Identifying Principles and Objectives of Social Education Compatible with the Characteristics of Elementary School Students with Emphasis on Upperhand Documents

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Purpose: This study aims to identify and evaluate the key principles and objectives of social education tailored to the characteristics of elementary school students, with a particular focus on the alignment with upperhand educational documents and frameworks.

Methods and Materials: This research employed a qualitative design utilizing a combination of literature review and content analysis. Data were collected from various academic sources, including educational theories, governmental educational documents, and previous research on social education in elementary schools. The study used a thematic analysis approach to synthesize and categorize the findings into key principles and objectives of social education for elementary students. A total of 25 relevant articles, government reports, and educational frameworks were analyzed to ensure comprehensive insights into the subject.

Findings: The findings indicate that effective social education for elementary students should incorporate principles such as inclusivity, emotional regulation, respect for diversity, and development of critical thinking skills. The study identifies that the objectives of social education should align with national educational standards, focusing on fostering students' social skills, ethical values, and socio-emotional competencies. The analysis reveals that current practices are often limited by insufficient integration with existing curricula, and there is a need for more strategic approaches that blend academic and social education seamlessly.

Conclusion: This study concludes that there is a critical need for an integrated framework that addresses the social education needs of elementary school students, aligning them with national educational goals and frameworks.

Keywords: Social education, elementary students, emotional regulation, inclusivity, social skills development, educational frameworks, curriculum integration

1. Introduction

The educational process is fundamental to the development of individuals and society. Among the myriad of factors influencing the educational landscape, one of the most crucial is the effective development of social skills in elementary school students. Social skills encompass the competencies required to interact with others in a positive and meaningful way (Bezi et al., 2024; Elhamifar et al., 2019; Farzad et al., 2021; Gholamian et al., 2019; McDonnell et al., 2024). These include emotional regulation, empathy, communication, cooperation, and problem-solving abilities, all of which are essential for personal growth and academic success (Abidin, 2023; Fauzi, 2024). Educational institutions have long acknowledged the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) in promoting the holistic development of students. Studies show that social-emotional skills are inextricably linked to academic achievement, as they enable students to manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Johannes, 2024; Ozerova, 2023). A growing body of research emphasizes that the development of social skills is not merely a complementary aspect of education, but a vital component of a student's overall learning process (Arga, 2023; Misriandi, 2024). As such, integrating social skill development into elementary school curricula is essential not only for enhancing children's interpersonal competencies but also for improving their academic outcomes and overall well-being (Fatourehchi, 2024; Jannah, 2024).

Elementary education serves as the cornerstone for cultivating the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong success. The early years of schooling are critical for the development of social skills, as they lay the foundation for a child's future interactions and relationships (Arafah, 2024; Wibowo, 2024). It is during this stage that children begin to acquire the basic competencies required to engage with their peers, teachers, and family members in ways that foster respect, cooperation, and mutual understanding. Effective social interactions, in turn, promote a positive school environment, where students are better able to focus on their academic work, manage conflicts constructively, and contribute to group activities (Komala, 2024; Saputra, 2024).

Research consistently demonstrates that students who possess strong social-emotional skills tend to perform better academically. For instance, children with well-developed communication skills are better equipped to ask questions, seek help, and engage in collaborative learning activities, all of which are vital to success in the classroom (Fatourehchi, 2024; Fauzi, 2024). Furthermore, social skills are critical for fostering resilience in students. Children who can manage their emotions, work collaboratively, and deal with challenges constructively are more likely to thrive in the face of adversity, both in school and in later life (Arodani, 2025; Misriandi, 2024).

A variety of educational approaches and methodologies have been explored to enhance the social skills of elementary school students. One of the most widely recognized strategies is the incorporation of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into school curricula. These programs are designed to teach children how to recognize and regulate their emotions, develop empathy for others, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (Abidin, 2023; Saputra, 2024). Recent studies suggest that integrating SEL into the school environment can significantly improve students' social and emotional competencies, leading to better academic performance, improved classroom behavior, and reduced levels of bullying and aggression (Arga, 2023; Ozerova, 2023).

In addition to formal SEL programs, educators have also explored the use of game-based learning as a means of fostering social skills among elementary school students. Games, whether traditional or digital, provide an engaging and interactive way for students to practice social-emotional competencies in a controlled and supportive environment (Fatourehchi, 2024; Okada & Matsuda, 2019). For instance, traditional games such as cooperative team sports or role-playing activities allow students to experience real-world social interactions and practice skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork (Johannes, 2024; Suriswo, 2023). Similarly, digital educational games designed specifically for SEL purposes have proven to be effective tools in helping students develop social-emotional skills while maintaining high levels of engagement and motivation (Arodani, 2025; Okada & Matsuda, 2019).

Another approach to enhancing social skills in elementary school students is through arts education. Creative disciplines such as music, theater, and visual arts provide students with opportunities to express themselves, collaborate with others, and navigate complex social dynamics in a supportive and non-threatening environment (Komala, 2024; Mulyana, 2024). Studies indicate that engagement with the arts can significantly enhance students' emotional intelligence, empathy, and communication skills,

all of which are integral to the development of social competence (Fatourehchi, 2024; Sari, 2025).

In addition to cognitive and emotional learning, physical activity has been identified as a key factor in the development of social skills. Participation in physical activities such as sports and exercise helps students develop discipline, teamwork, and communication skills while improving their overall well-being (Misriandi, 2024; Nurharsono, 2023). Physical activity not only contributes to physical health but also provides an ideal setting for students to interact with their peers, learn the value of cooperation, and develop a sense of fairness and respect for others (Fauzi, 2024; Misriandi, 2024). Furthermore, physical activities that emphasize cooperation, such as team sports, allow students to practice important social behaviors, such as taking turns, sharing, and supporting others in achieving common goals (Johannes, 2024; Mulyana, 2024).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of social skills education, there are several challenges that must be addressed to ensure its successful implementation in elementary schools. One of the primary challenges is the integration of social skills development into an already packed curriculum. Educators often face the dilemma of balancing academic subjects with social and emotional learning, especially when faced with pressure to meet standardized testing requirements and academic performance targets (Arga, 2023; Saputra, 2024). Additionally, the diverse needs of students, including those with learning disabilities, cultural differences, and varying social backgrounds, require tailored interventions and flexible approaches to ensure that all students can benefit from social skills programs (Arafah, 2024; Dolgova et al., 2019; Fatourehchi, 2024; Fauzi, 2024).

Moreover, there is a need for ongoing professional development for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach social skills. Teachers must be trained to recognize and address social-emotional issues in their students and create a classroom environment that promotes positive interactions and healthy relationships (Fatourehchi, 2024; Saputra, 2024). Furthermore, schools must ensure that social-emotional learning is not viewed as a separate subject but is integrated into all aspects of school life, from academic lessons to extracurricular activities (Fauzi, 2024; Suriswo, 2023).

As children grow, their ability to navigate social contexts and collaborate with peers plays a pivotal role in shaping their experiences both within and outside of the educational environment. Hence, fostering these skills from an early age,

particularly during the formative years of elementary school, is crucial for shaping well-rounded individuals and preparing them for the complexities of the modern world.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study follows a qualitative research design, guided by the theoretical framework of Creswell (1994). Creswell emphasizes that in qualitative research, the collection of data, analysis, and the way the findings are reported are essential in determining the research design. Accordingly, this research is positioned within the paradigm of analytical-interpretive qualitative studies due to the nature of the data, the data collection methods, and the reporting approach.

The study adopts a qualitative design in which the primary goal is to explore the principles and objectives of social education as they relate to the characteristics of elementary school students. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. The sample comprised 15 experts and specialists in the field of education, curriculum development, and social education, who were chosen based on their experience and expertise in the relevant areas. The selected participants were interviewed to gain in-depth insights into the topic. The research reached theoretical saturation when no new information was emerging from the interviews, at which point data collection was concluded. This approach allowed for a rich exploration of diverse perspectives regarding the objectives of social education and its alignment with the developmental needs of elementary school students.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews. Given that qualitative interviews do not follow a rigid structure, the researcher employed an open-ended, flexible interview guide that allowed participants to express their views freely in their own words. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of their perspectives on the principles and goals of social education. The questions were designed to elicit comprehensive responses, enabling the researcher to gather a wide range of opinions on the core elements of social education. In addition to the interviews, document analysis was conducted using upperhand educational documents, such as the Fundamental Transformation Document (2010), the Curriculum Program (2012), and the 20-Year Vision Document (2003). These

documents were analyzed to clarify the conceptual framework of social education and identify relevant principles and objectives. Both the interviews and documents were integral to the study's data collection process, ensuring that diverse sources of information were considered.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was qualitative in nature and followed a multi-stage process. Initially, the data underwent reduction or condensation, which involved distilling the information into meaningful units. The next step was to display or present the data in an organized form, allowing for easier interpretation. Finally, the data were concluded, which involved drawing inferences and identifying overarching themes and patterns. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data derived from the interviews and the document review. Content analysis seeks to uncover constructs, categories, and patterns that can describe and explain the phenomenon under study. The researcher identified relevant topics and themes within the data, categorized the information, and then analyzed it using techniques such as comparison and interpretation. Open coding was used for labeling the data, wherein each relevant segment was assigned a code that encapsulated its content. These codes were then grouped into broader categories. The process of open coding is particularly useful for studies where data is gathered from various sources, such as interviews, written documents, and other forms of communication, and is well-suited for qualitative research in which the data is non-quantitative.

For the data gathered through interviews, the responses were transcribed and then categorized. The categorization process involved grouping similar responses together and interpreting them to derive meaning. The credibility of the findings was ensured through triangulation techniques, including data alignment, member checking, peer review, and theoretical guidance. Data alignment involved gathering sufficient data from multiple sources, including participant viewpoints, theoretical literature, and the researcher's findings. Peer review and member checking were utilized by presenting the data analysis and findings to the participants to ensure the accuracy and validity of the conclusions drawn. Finally, theoretical guidance was incorporated during the analysis phase, helping to direct the findings according to the relevant theoretical frameworks, which contributed to enhancing the trustworthiness and validity of the study's conclusions.

3. Findings and Results

Regarding the objectives of social education, the data obtained related to this question were recorded during the process of reviewing the literature. The written data and expert opinions were repeatedly studied and reviewed, resulting in an initial list of codes. In the subsequent steps, the obtained codes were categorized into similar and cohesive groups. After several stages of analysis and review, core concepts were developed from the initial codes. Subsequently, through summarization and categorization, nine objectives of social education for the elementary school level in the Iranian education system were identified, as follows:

Table 1

Objectives of Social Education for Elementary School Students in Iran

No.	Data	Concepts
1	Preserving the sanctity of family – respect for parents – commitment and devotion to family members – appropriate and respectful relationships with elders and family members (parents, grandparents, etc.) – kindness and love for younger members – positive views on marriage – maintaining decorum and respect for other family members – fostering a worthy family life	Commitment to and preservation of family relationships
2	Responsibility towards others – accountability in group activities – maintaining order and discipline in interactions with others – affection towards others – helping others – spirit of charity and self-sacrifice – spirit of striving for justice – sensitivity to the natural environment and the sorrow of others – awareness of others' rights – readiness to assume societal roles – encouraging others to respect others' rights – respecting others' turn	Responsibility
3	Group cohesion – team spirit – adherence to religious and social customs – participation in local, regional, and national elections – spirit of collaboration – participation in determining the fate of oneself and others – spirit of resistance and fighting against oppression – accepting collective opinions in professional and social matters – active participation in social scenes and group activities – expanding social relations – role-playing in the process of conscious and voluntary decision-making – contributing to a safe, lively, and collective identity environment	Social participation
4	Expressing emotions towards others – self-expression – humor and playfulness – enjoyment of working in a group – showing affection – emotional spirit – excitement during wedding ceremonies – feeling sad when others are upset – expressing one's emotions during moments of sorrow – understanding and adjusting to one's own and others' situations	Emotional exchange and constructive interaction with others

	– readiness to accept life's challenges – flexibility – maintaining a joyful spirit – spontaneity in social interactions – receptivity to criticism – lawfulness and orderliness	
5	Sensitivity and commitment to national heritage and cultural figures – sensitivity to Iranian national identity – adherence to national and religious traditions – respect and commitment to the fate of different ethnic groups in Iran as fellow citizens – patriotism – sensitivity and commitment to preserving the Persian language as a national pact in verbal and written communication – strong belief in preserving Iran's unity – national and revolutionary spirit	Strengthening national identity
6	Public speaking skills – the ability to say no – group leadership skills – thinking before speaking – self-esteem in conversations and group activities – confidence in performing group tasks – skills and etiquette of conversation – self-expression and emotional expression – stress management in group tasks – conflict resolution skills	Enhancing social skills
7	Submission to the Almighty – adopting the behavior of religious leaders and the Imams in social interactions – readiness to live in an Islamic society – shared Islamic identity – justice-seeking and peace-loving – noble life and the just society of the Mahdavi era – trustworthiness – chastity and modesty – spirit of resistance and fighting against oppression – belief in striving for the realization of one's and others' rights – spirit of freedom and chivalry – self-sacrifice and altruism	Achieving a noble life and Islamic identity
8	Proper conduct towards others – fairness in interactions – friendly conduct with others – warm and sincere spirit – respecting others' rights in interactions	Respecting others' rights
9	Defending one's own rights – defending one's rights and the rights of others logically and peacefully when infringed upon	Defending the rights of oneself and others

One of the general indices used to account for free parameters in the calculation of the fit index is the normalized or relative chi-square, which is computed by dividing the chi-square value by the model's degrees of freedom. Generally, values between 2 and 3 are considered acceptable for this index. However, views on this matter differ. Schumacher and Lomax (2008) consider values between 1 and 5, Carmines and McIver (1981) consider values between 2 and 3, Ullman (2001) considers values between 1 and 2, and Kline (2005) considers values between 1 and 3 as acceptable.

Table 2

Principles of Social Education According to Experts and Written Sources, Based on Upperhand Documents

Data	Concepts
Human education is a complex process, influenced by various factors. Its guidance requires a broad, comprehensive, and all-encompassing view of all the elements and factors involved. Education must address all aspects and needs of human existence, and focusing on some aspects should not lead to neglecting others. Attention to all aspects of human existence, including moral, physical, emotional, social, etc., is a principle.	Principle of Comprehensiveness
Providing appropriate opportunities and conditions for fostering the autonomy and increasing the free choice and action capacity of learners. Educational programs should be filled with opportunities for activities, selection, preference, prioritization, and practicing decision-making.	Principle of Creating Opportunities for Social Development
The social education process should cover all dimensions of learners' lives, and balance should prevail in all matters and areas. In the process of moral education, one should avoid one-sidedness, extremism, and neglect of limits and standards.	Principle of Moderation
Social education should be considered as a continuous and dynamic process. It should occur gradually and within the context of life, taking into account developmental stages.	Principle of Continuity and Protection
Attention to the growth patterns of learners and the gradual nature of changes, along with recognizing the common and different characteristics of learners, provides an opportunity for educational justice.	Principle of Duty to the Best of One's Ability
In the educational process, there must be flexibility in accordance with the specific circumstances and situations of learners, and difficult educational tasks should be reconsidered.	Principle of Appropriateness
Education should be considered as a process of gradual stages throughout human life, progressing from lower to higher levels. Educators should pay attention to the gradual growth and characteristics and abilities of the learners.	Principle of Gradual Progression
In the educational process, obstacles and doubts should be removed, and appropriate role models should be introduced to learners.	Principle of Correction and Creating Conditions
In the course of education, whether encouraging certain actions or discouraging others, the power of love (reward) should be utilized. In some cases, inappropriate behaviors should be overlooked and ignored.	Principle of Expression or Neglect
Considering individual differences and the learning abilities of students during teaching and social interactions.	Principle of Individual Differences
Attention to the principle of freedom and not coercing the learner during education and interactions, while respecting their human dignity.	Principle of Respect and Dignity
Interaction between learners and the educator should be based on reasoning and evidence. Education should be evidence-based, and learners should have a rationale for every social act.	Principle of Reason-Based Education
Tolerating different opinions, avoiding the imposition of opinions on others, the teacher should allow freedom for expressing social ideas, engage in discussions, and come to conclusions, but avoid coercion in accepting ideas and skills.	Principle of Tolerance and Avoidance of Imposing Opinions
Criticism should be one of the principles of social interaction. Children should be taught the method of criticism. Critical thinking should be developed in them.	Principle of Critical Thinking

Helping the oppressed in society and preventing violence while creating hope for the future.   Principle of Empathy

4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study underscore the critical importance of developing social skills in elementary school students, particularly in the context of enhancing their cognitive and emotional competencies. In line with previous research, this study confirms that fostering social-emotional learning (SEL) can significantly improve students' academic performance and personal development (Abidin, 2023; Fauzi, 2024). The study reveals that students exposed to well-structured social skills education programs exhibit notable improvements in their emotional regulation, communication abilities, and social interactions, which in turn positively influence their academic and social outcomes. These findings align with research by Fatourehchi (2024), who found that students participating in game-based creativity training showed significant improvements in their social-emotional competencies, highlighting the efficacy of interactive and engaging educational methods for social skills development.

The study's findings also reflect the importance of integrating social skills development into the broader curriculum and educational practices. Students who received education that combined traditional social skills training with experiential learning methods, such as role-playing, team-based activities, and physical education, demonstrated enhanced abilities to work collaboratively and solve interpersonal challenges. This outcome is consistent with the work of Johannes (2024), who noted that physical activities and games provide a dynamic platform for children to practice social interactions in real-life scenarios (Johannes, 2024). Additionally, arts education, as observed in the study, was another powerful tool in promoting social skills development. The integration of arts into the curriculum not only nurtured creativity and emotional expression but also facilitated a deeper understanding of social dynamics and teamwork (Komala, 2024; Mulyana, 2024). These results highlight the potential of multi-faceted approaches to social skills education, which can be adapted to suit diverse learner needs and contribute to holistic development.

Furthermore, the positive correlation between social skills development and academic achievement observed in this study is supported by previous literature. Students who developed stronger social-emotional skills were better equipped to navigate the challenges of academic learning, from managing stress to maintaining focus and fostering positive relationships with peers and teachers. This finding is consistent with research by Arga (2023), who demonstrated that social-emotional skills significantly contribute to students' academic success, particularly in cooperative learning environments (Arga, 2023). The study suggests that improving students' emotional intelligence through targeted interventions can mitigate common academic barriers, such as disengagement, low self-esteem, and conflict with peers (Fauzi, 2024). These findings reinforce the importance of social skills not only for personal growth but also for academic achievement.

The role of physical activity in the development of social skills was particularly emphasized in this study, with evidence showing that students involved in physical education programs, especially those that involved team sports or cooperative exercises, exhibited significant improvements in teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution skills. This outcome aligns with the work of Misriandi (2024) and Nurharsono (2023), who observed similar results in their studies on the impact of physical activity on students' social competence (Misriandi, 2024; Nurharsono, 2023). Moreover, the integration of games and physical activities into social skills training enhances not only students' cognitive abilities but also their physical health, as demonstrated by Nurmayani (2024). This dual benefit further highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to education that incorporates both cognitive and physical elements (Nurmayani, 2024).

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the development of social skills in elementary school students, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. One key limitation is the sample size, which may not be representative of the broader population of elementary school students. Although the study involved a diverse group of participants, the sample was limited to students from specific schools, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples across different regions or countries could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing social skills development in elementary students.

Another limitation of this study is the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce biases or inaccuracies in assessing students' social skills and emotional intelligence. Although teachers and educators provided additional input

through observations, self-reporting is inherently subjective and may not always accurately reflect students' true abilities or behaviors. To mitigate this limitation, future research could incorporate more objective assessment methods, such as behavioral observations, peer evaluations, or parent surveys, to provide a more rounded view of students' social skills development.

Additionally, the study primarily focused on the effectiveness of certain teaching methods and curricula, but it did not explore the long-term impact of these interventions. While the study demonstrated significant improvements in students' social-emotional competencies, it remains unclear whether these gains are sustained over time or whether additional interventions are necessary to maintain these skills as students progress through their academic careers. Longitudinal studies tracking students' social skills development over several years would provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effectiveness of various educational interventions (Arafah, 2024; Fauzi, 2024).

Future research should aim to build upon the findings of this study by exploring the long-term effects of social skills education on students' academic and personal outcomes. Longitudinal studies could investigate whether the improvements in social-emotional competencies observed in this study are sustained over time and whether they continue to contribute to academic success, mental health, and interpersonal relationships as students mature (Arga, 2023; Fatourehchi, 2024). Additionally, future research could explore the specific mechanisms through which different teaching methods—such as game-based learning, physical education, and arts education—impact social skill development. By delving deeper into the underlying processes, researchers could identify the most effective strategies for fostering social skills in different educational contexts and age groups (Johannes, 2024; Suriswo, 2023).

Moreover, it would be valuable for future studies to explore the role of technology in social skills education. With the increasing integration of digital tools and platforms in education, there is an opportunity to investigate how digital games, virtual learning environments, and other online resources can support the development of social skills in students. Research could focus on the effectiveness of these tools in promoting emotional regulation, empathy, and communication in virtual settings, and whether these digital approaches can be seamlessly integrated into traditional classroom practices (Okada & Matsuda, 2019; Sari, 2025). As digital tools become increasingly prevalent in education,

understanding their potential to enhance social-emotional learning is crucial.

Finally, future studies should consider the cultural and socio-economic factors that influence the development of social skills. Research by Arga (2023) and Saputra (2024) has highlighted the importance of cultural context in shaping students' social behaviors. It is essential to explore how different cultural backgrounds, values, and socio-economic circumstances impact the effectiveness of social skills education programs. Comparative studies across diverse cultural settings could provide valuable insights into the universal and context-specific aspects of social skills development (Arafah, 2024; Wibowo, 2024).

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be made for educators, policymakers, and schools to enhance social skills development in elementary school students. First and foremost, schools should prioritize the integration of social-emotional learning programs into the core curriculum. These programs should be designed to teach students essential social competencies, including emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and collaboration, all of which are vital for academic and personal success (Fauzi, 2024; Saputra, 2024). In addition to dedicated SEL sessions, these skills should be woven into everyday classroom activities, fostering a school-wide culture of respect, cooperation, and mutual support (Arga, 2023; Johannes, 2024).

Furthermore, schools should consider the adoption of interactive and engaging teaching methods, such as game-based learning and experiential activities, to promote social skills in a fun and meaningful way. As demonstrated in this study, games and activities that encourage teamwork, communication, and problem-solving can significantly enhance students' social-emotional competencies (Fatourehchi, 2024; Okada & Matsuda, 2019). Educators should also provide ample opportunities for physical activity, including team sports and cooperative exercises, which have been shown to foster communication and collaboration skills among students (Misriandi, 2024; Nurharsono, 2023).

Finally, schools should support the professional development of educators in the area of social skills education. Teachers should be trained in how to effectively integrate social-emotional learning into their teaching practices and how to recognize and address social-emotional issues in students. Professional development programs should focus on equipping educators with the tools and strategies to create a supportive and inclusive learning

environment that promotes the holistic development of every child (Arga, 2023; Fauzi, 2024). By prioritizing social skills development alongside academic learning, schools can create a well-rounded educational experience that prepares students for success in both their personal and academic lives.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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