



Original Article

Operations Management and Organizational Performance of an ISO 9001:2015 Certified Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

This study examined the correlation between two domains of operations management – quality management and human resource practices – and organizational performance outcomes in the first ISO 9001:2015-certified higher education institution in Davao del Norte, Philippines. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed, engaging all 262 employees of the institution: 166 teaching and 96 non-teaching personnel. Operations management was assessed through a validated primary survey instrument, while organizational performance was drawn from secondary institutional evaluation data – customer satisfaction surveys and formal human resource evaluation instruments – for the second semester of School Year 2017-2018. Both operations management domains were rated at a very high level by non-teaching personnel ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.43$) and teaching personnel ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.48$), with quality management consistently outscoring human resource practices across both groups. Organizational performance was similarly rated very high for non-teaching personnel ($M = 98.33$, $SD = 6.16$) and teaching personnel ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.33$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a mixed pattern of results. For non-teaching personnel, quality management demonstrated a significant positive correlation with organizational performance ($r = 0.335$, $p = 0.045$), while human resource practices did not ($r = 0.273$, $p = 0.064$). For teaching personnel, both quality management ($r = 0.315$, $p = 0.037$) and human resource practices ($r = 0.441$, $p = 0.012$) were significantly and positively correlated with organizational performance. However, regression analysis indicated that neither domain emerged as a statistically significant independent predictor of organizational performance when both domains were modeled simultaneously. These findings reveal a context-dependent, domain-differentiated relationship between operations management and organizational performance in this ISO-certified educational setting – one where quality management is more consistently associated with performance outcomes than human resource practices, particularly for client-facing non-teaching units. Implications for ISO-aligned institutional quality management and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords

operations management, organizational performance, quality management, human resource practices, ISO 9001:2015, higher education, correlational study, Philippines



INTRODUCTION

The growing emphasis on operational efficiency and evidence-based performance management in higher education reflects a broader global convergence between quality assurance frameworks originally developed for the manufacturing and service sectors and the increasingly accountability-driven landscape of academic institutions. Among the most consequential of these frameworks is the ISO 9001 Quality Management System, which specifies requirements for organizations seeking to demonstrate their ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements (ISO, 2015). When adopted by educational institutions, ISO certification signals a commitment to systematic operations management — encompassing documented procedures, internal auditing, continuous improvement, and structured human resource practices — as a foundation for institutional quality. Yet the relationship between these operational inputs and the measurable performance outcomes that institutions produce remains a contested empirical question, particularly in the Philippine higher education context where ISO adoption is growing but independent scholarly scrutiny of its organizational effects is limited.

Operations management, at its most fundamental, is concerned with the design, planning, control, and improvement of the processes through which organizations create and deliver value (Slack, 2024). In service organizations such as universities, these processes span the full institutional lifecycle: from the design of academic programs and support services, through the management of faculty development and student engagement, to the evaluation of learning outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction. The strategic importance of operations management in this context is well-established: organizations that systematically improve their internal processes, maintain rigorous quality controls, and invest in human capital development tend to achieve superior performance outcomes compared with those that manage operations ad hoc (Voss, 1995; Sousa & Voss, 2008). However, the mechanisms through which operations management practices translate into measurable performance improvements are not uniform across sectors, organizational types, or measurement frameworks, and the specific indicators chosen to operationalize both operations management and organizational performance can substantially affect the nature and direction of observed relationships (Battistoni et al., 2013; Sila, 2007).

In the Philippine context, educational institutions in Tagum City and the broader Davao Region have increasingly sought ISO 9001 certification as a marker of institutional quality and a mechanism for systematic process improvement. The first institution to receive ISO 9001:2015 certification in Davao del Norte operates within a competitive regional educational market and has committed to rigorous operations management standards as a condition of maintaining its certification. This institutional commitment raises an important empirical question: to what extent do the operations management practices embedded in ISO compliance — particularly quality management and human resource practices — correlate with and predict the institution's organizational performance as measured by customer satisfaction and human resource results?

Existing literature on the relationship between operations management and organizational performance has largely concentrated on manufacturing and commercial service contexts, with findings that are not consistently applicable to educational institutions, which operate under distinct market, regulatory, and human capital conditions (Amundson, 1998; Sousa & Voss, 2008). The few studies that have examined this relationship in educational contexts have produced mixed results, suggesting that the performance consequences of operations management practices in academic institutions may be mediated by contextual factors — including the nature of the performance measurement system employed, the level of faculty professional autonomy, and the institution's external accreditation environment — that



quantitative survey-based studies cannot fully capture (Sila, 2007; Stojanovic, 2015). This study addresses this gap by examining the operations management-performance relationship at a specific ISO-certified Philippine higher education institution, using a research design that combines primary survey data on operations management practices with secondary institutional performance evaluation data.

The study was anchored on Voss's (1995) best-practice paradigm in operations management, which posits that organizations systematically adopting world-class operations management practices will achieve superior performance, and was framed by the contingency theory perspective articulated by Sila (2007), which holds that the strength of this relationship is moderated by organizational and contextual characteristics. These complementary theoretical lenses – one anticipating a positive relationship, the other preparing for context-dependent variation – together provided the conceptual scaffolding for interpreting the mixed pattern of findings that emerged.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative non-experimental descriptive-correlational design. This design was selected for its capacity to describe the current state of the study variables and to examine the statistical associations between them without artificial manipulation, enabling inferences about the direction and strength of the operations management-performance relationship in its natural institutional context (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study was conducted at the first educational institution in Davao del Norte to receive ISO 9001:2015 certification – a growing, multi-campus higher education institution operating across the Mabini Main and Visayan Village campuses in Tagum City – which serves more than 10,000 students and constitutes the largest academic institution in Davao del Norte and the surrounding ComVal area.

Universal sampling was employed, encompassing all 262 regular, part-time, and probationary employees of the institution as the study population. Employees remunerated on an honorarium basis – such as coaches of sports and cultural groups – were excluded from the sampling frame, as their institutional relationships and operations management exposure differ substantively from those of regular employment personnel. The total respondent population comprised 166 teaching personnel from various academic departments and 96 non-teaching personnel from administrative and support offices. Separate analytical tracks were maintained for teaching and non-teaching personnel, reflecting meaningful differences in their primary functions, performance evaluation systems, and day-to-day operations management exposure.

Operations management was assessed through a structured questionnaire adapted from Owino's (2010) survey instrument on operations management practices, modified to reflect the institutional context of a Philippine higher education setting. The instrument comprised 16 items organized across two subscales: eight items assessing Quality Management practices and eight items assessing Human Resource Practices, each rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Observed at All) to 5 (Very Much Observed). Content validity was established through expert panel review, with recommendations incorporated into the final instrument. The 16-item instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (expert validation score: 4.78, descriptive equivalent: Very Good). Meanwhile, organizational performance data were drawn entirely from secondary institutional sources to eliminate the common method bias that would arise from assessing both predictor and outcome variables through the same



respondents' survey responses. Customer Satisfaction data were drawn from the institution's Customer Satisfaction Survey (non-teaching personnel) and the composite of Customer Satisfaction Survey, Exit Survey, and Course Assessment results (teaching personnel) for the second semester of School Year 2017-2018. Human Resource Results were obtained from the Performance Evaluation system for non-teaching personnel, and from the composite of Evaluation of Teachers by Students (ETS), Classroom Evaluation of Teachers by Administrators (CETA), and Evaluation of Teachers by the Dean (ETD) for teaching personnel. Mean scores were interpreted using a five-point scale: 4.20-5.00 (Very High), 3.40-4.19 (High), 2.50-3.39 (Moderate), 1.80-2.49 (Low), 1.00-1.79 (Very Low).

Three statistical procedures were employed. Mean and standard deviation were computed to characterize the central tendency and variability of operations management and organizational performance ratings, addressing the first two research objectives. Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was used to examine the bivariate associations between each operations management domain and organizational performance for both personnel groups, addressing the third objective. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which the two operations management domains, considered simultaneously, predicted organizational performance – addressing the fourth objective and enabling identification of any domain contributing unique predictive variance after controlling for the other (Field, 2018). All analyses were conducted at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables 1 and 2 present the descriptive statistics for the two dimensions of operations management as assessed by non-teaching and teaching personnel, respectively.

Table 1. Level of Operations Management for Non-Teaching Personnel (N = 96)

Indicator	$\bar{x}$	SD	Descriptive Level
Quality Management	4.59	0.41	Very High
Human Resource Practices	4.36	0.50	Very High
Overall	4.47	0.43	Very High

Note. $\bar{x}$ = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Table 2. Level of Operations Management for Teaching Personnel (N = 166)

Indicator	$\bar{x}$	SD	Descriptive Level
Quality Management	4.55	0.48	Very High
Human Resource Practices	4.30	0.56	Very High
Overall	4.42	0.48	Very High

Note. $\bar{x}$ = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Non-teaching personnel assessed operations management at an overall very high level ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.43$). Quality Management registered the higher mean of the two subscales ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.41$), with continuous quality improvement in operations receiving the highest individual item rating ($M = 4.70$) and regular facility inspection the lowest within this subscale ($M = 4.44$), though both remained in the very high range. Human Resource Practices achieved $M = 4.36$ ($SD = 0.50$), with employee understanding of goals and objectives receiving the highest



item rating ($M = 4.50$) and prompt response to employee problems and concerns the lowest ($M = 4.17$).

Teaching personnel similarly assessed operations management at a very high overall level ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.48$). Quality Management again registered the higher subscale mean ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.48$), with the presence of a quality management system receiving the highest item rating ($M = 4.63$) and regular facility inspection the lowest ($M = 4.44$). Human Resource Practices achieved $M = 4.30$ ($SD = 0.56$), with employee understanding of goals and objectives again the highest-rated item ($M = 4.46$) and prompt responsiveness to employee concerns the lowest ($M = 4.08$). Across both personnel groups, Quality Management consistently outscored Human Resource Practices, and prompt response to employee problems and concerns emerged as the lowest-rated item within the Human Resource Practices subscale – a pattern with implications discussed in the following section.

The very high overall levels of operations management assessed by both teaching and non-teaching personnel – non-teaching: $M = 4.47$; teaching: $M = 4.42$ – are consistent with what one would expect of an institution that has attained and maintained ISO 9001:2015 certification. ISO certification requires that organizations demonstrate systematic adherence to quality management principles and documented operational procedures across all relevant functional areas, and the very high employee perceptions of quality management practices suggest that the institution's ISO compliance efforts have generated genuine organizational awareness and observable practice implementation rather than merely paper-level conformance.

The consistent primacy of Quality Management over Human Resource Practices across both personnel groups is theoretically coherent. Quality management practices under ISO 9001:2015 – including documented procedures, internal audit programs, corrective action systems, and management review processes – are externally mandated and subject to third-party surveillance audit, creating compliance incentives and accountability structures that drive observable practice adoption. Human resource practices, by contrast, are not as directly specified or externally audited under ISO 9001, meaning that their implementation quality is more dependent on internal management discretion and organizational culture, which are more variable and less directly responsive to certification pressure. Zakuan et al. (2010) similarly found that quality management practices tended to outperform human resource practices in operations management assessments in certified organizations, attributing this pattern to the differential specificity and enforceability of quality-related versus HR-related ISO requirements.

The item-level finding that continuous quality improvement in operations and the presence of a quality management system received the highest ratings – reflecting the core commitments of ISO compliance – and that prompt response to employee problems received the lowest ratings within the Human Resource Practices subscale is consistent with established patterns of ISO implementation. Organizations typically develop the most observable competencies in those practice areas most centrally and prescriptively addressed in the standard, while the more discretionary and culturally dependent practices – including responsive management of employee welfare concerns – remain areas for ongoing development (Bernardo et al., 2010; Aba, Badar, & Hayden, 2016). The persistence of prompt employee responsiveness as the lowest-rated HR practice item across both personnel groups merits specific management attention, as it suggests a gap between institutional



responsiveness intentions and employee experience that may have consequences for organizational climate and, ultimately, for the HR results dimension of organizational performance.

Tables 3 and 4 present the organizational performance results for non-teaching and teaching personnel, respectively, based on secondary institutional evaluation data.

Table 3. Level of Organizational Performance for Non-Teaching Personnel (N = 96)

Indicator	$\bar{x}$	SD	Descriptive Level
Customer Satisfaction	4.58	0.39	Very High
Human Resource Results	93.75	6.13	Very High
Overall	98.33	6.16	Very High

Note. $\bar{x}$ = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Non-teaching personnel achieved a very high overall organizational performance composite ($M = 98.33$, $SD = 6.16$). Customer Satisfaction scored at 4.58 ($SD = 0.39$, Very High), reflecting high ratings from internal institutional stakeholders. Human Resource Results registered a mean of 93.75 ($SD = 6.13$, Very High), indicating above-satisfactory to outstanding performance by institutional evaluation standards.

Table 4. Level of Organizational Performance for Teaching Personnel (N = 166)

Indicator	$\bar{x}$	SD	Descriptive Level
Customer Satisfaction	4.54	0.33	Very High
Human Resource Results	4.53	0.20	Very High
Overall	4.53	0.33	Very High

Note. $\bar{x}$ = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Teaching personnel achieved a very high overall organizational performance level ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.33$). Customer Satisfaction ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.33$, Very High) was assessed through the composite of Customer Satisfaction Survey, Exit Survey, and Course Assessment ratings, while Human Resource Results ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.20$, Very High) reflected ETS, ETD, and CETA evaluation composites. The near-identical means across the two teaching performance indicators (0.01 mean point difference) suggest a uniformly high evaluation profile across both customer-facing and internally assessed dimensions.

The very high organizational performance levels achieved across both non-teaching personnel ($M = 98.33$) and teaching personnel ($M = 4.53$) indicate that institutional stakeholders – students, administrative clients, and supervisors – assessed both service quality and professional conduct at consistently high levels. The secondary data design of the performance assessment strengthens confidence in these findings, as the performance evaluations are conducted through formal institutional systems rather than through the same survey instrument used for operations management assessment, eliminating the common method variance concern that would arise if both variables were assessed through the same respondents' self-report.

Customer satisfaction receiving the highest performance rating for both personnel groups is consistent with the literature on organizational performance in service institutions, which consistently identifies customer satisfaction as the most directly salient performance indicator from the stakeholder perspective (Bowden, 2009; Short et al., 2008). For an ISO-certified



institution, for which customer focus is a foundational quality management principle, the high customer satisfaction ratings suggest that the institution's service delivery and educational experience are meeting or exceeding stakeholder expectations across the measured dimensions. Human resource results – based on multiple formal evaluation instruments – also achieved very high levels, indicating consistent professional performance across both workforce categories.

The uniformity of very high performance ratings across multiple evaluation instruments and both personnel groups raises a methodological observation worth noting: ceiling effects in performance measurement systems that are designed to encourage rather than differentiate may compress the variance in the dependent variable to a degree that makes it statistically difficult to detect relationships with predictor variables, even when genuine relationships exist. This ceiling effect hypothesis, while not fully testable with the available data, provides one plausible partial explanation for the moderate correlation coefficients observed in the bivariate analyses and the non-significant multivariate regression results (Field, 2018).

Tables 5 and 6 present the Pearson correlation results for non-teaching and teaching personnel, respectively.

Table 5. *Significance of the Relationship Between Operations Management and Organizational Performance for Non-Teaching Personnel (N = 96)*

Operations Management Domain	r-value	p-value	Decision
Quality Management	0.335	0.045	H ₀ Rejected (Significant)
Human Resource Practices	0.273	0.064	H ₀ Not Rejected

Note. *Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 6. *Significance of the Relationship Between Operations Management and Organizational Performance for Teaching Personnel (N = 166)*

Operations Management Domain	r-value	p-value	Decision
Quality Management	0.315	0.037	H ₀ Rejected (Significant)
Human Resource Practices	0.441	0.012	H ₀ Rejected (Significant)

Note. *Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

The correlation results revealed a notably mixed and group-differentiated pattern. For non-teaching personnel (Table 5), Quality Management demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation with organizational performance ($r = 0.335$, $p = 0.045$), while Human Resource Practices did not reach significance ($r = 0.273$, $p = 0.064$). The first null hypothesis was therefore rejected for Quality Management but not for Human Resource Practices within the non-teaching personnel group.

For teaching personnel (Table 6), both operations management domains were significantly and positively correlated with organizational performance: Quality Management ($r = 0.315$, $p = 0.037$) and Human Resource Practices ($r = 0.441$, $p = 0.012$). Both null hypotheses were rejected for teaching personnel, with Human Resource Practices demonstrating the stronger correlation of the two domains within this group – a reversal of the relative prominence observed in the non-teaching group.

The mixed pattern of correlation findings – with Quality Management significantly correlated with performance in both personnel groups, and Human Resource Practices significantly correlated only among teaching personnel – represents the study's most



analytically consequential result. Rather than a uniform significant or non-significant pattern across all four predictor-outcome pairings, the data reveal a domain-differentiated and group-differentiated relationship that warrants careful theoretical interpretation.

The consistent significance of Quality Management's correlation with organizational performance across both non-teaching ($r = 0.335$, $p = 0.045$) and teaching personnel ($r = 0.315$, $p = 0.037$) aligns directly with the predictions of Voss's (1995) best-practice paradigm. Quality management practices — by structuring how work is planned, executed, reviewed, and improved — establish the procedural consistency and accountability framework that most directly governs service delivery quality. In an ISO-certified institution, where quality management is the most externally mandated and monitored domain of operations management, its association with customer satisfaction and human resource evaluation outcomes is theoretically expected: institutions that exhibit stronger observable quality management practices create operational conditions more conducive to the high-quality, consistent service delivery that generates favorable stakeholder assessments. This finding extends Battistoni et al.'s (2013) evidence that different operational management practices affect different aspects of organizational performance, by specifying that quality management — rather than human resource practices — constitutes the more consistent correlate of performance in the ISO-certified educational context.

The significant correlation between Human Resource Practices and organizational performance for teaching personnel ($r = 0.441$, $p = 0.012$) — the strongest correlation observed in the study — but its non-significance for non-teaching personnel ($r = 0.273$, $p = 0.064$) reveals an important group-level difference that deserves specific attention. The stronger Human Resource Practices-performance relationship for teaching personnel likely reflects the more direct and explicit connection between faculty professional development, goal alignment, and supervisory feedback on one hand, and the formal teaching evaluation outcomes (ETS, CETA, ETD) and student satisfaction ratings that constitute their performance indicators on the other. For teaching staff, whose primary institutional contribution is student instruction and whose performance is evaluated by the direct recipients of that instruction, the quality of human resource practices — particularly goal clarity, supervisor feedback, and professional support — is plausibly a more proximate determinant of performance evaluation outcomes. For non-teaching personnel, whose performance evaluation depends on a broader range of organizational, interpersonal, and service-contextual factors, the connection between HR practice quality and performance outcomes may be more diffuse and mediated by additional variables not captured in this study.

The non-significance of Human Resource Practices for non-teaching personnel warrants consideration through the lens of contingency theory (Sila, 2007). The client-service orientation of non-teaching offices — where performance is primarily assessed through customer satisfaction surveys reflecting service quality from the client's perspective — may mean that the operational processes governing service delivery (captured primarily in Quality Management) are more directly consequential for evaluated performance than the internal HR practices governing employee management and welfare. This interpretation aligns with Ahmad and Schroeder's (2003) finding that the HR practices-performance relationship exhibits significant cross-contextual variation, and suggests that the nature of the work — client-facing service versus instructional delivery — meaningfully moderates which domain of operations management most closely tracks with organizational performance outcomes.



Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether either operations management domain uniquely predicted organizational performance when both domains were entered simultaneously as predictors. For both non-teaching and teaching personnel groups, the regression coefficients for all predictors were non-significant (all $p > 0.05$), and the overall regression models did not achieve statistical significance. These results indicate that while Quality Management and Human Resource Practices individually demonstrate significant bivariate correlations with organizational performance – particularly for teaching personnel – neither domain emerges as a statistically significant independent predictor when the shared variance between them is accounted for. The second null hypothesis was therefore not rejected for either personnel group, suggesting that the predictive contributions of the two operations management domains are not independently distinguishable within this institutional context.

The non-significant regression results for both personnel groups – despite the significant bivariate correlations for Quality Management (both groups) and Human Resource Practices (teaching group) – indicate that neither domain independently accounts for unique variance in organizational performance when the shared variance between the two domains is statistically partitioned. This pattern is consistent with multicollinearity between the two operations management subscales: Quality Management and Human Resource Practices are conceptually related dimensions of a broader operations management construct, and employees who perceive high quality management practices in their institution are also likely to perceive stronger human resource practices, creating shared variance that makes it difficult to isolate the unique predictive contribution of each domain separately.

This finding connects directly to Abas and Yaacob's (2006) observation that the relationship between total quality management and organizational performance is moderated by strategic control systems – implying that operations management practices do not drive performance independently but operate within a broader strategic and managerial context that this study's design does not fully capture. The significant correlations establish that operations management practices, particularly Quality Management, are meaningfully associated with performance; the non-significant regression establishes that this association is not reducible to simple, independent linear prediction. Together, these findings suggest that Quality Management functions as a correlate – rather than a clean independent predictor – of organizational performance in the ISO-certified educational setting, a distinction appropriately reflected in the study's revised title framing this as a correlational rather than predictive inquiry.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between two domains of operations management – quality management and human resource practices – and the organizational performance of an ISO 9001:2015-certified higher education institution in Tagum City, Philippines. Four principal conclusions emerge from the findings.

First, both teaching and non-teaching personnel assessed operations management at a very high level, with quality management consistently outscoring human resource practices across both groups. The very high operations management ratings are consistent with the institutional discipline that ISO 9001:2015 certification demands, confirming that



certification has generated substantive and observable practice adoption rather than mere formal compliance. The persistent gap between quality management and human resource practices reflects the differential prescriptiveness and enforceability of these two domains within the ISO 9001 framework.

Second, organizational performance – assessed through secondary customer satisfaction survey data and formal human resource evaluation instruments – reached very high levels across both personnel categories, indicating that the institution's stakeholders evaluated both service quality and professional performance highly and consistently.

Third, the bivariate correlational analysis revealed a domain-differentiated and group-differentiated pattern of associations. Quality Management was significantly and positively correlated with organizational performance for both non-teaching and teaching personnel, establishing quality management as the more consistent operations management correlate of performance across the institution. Human Resource Practices demonstrated a significant positive correlation with organizational performance only for teaching personnel, the strongest correlation observed in the study, but not for non-teaching personnel. These results reflect meaningful differences in how the two workforce categories' performance outcomes are constituted and what operational factors most proximately drive them.

Fourth, multiple regression analysis indicated that neither operations management domain emerged as a statistically significant independent predictor of organizational performance when both domains were entered simultaneously, suggesting that the two domains' shared variance with organizational performance is not independently partitionable in this institutional context. This finding positions operations management as a correlate rather than a determinate independent predictor of performance, consistent with Battistoni et al.'s (2013) evidence of context-dependency in the operations management-performance relationship.

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Competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data will be made available by the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use

In the preparation of this research, we utilized **DeepSeek Chat** (DeepSeek-V3) as an AI-assisted editing tool to refine language, ensure proper citation formatting in APA 7th edition style, and improve overall readability. The AI was employed solely for proofreading, grammar correction, and structural suggestions, while all academic content, analysis, and conclusions remain our original work. We take full responsibility for the research integrity and confirm that human judgment guided all critical decisions in the study's development.



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