as the study of Edmonds (1979) who found the principal is the key individuals in developing their school. Implications, the community has identified the school's

performance based on their leadership. In other words, the community especially parents will point fingers towards the achievement of a school principal if dropped. Cotton and Wiklund (2001) accept that view, said that in this era of globalization parents are aware of their rights to speak of increasing their knowledge of the consumer.

In other words, transformational leadership will produce akhlaq leadership. What is Akhlaq leadership? How akhlaq leadership of the principals are able to drive the effectiveness of the school? Therefore, this article aims to identify the principal akhlaq leadership practices in schools.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Statement of Problems

The cases now that some leaders no longer make *akhlaq* (moral values) and ethical practices when carrying out duties as a guide for discharging their responsibilities. In other words, the principal who serves as a major contributing factor to the effectiveness of the school can't be used as a role model to other school staff. Therefore, this study aims to introduce a leadership style that should be adopted by the principals of akhlaq leadership.

### Objectives of the study

1. To identify about practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority.
2. To know about implementation of akhlaq leadership in Islamic excellent school.

### Research Question

1. What are practices of the akhlaq leadership based on priority?
2. How is implementation of akhlaq leadership in Elementary Islamic excellent school?



## FINDINGS

### *Leadership, Akhlaq and Power*

The inclusion of morality as a central aspect in value-laden concepts of leadership by the majority of modern leadership theorists is a new development whereas the importance of power for leadership has never been challenged: "All leaders are actual or potential power holders, but not all power holders are leaders" (Burns 1978: 8). If we assume the difference has something do with morality, it seems fair to say that power (Burns 1978: 12) and morality are the two most important components of leadership. This essay goes even further and proposes that it is exactly the product of both so that we can create a simple formula as a definition of leadership:

$$\text{Leadership} = \text{Akhlaq (Morality)} \times \text{Power}$$

It is not the sum but the product because one component alone (however strong it might be) is not sufficient to create “positive leadership”. At least some power is necessary to get good values implemented ((Heifetz, 1994: 69) describes how power (and therefore leadership) can be executed with or without authority. He defines authority as “conferred power to perform a service” (Heifetz 1994: 57). Power without authority is possible but conceptually different) and it needs some positive moral input to make good use of power. If there is some one who is very powerful but has no or even bad moral values<sup>5</sup> this creates “negative leadership”<sup>6</sup> and is the worst case for society. It would be better (less bad) if this person was less powerful, a type we could call the “negative non-leader” without good moral values but fortunately also without power. Society should make sure that the negative leader has not too much power. It is the task of leadership development to transform the negative non-leader into a positive non-leader, the positive non-leader into a positive leader, and (most difficult) the negative leader into a positive leader.

### *Transformational Leadership*

Transformational leadership was born as a result of staff who wish to claim a more democratic style of leadership that their needs are met. Through transactional leadership, staff should be treated like machines that perform tasks based on standards set. Born implications of staff not dare to take risks. Where as transformational leadership, which was introduced by Burns (1978) are able to create a positive attitude of staff. Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers strive to improve themselves in terms of moral and motivation. thus, Hopkins (2003) says leaders will implement the following aspects to achieve the prescribed namely: (a) leadership style is to human-oriented from of a duty, (b) to establish a close relationship with the follower, (c) there exists the transfer of feelings, attitudes , and belief and (d) leaders focus on cultural change from the structure.

Conclusion, transformational leadership is an activity designed to influence followers to enhance motivation and meet their needs and consider the staff as an asset to the organization.

### *Moral Leadership (Akhlaq Leadership)*

Moral leadership (akhlaq leadership) is also focused on the aspects of high morale and motivation when carrying out their duties. In this context, leaders are humane, fair, honest, and not to be emotional in making decisions and not be jealous of his success. Hence, the discussion of moral leadership can't marginalize the concept of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2001). Further Kanungo and Menonca (1998) has given the definition of moral (akhlaq) leadership as a leader's ethical (akhlaq) behavior is based on morality (akhlaqi) and human dignity in order to

achieve organizational goals. While, Roepke (1995) says that moral leadership focused on human values, moral responsibility and thinking systems.

Conclusion, akhlaq Leadership (the moral leadership) focuses on developing themselves together in a manner to avoid selfishness and to create values, new attitudes and beliefs (in Islam) among leaders and followers

## DISCUSSIONS

### **Implementation of Akhlaq Leadership in Islamic Excellent Schools at Malang**

#### *Indonesian School Context*

In general, there are two types of school in the Indonesian education system in terms of ministerial affiliation (MNE, 2003b; National Office of Overseas Schools Recognition, 1995; Poerbakawatja, 1970; Raihani, 2001). These include schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and schools affiliated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA). The MNE and MRA administer public and private schools, and provide education at kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Both the MNE and MRA manage their own schools and develop the curriculum (Hasbullah, 1995; MNE, 2003a; National Office of Overseas Schools Recognition, 1995; Tilaar, 1995; Yunus, 1979). The number of the MNE schools constitutes about eighty per cent of the total number of Indonesian school (EMIS, 2002; Hartono & Ehrmann, 2001; MNE, 2002). The main differences between these school types are found in the curriculum content in that there is a stronger focus on religious teaching in MRA compared to MNE schools (Mastuhu, 1994; Raihani, 2001), with about thirty per cent of the whole curriculum of the MRA schools being religious (Islamic), whereas it is less than five per cent in MNE schools.

The Indonesian government has conducted two major school reforms in the last decade. First, School-Based Management (SBM), both in primary and secondary levels, was introduced in 1999 (Jalal dan Supriadi, 2001; Jiyono et al., 2001; Umaedi, 2001). Second, Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was trialed in 2004, and will be implemented in 2006 in both primary and secondary schools (MNE, 2003a; Penabur, 2003; Setiawan, 2000; Umaedi, 2001). Although these reforms have been criticized, they do reflect the major government policy of political decentralization begun in 1999, shortly after the fall of the Soeharto regime (Jalal & Supriadi, 2001; Jiyono et al., 2001; MNE, 2001). Another initiative is to have the larger community involved in the school education processes through the empowerment of local education councils (dewan pendidikan) and school committees (komite sekolah).

Elementary Islamic excellent school in this paper it's mean Elementary Islamic successful school at Malang. The findings of this study presented in the following sub-

sections were based on emerging themes drawn from the principal interview transcripts. The major themes include personal beliefs and values, analyzing situations, visioning and setting strategies, fostering professional development, building collaborative culture, and redesigning school structure.

1. Order practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority.

This section is to answer the first research question. Data collected from a total of 4 participants in the study of four schools to see anything akhlaq overall leadership practices. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative method through interviews, documentation, and observation.

Practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority in school A are:

1. demonstration of sincerity
2. demonstration of fairness
3. demonstration of respect the school community
4. demonstration of build community
5. demonstration of serving others

Practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority in school B are:

1. demonstration of fairness
2. demonstration of sincerity
3. demonstration of build community
4. demonstration of respect the school community
5. demonstration of serving others

Practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority in school C are:

1. demonstration of serving others
2. demonstration of sincerity
3. demonstration of fairness
4. demonstration of build community
5. demonstration of respect the school community

Practices of akhlaq leadership based on priority in school D are:

1. demonstration of serving others
2. demonstration of build community
3. demonstration of fairness
4. demonstration of sincerity
5. demonstration of respect the school community

2. Implementation of akhlak Leadership and Elementary Islamic Excellent school in Malang

The findings of this study presented in the following sub-sections were based on emerging themes drawn from the principal interview transcripts. The major themes include personal beliefs and values, analyzing situations, visioning and setting strategies, fostering professional development, building collaborative culture, and redesigning school structure.

### *Personal Beliefs and Values*

The study found that the principals' leadership was underpinned by a set of beliefs and values. These beliefs and values can be classified into: religious beliefs and values; universal beliefs and values; and local cultural values.

A strong influence of religious beliefs and values was found in each of the principals' leadership practices. There were small variations in terms of beliefs and values emerging from each interview, but some common religious beliefs and values – amanah and IMTAQ were found.

'Amanah' was found to be the most influential value in each principal's leadership. It was the way by which the principals considered their job as something entrusted to them (typically with reference to being entrusted by God) to fulfill as perfectly as they could. In another study of school leadership in Indonesia, 'amanah' was found to be an important value of the principal (Nurman, 2003), too.

To me if I am given a responsibility, I will work with it the best that I can. This is an 'amanah'. My commitment is to serve pupils and the school [SD A Principal]. According to SD B and C Principal, 'amanah' resulted in a strong commitment to his job, without complaining about what happened in the school. For the SD D Principal 'amanah' was related to accountability in that he was not only responsible to the school system, including the higher authority, pupils, and other members of the school community, but also to God.

IMTAQ (constructed from the words Iman and Taqwa, meaning faith and piety) was another religious belief and value common to each principal. This value is explicitly stated as one of the national education objectives (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2003; Tilaar, 1995), and therefore became one of the inspirational values for the principals. This was evident in the school vision and program in which IMTAQ development in students was emphasized. For instance, as will be mentioned later on, an explicit mention of IMTAQ was found in the SD A and B school vision statements, while it was implied in the SD C and D vision. Included in this IMTAQ value is 'akhlak karimah' (good morality).

Another category of the principals' enduring beliefs and values is universal beliefs and values including equity and trustworthiness. Equity was manifested in their policies and practices of leadership, which included openness to criticisms and other

ideas, the school stakeholder involvement, and equal rights and responsibilities in education.

All the principals had regular meetings with their staff, teachers and students in which they could listen to, and accept, their ideas for the school development, and criticisms of their leadership practices. Dialogues with the school community, school committee, parents and other stakeholders were held regularly. The principals were aware of the importance of the stakeholders and the nature of school-based management which requires intensive and broader involvements of those that influence the school (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Mohrman et al. , 1994). In SD C and D, for instance, the involvement was extended to the board of alumni and the association of ex-SD C and D-teachers.

Trustworthiness was another universal belief and value that the four principals shared. This was reflected in their transparent and accountable school policies through regular consultation with other stakeholders and shared decision-making. In particular, they were very transparent regarding money issues. As corruption has been a major problem in Indonesia, money has become a very sensitive issue in every sector of governance, including the school sector. Irawan et al. (2004), in a study about school-based management implementation in Jakarta, indicates a severe level of corruption occurring in schools.

The last category of the principals' common personal beliefs and values was local cultural values. Uniquely and explicitly found in the SD C and D principal were a set of Javanese beliefs and values that were articulated in the school vision and that emphasized, among other matters, graduates having a well developed sense of Javanese culture.

Accordingly, one of the strategies was teaching the Javanese language to all students, with an emphasis on the rich Javanese philosophies and values as the basis of the whole Javanese culture. An example of this, which was explicitly mentioned by the principal, was a Javanese adage *menang tanpo ngasorake*. In essence, as they said, this philosophy means inviting and welcoming the loser in a competition to work together in order to improve the organizational conditions. This was applied in his strategies when he came first to the school and took the position as principal.

While the SD A and B principals did not explicitly mention the Javanese cultural values during the interviews, their leadership practices implied a high respect for these values, particularly regarding the way they interacted with others. Yet, Javanese cultural beliefs and values in these schools were not emphasized in the school vision, and were absent in the school improvement strategies.

### *Analyzing situations*

Each of the principals demonstrated ability in understanding and analyzing the contexts of their schools to determine the actions required for the achievement of leadership objectives.

This was also found in studies of successful school leadership across different countries (Leithwood, 2005). The contexts are classified into two—immediate and broader. The immediate contexts include the school conditions such as teacher competences and school facilities, student background such as prior academic achievement and economic backgrounds, and parent and community expectations.

Meanwhile, the broader contexts are those outside the school and community believed to influence the school process, such as IT development.

Some of the examples of how each principal understood both contexts—immediate and broader—can be seen in the following quotations. The SD B principal said: Now is a competition era. We have to compete with other schools in improving our school quality, improving our service to students and community, accommodating IT development, completing the school facilities with more quality stuff.

The SD C and D principal also showed his deep understanding of the school contexts. For instance, considering that the school he has been leading was a model school and the best school in Malang with better resources than any other schools, he has initiated some innovations to achieve even better school performance.

After we achieved good performances, I initiated some innovations such as the international school program. This is to motivate the students to perform the best so that there will be more students able to study overseas.

The SD A principal was found to free some students from paying the school fees considering their parents' economic disadvantages—the immediate context of students' backgrounds. The principal implemented a policy of 'subsidi silang' (cross-subsidy) to help the economically disadvantaged students

### *Visioning and setting strategies*

After analyzing the contexts of the school, the principals created the school vision and set strategies accordingly. The visioning process of their leadership included articulating and aligning the vision, explaining it to the school stakeholders, and putting high expectations on school performance.

After being a while in this school learning the situation, I sent a letter to teachers, staff, as well as students and school committee asking for inputs regarding the vision formulating. The responses varied. Some of them said this is very good [approach], some others just said it is up to me as the principal. Finally, with all the inputs and my own concept, we formulated the vision. We have a target that we will realize the vision in 2013 (SD B Principal).

The above quote indicates the involvement of other stakeholders in formulating the school vision—aligning their vision with the principals' vision. The involvement of more stakeholders assured the acceptance of the vision by the school community, and attracted their commitment to it. In SD C and D, the involvement of stakeholders in the visioning was broader, including the school alumni association too, whilst in SD A and B it was limited to the principal, vice principals, teachers, and the school committee.

Religious beliefs and values, intellectual characteristics and images of being up to date in terms of science and technology, were commonly found in each schools' vision.

The SD B vision: "Mewujudkan sekolah yang unggul dan terdepan dalam penyelenggaraan pendidikan dan pengajaran untuk menghasilkan lulusan yang memiliki IMTAQ, Akhlak, dan penguasaan IPTEK dalam dunia global pada tahun 2010" [to realize a competitive and advanced school in running education and teaching for the production of graduates with faith, piety, and good morality, mastering science and technology in the global world in 2010](SD B, 2004).

The SD C vision: "Mewujudkan sekolah yang mampu menghasilkan keluaran yang berakar budaya bangsa, berwawasan kebangsaan, dan bercakrawala global" [to realize a school that is able to produce graduates with strong cultural traits, spirit of nationalism, and global orientation](SD C, 2004).

The SD A vision: "berusaha menciptakan manusia yang memiliki citra moral, citra kecendekiawanan, kemandirian, dan berwawasan lingkungan berdasarkan atas ketaqwaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa" [striving to produce graduates who possess good images of morality, intellectuality, independence, and have environmental knowledge, which all are based on the faith and piety towards God the Only One] (SD A, 2004).

The above visions reflect the respective school community's expectations of the future. In order to realize such visions, each of the principals set several strategies that can be classified into three: academic strategies, non-academic strategies, and supporting strategies. Academic strategies included programs oriented to facilitate students to achieve better academic performance such as material comprehension and enrichment for Grade 5 and 6 students, an extra program commonly found in each case.

Meanwhile, non-academic strategies referred to extra-curricular activities such as sporting and arts. Supporting strategies included disciplining students and teachers, building teamwork and improving the school facilities. In terms of promoting discipline among students, for example, the SD A principal with the support of staff, teachers, and parents, has launched a program called 'pagi simpatik' [morning of sympathy]. Every morning from 6:30 to 7:00, the principal along with some teachers stand in front of the school main gate to say Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and shake students' hands. According to the principal, besides helping to strengthen emotional

relationship among the principal, teachers, and students, this is to enforce the students' discipline for not being late.

### *Fostering professional development*

The three principals believed in the importance of professional development of themselves and teachers for the whole-school improvement. Each of the principals was eager to learn. For example, the SD B principal said that he had a plan to continue to doctorate level. The SD C principal was studying at doctoral level in the field of education, and the SD A principal had a strong commitment to learn from other successful principals.

As to the teacher professional development, the principals implemented several programs and strategies including sending teachers to training and seminars, motivating by modeling and promoting teachers to higher rank and providing rewards, delegating jobs, and providing funds for teachers to continue their education.

I always send some teachers to join trainings held by other institutions. I also send teachers to join MGMP (Subject Teachers Consultative Group) (SD A Principal). I also regularly send teachers to join seminars, trainings and conferences. For example, I sent some teachers to the 2003 curriculum workshop, even though at the same time we sacrifice learning time for students since the teachers are being sent to that workshop. I think one step backward does not matter for hundred steps forward (SD B Principal).

The four principals were also aware of the importance of motivating their staff and teachers. For this, each of the principals has provided a model for staff and teachers. The SD C and D principal said: I believe in the motto of life-long education. I am now doing my Ph.D. Beside to pursue my personal objectives I want to motivate [my staff and teachers]. If we want to ask them to study further, we have to do it first. How come we ask them to run while we do not want to run? The principals also provided various rewards to well-performing staff and teachers. The rewards could be in the form of psychological and material rewards. Each of the principals was found to give praises or compliments to well-performing teachers and consistently strived to increase their wages.

Intellectual stimulation as part of professional development strategies was also provided by each of the principals. The SD A and B principal, for instance, said: I inform my staff and teachers about this as it is, including the student achievement both at local and national levels. We seek together the reasons and factors behind our performances. It seems to me that before, they had never been told about the school performance. They had never been invited to analyze and make improvements. I also encourage teachers to make analysis of their students and curriculum.

### *Building collaborative culture*

The principals believed in the necessity of collaboration among the school stakeholders in order to make a simultaneous and comprehensive improvement. This belief has been manifested in their actions to involve the school stakeholders in the decision-making process.

I try that every decision we make becomes all's decision and responsibility to implement it. Therefore, I always involve teachers, staff, and students, and when necessary other stakeholders. Furthermore, we apply the bottom-up principle. We empower teachers by creating some teams where they can develop themselves (SD B Principal).

The efforts to create a collaborative culture went beyond the formal professional relationship between the principal and other stakeholders. Many initiatives done by each of the principals symbolized the importance of informal approaches to the creation of this culture. These approaches, for instance, included arisan haji ii (SD B), school staff/teacher-family recreation (SD A, B, C), and sporting (SD A & C).

### *Redesigning school structure*

Each of the principals demonstrated his ability in redesigning the school structure. The school structure redesign was intended to meet the need for changes and improvement by putting each school matter into the right division in the school. Parallel to the creation of collaborative school culture, each of the principals put additional coordinators under the principal structure to cater for the needs for personnel specified to deal with certain areas. Included in this was a common additional structure across the cases: the formation of Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), meaning subject teacher consultancy, in which subject teachers shared ideas, showed their creative and innovative thinking, collaboratively solved their problems of instruction, and so on. Also for the purpose of professional development, I added to the structure an MGMP. In this board, teachers of the same subject sit together and discuss what needs to be discussed (SD B Principal).

Another method was by redefining the job description within the existing structure so that each staff member was aware of his or her own rights and responsibilities. However, changing or replacing staff in general was found to be a very sensitive issue for the principals to undertake, particularly in the early period of their principalship. If not calculated carefully, as all the principals said, it could be counterproductive to the improvement efforts and strategies developed.



## CONCLUSION

This study is an initial survey of akhlaq leadership styles among principals considered as a new leadership style in education in Indonesia. Hence, it is hoped the stakeholders in education policy-makers and principals in particular use these findings

to be used in education. Policy makers should be aware of the teacher selection procedure to the post of principal was based on their achievements in education, and not make a past practice as a selection procedure that teachers experience in the field of education.

Principals should make themselves as a role model to other school staff, especially teachers, staff and students. Therefore, the principal must increase the performance aspects of the self either internal (emotional and spiritual) and external (intellectual and social). implications, they are able to exercise akhlaq leadership practices as suggested by previous research on leadership is to build community, demonstrate fairness, honesty, respect and serve the school community.



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