Religious Communication and Political Engagement the Role of Faith-Based Organizations: Case Study Political Involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama Tasikmalaya

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
  	This article examines the involvement of faith-based organizations, especially Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya, in the political process in Indonesia. Through a religious communication approach, this research focuses on how the religious messages conveyed by the organization affect people's political views and behaviors. In addition, this article analyzes various forms of political involvement of NU Tasikmalaya, such as campaigns, advocacy, and voter mobilization, as well as the social impact of such involvement. In the digital era, the role of social media in spreading political messages is also discussed, given the increasing influence of technology in religious communication. This study contributes to a broader understanding of the role of faith-based organizations in Indonesia's political landscape and the social impact it has caused.

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of faith-based organizations in politics is not a new phenomenon, especially in countries with a majority religious population such as Indonesia. Organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have long played a role as one of the important actors in national and local political dynamics. In Tasikmalaya, NU plays an active role in conveying religious messages that affect people's political views. This article aims to explore the role of NU Tasikmalaya in political engagement through the approach of religious communication, as well as the social impact and use of digital media in their political activities. Faith-based organizations, such as NU, have a significant influence in Indonesia's political life. According to him, "NU's involvement in politics has been going on for a long time, especially since the independence era. NU not only facilitates the dissemination of religious values, but is also involved in the political decision-making process, both at the local and national levels" (Azra, 2014: 25). In Tasikmalaya, for example, "NU is a mediator between the interests of the people and the government, often playing a role in influencing political decisions related to social and religious policies" (Suryadinata, 2020: 45).

Religious communication in the political realm can be explained through the approach of religious communication "organizations such as NU use religion as a tool to mobilize the masses, convey political messages, and shape public opinion. This can be seen in the way NU conveys moral messages through da'wah, lectures, and sermons in mosques as well as through social media" (Dawson & Henne, 2019: 150). "Religious communication in politics is often used to strengthen collective identity and reinforce the position of religious organizations in the public sphere." (Hefner, 2017: 68). In Tasikmalaya, NU uses this approach to support political candidates who are considered to be able to fight for Islamic values and social justice. This is in line with the theory of religious communication which emphasizes the role of religion in conveying narratives that affect people's political behavior.

NU's involvement in politics has a significant social impact, especially in shaping people's political attitudes and views. "Religious organizations such as NU not only function as religious institutions, but also as social actors that influence socio-political dynamics" (Woodward, 2018: 96). In Tasikmalaya, for example, NU's involvement in the local election process is often associated with efforts to fight for the interests of the people and avoid the politicization of religion that can divide society. Another social impact is the emergence of the phenomenon of identity politics, where religion is one of the dominant factors in determining political choices. "This identity politics is often used by religious organizations to approach society through sensitive issues, such as morality, public policy, and the protection of minorities" (Saeed, 2021: 212). NU Tasikmalaya, through the religious communication conveyed, tries to create a balance between politics and religion, so as not to cause dangerous social fragmentation.

In the digital era, NU Tasikmalaya has begun to use social media to spread political and religious messages. "Social media has become one of the main tools for religious organizations to reach a wider and more diverse audience" (Lim, 2020: 35). In Tasikmalaya, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are used by NU to convey information about religious activities, political campaigns, and moral appeals to the public. "The use of digital media by religious organizations also allows for interactive dialogue between religious leaders and worshippers" (Bunt, 2019: 47). This provides an opportunity for NU Tasikmalaya to answer developing political issues, as well as convey religious views that are relevant to the current political situation. Thus, digital media is not only a tool for disseminating information, but also a means to strengthen social and political relations between NU and the community.

The relevant political communication theory to explain NU Tasikmalaya's involvement in politics is the agenda-setting theory. "The media, including digital media, plays an important role in shaping society's political agenda" (McCombs and Shaw, 2021: 130). NU Tasikmalaya, through the use of social media, can influence issues that are considered important by the community. For example, when NU emphasizes the importance of social justice and morality in political campaigns, those issues will be a priority for their audience. In addition, "framing theories that explain the way an issue is framed by religious organizations" (Entman, 2018: 85), such as NU, will affect the way society understands and responds to the issue. NU Tasikmalaya, for example, can frame their involvement in politics as part of a moral and religious struggle, which ultimately affects the public's perception of political candidates supported by NU.

The involvement of faith-based organizations in politics in Indonesia, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), can be understood through research that has been conducted by several academics. For example, "NU and Muhammadiyah play an important role in the formation of national identity" (Hefner, 2017: 68). Their involvement is not only in the religious aspect, but also in influencing political policy. These organizations play an active role in formulating and advocating values that support morality, social justice, and community development, which indirectly shape the national character of Indonesia. Further, "faith-based organizations utilize religious rhetoric to mobilize political support, especially in the context of elections" (Pepinsky, 2018: 156).

Organizations such as NU use da'wah and lectures as a means to convey political messages that frame religious values as solutions to social problems. In the context of Tasikmalaya, NU is often involved in political campaigns that carry moral and religious narratives, which are able to influence the political perception of the public at large. "The importance of social media in strengthening the political message of religious organizations" (Slama, 2020: 45). Social media is an effective means for NU to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are more active on digital platforms. In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, social media is used to spread religious messages related to political issues. This allows NU to respond more quickly to political developments and remain relevant in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya in politics can be understood through two main theoretical approaches, namely the theory of Religious Communication and the theory of Political Engagement. "Religious Communication Theory focuses on how religious messages are conveyed through various media, such as lectures, sermons, and digital platforms, and how these messages affect their audiences" (Anderson, 2013: 112). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, the delivery of da'wah and religious messages is not only aimed at teaching religion, but also affects the political attitude of the community. Through religious lectures containing moral values and justice, NU plays an important role in shaping the political behavior of society based on Islamic principles.

Commenting on the involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya in politics such as Framing Theory in political communication, "This theory explains how messages are conveyed in a certain way to influence the audience" (Entman, 2018: 90). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, religious messages communicated through da'wah, recitation, and social media are not only aimed at religious education, but also have a political agenda. Da'wah that emphasizes social justice and Islamic morality is used to influence people's political behavior, making religious messages a political instrument. Thus, framing these messages serves to build a political narrative that is in line with Islamic values and strengthen support for certain candidates who are considered to represent the interests of Muslims.

In addition, "the theory of Political Engagement, which defines political engagement as an attempt made by an individual or group to influence public policy and political processes" (Verba et al., 1995: 37). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, political involvement includes various activities, such as political advocacy, voter mobilization, and direct involvement in political campaigns. Through its strong structural network at the local level, NU is able to mobilize voters to support candidates who are in line with their religious vision. For example, NU's involvement in supporting certain candidates in the Tasikmalaya Regional Election shows that this organization is active in influencing local political decisions.

Furthermore, within the framework of Social Movement Theory, it is revealed that "the political involvement of NU Tasikmalaya can be seen as part of a social movement" (Tarrow, 2019: 115). This organization not only operates within a religious framework, but also as an agent of political change by fighting for social agendas through policy advocacy and voter mobilization. Through a strong network at the local level, NU is able to mobilize the masses to support prospective leaders who are in line with their vision and mission. This reflects how faith-based organizations can play a major role in socio-political movements at the local and national levels.

"Digital media further strengthens the political involvement of faith-based organizations such as NU" (Slama, 2020: 67). Social media is used by NU Tasikmalaya to spread political and religious messages quickly and widely, allowing the organization to reach a younger and more diverse audience. Thus, the combination of the theories of Religious Communication and Political Engagement explains how NU Tasikmalaya uses a religious approach to influence local politics.

The use of digital media by NU Tasikmalaya to spread political messages can also be analyzed through Network Society Theory. In this context, "social media serves as an important tool for religious organizations such as NU to expand the reach of their political message" (Castells, 2010: 95). NU can reach the younger generation and a wider audience through digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, which allows for the rapid and effective dissemination of messages. This digitization of political communication not only affects localities but also opens up opportunities for NU to engage in a broader political discourse.

METHODOLOGY

Research on the involvement of faith-based organizations in politics, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya, requires a proper methodological approach to explore how religious messages are communicated and influence political behavior. The use of qualitative methods with a case study approach is very relevant in this context because it allows researchers to deeply understand how NU is involved in political activities through in-depth interviews and participatory observations.

Case Studies and Qualitative Approaches

The case study approach in this study aims to explore the phenomenon of political involvement of NU Tasikmalaya in depth. "Case studies are a methodology that is suitable for use when researchers want to understand complex dynamics in a certain context" (Yin, 2018: 45). In this case, NU Tasikmalaya became the main unit of analysis to understand how religious messages are conveyed and how this organization plays a role in local politics. The qualitative approach allows data mining from various perspectives of NU members who are directly involved in political activities.

In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are the main method in this study, which allows researchers to explore the perceptions, motivations, and strategies used by NU Tasikmalaya in politics. "In-depth interviews provide an opportunity for participants to share their experiences openly and in detail, so that researchers can gain a rich understanding of their political involvement" (Seidman, 2019: 18). In the context of NU, interviews with members involved in political campaigns or political advocacy will provide an overview of how religious messages are used to mobilize political support.

Participatory Observation

Participatory observation is an important method in this study to understand NU's direct involvement in various political activities, including campaigns or social activities that have political implications. "Participatory observation allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social behavior and interactions in the field" (Spradley, 2016: 97). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, researchers can observe how religious lectures or other activities are used to convey political messages, as well as how NU members interact with the community.

Analisis Data

First, analyze social media content. Content analysis of NU Tasikmalaya's social media provides a view on how political messages are disseminated through digital platforms. "The importance of content analysis to understand communication patterns in texts, including on social media" (Krippendorff, 2018: 121). In this context, an analysis was carried out on NU's publications on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to see how they convey political messages and how people respond to those messages.

Second, the Theory of Religious Communication. Religious Communication Theory, "an important foundation for understanding how religious messages are conveyed in a political context" (Campbell, 2021: 56). NU Tasikmalaya uses religious narratives to frame political issues, with da'wah and lectures as the main media. These messages touch on aspects of morality, social justice, and welfare that are aligned with the political platform of the candidates supported by NU.

Third, the theory of political involvement. Political Involvement Theory, "political involvement as an action taken to influence public policy" (Verba et al., 1995: 37). In this case, NU Tasikmalaya is not only involved in voter mobilization but also in advocating for policies that are in accordance with the religious values they adhere. Through da'wah and social programs, NU is able to influence people's political preferences at the local level.

RESEARCH RESULT

NU's involvement in politics is often manifested through the delivery of messages that are aligned with Islamic teachings. According to interviews with members of NU Tasikmalaya, the political messages conveyed focused on issues of social justice, economic empowerment, and support for prospective leaders who were considered in line with Islamic principles. "Organizations such as NU have an important role in articulating political identities based on religious values, where NU uses religious spaces such as mosques and recitation to direct political discussions" (Hefner, 2017: 68). Lectures and recitations are traditional media that NU has long used to communicate their political views. However, in recent years, NU Tasikmalaya has also begun to use social media to spread political messages faster and wider. "Social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp have become the main tools in spreading religious and political messages among Muslims in Indonesia" (Slama, 2020: 110). In the context of NU

Tasikmalaya, social media allows this organization to reach a wider audience, not only at the local level but also regional and national.

Voter mobilization is a form of political involvement carried out by NU Tasikmalaya. The organization actively directs its members to vote for leaders they consider to be in line with Islamic principles, especially during regional head elections. "Faith-based organizations in Indonesia, such as NU, often utilize religious rhetoric to mobilize political support and create collective solidarity among their members" (Pepinsky, 2018: 135). Through messages conveyed in lectures or social media, NU Tasikmalaya encourages voters to support candidates who are considered to be the most fighting for the interests of the people. In addition, NU is also involved in policy advocacy. "NU actively encourages legislation that supports the welfare of the community, especially in issues related to social justice and the protection of the rights of Muslims" (Hefner, 2017: 85). In Tasikmalaya, this advocacy focuses on policies that can improve the economic and social welfare of the local community, which is considered the moral responsibility of NU-supported leadership candidates.

The use of social media by NU Tasikmalaya has had a significant impact in accelerating the spread of political messages. "Social media allows religious organizations such as NU to disseminate information more effectively and interactively" (Slama, 2020: 115). In Tasikmalaya, platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp are often used to share information related to political and religious activities, as well as to mobilize support during elections.

However, one of the main challenges faced by NU Tasikmalaya in the use of social media is the dissemination of information that is sometimes distorted. "Although social media provides many opportunities, it is also vulnerable to abuse by certain parties for political interests that are not always in line with the vision and mission of NU" (Bunt, 2019: 47). This distortion of information can affect public perception and create internal conflicts among members of the organization. NU Tasikmalaya's political involvement not only affects political dynamics, but also affects social dynamics in society. From the results of interviews with NU members, it was revealed that NU's involvement in politics has increased public awareness about the importance of political participation. "Religious organizations such as NU play an important role in encouraging active political participation, especially by directing their members to elect leaders who are expected to fight for the interests of the people" (Woodward, 2018: 96).

However, the social impact of NU's political involvement is not always positive. "In some cases, the political involvement of religious organizations can create social fragmentation where certain groups feel marginalized by political support that leans towards one particular side" (Azra, 2014: 35). This is also the case in Tasikmalaya, where NU's political support for certain candidates sometimes creates tension among people who have different political affiliations. NU Tasikmalaya's involvement in politics can be analyzed through framing theory. "This theory explains how organizations frame their political messages to influence public perception" (Entman, 2018: 85). NU Tasikmalaya, for example, frames their involvement in politics as part of the struggle for social

justice and the welfare of the people. In this way, NU was able to mobilize political support from its members through messages packaged within the framework of religious values. In addition, the "agenda-setting theory" (McCombs and Shaw, 2021: 130), in analyzing the use of social media by NU Tasikmalaya. By using social media, NU can shape the political agenda in society, especially in terms of issues that are considered important to Muslims, such as social justice, economic empowerment, and leadership based on Islamic principles.

The involvement of NU Tasikmalaya in politics also has a significant social impact. "Religious involvement in politics often has a great social effect, especially in strengthening social cohesion and reducing political tensions" (Casanova, 2019: 102). In Tasikmalaya, NU plays a role in maintaining political stability through messages that emphasize unity and peace, even though they are involved in political contestation. Through a qualitative methodological approach with case studies, in-depth interviews, and participatory observations, this study succeeded in exploring the important role of NU Tasikmalaya in political involvement. Using the theory of Religious Communication and the theory of Political Engagement, this study provides comprehensive insights into how faith-based organizations utilize religious messages to influence local political dynamics. The involvement of NU Tasikmalaya in politics also has a significant social impact. "Religious involvement in politics often has a great social effect, especially in strengthening social cohesion and reducing political tensions" (Casanova, 2019: 102). In Tasikmalaya, NU plays a role in maintaining political stability through messages that emphasize unity and peace, even though they are involved in political contestation. Through a qualitative methodological approach with case studies, in-depth interviews, and participatory observations, this study succeeded in exploring the important role of NU Tasikmalaya in political involvement. Using the theory of Religious Communication and the theory of Political Engagement, this study provides comprehensive insights into how faith-based organizations utilize religious messages to influence local political dynamics.

DISCUSSION

The involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya in politics, as conveyed through interviews with its members, highlights various important aspects, including the delivery of political messages, voter mobilization, the use of social media, and social impact. This analysis will delve into the role of faith-based organizations in politics by linking the latest theories and research on NU's political dynamics and relevance to the development of digital technology. Some researchers have revealed, "the theoretical basis for understanding this phenomenon in the context of Islamic organizations in Indonesia" (Hefner, 2017; Pepinsky, 2018; and Slama, 2020).

The involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya in politics has a major impact on social and political dynamics in the region. These religious organizations play an important role in spreading Islamic values related to social justice and the welfare of the ummah through various methods of communication, including religious lectures and social media. NU's role is not only limited to the realm of religion but also extends to practical politics, by directing its members to support leadership candidates who are considered in line with Islamic principles. However, in the digital era, NU faces a major challenge in controlling information disseminated on social media, where inaccurate information or distortions can disrupt social and political stability.

The Involvement of Religious Organizations in Politics: the Case of NU Tasikmalaya

NU Tasikmalaya has long played a role in spreading religious messages that are often connected to political issues. "Faith-based organizations such as NU have an important role in shaping people's political views, especially in areas where the majority is Muslim" (Hefner, 2017: 70). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, the messages conveyed through lectures in mosques and recitation often focus on issues of social justice, economic empowerment, and the welfare of the people. NU Tasikmalaya seeks to direct Muslims to be involved in politics as part of their religious responsibility.

"That religious organizations in Indonesia often use religious rhetoric to mobilize political support" (Pepinsky, 2018: 137). In the election of regional heads, for example, NU Tasikmalaya actively mobilizes its members to support candidates who are considered the most adequate in fighting for the interests of Muslims. This mobilization is not just about organizing, but also using digital platforms to increase political awareness and encourage active participation.

"Religious organizations often use religious rhetoric to mobilize political support" (Pepinsky, 2018: 137). In addition, "religious organizations use religious values-based messages to motivate political participation among their members" (Jelletich and Karaca, 2022: 99). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, political mobilization is not only carried out through religious lectures but also through digital platforms, social media functions as a strategic tool in expanding the reach of political messages and increasing political awareness among the people.

The Role of Social Media in NU Tasikmalaya's Political Involvement

The use of social media by NU Tasikmalaya in spreading political messages has a significant role in expanding the reach of information. "Social media has become an important tool in strengthening political and religious messages in Indonesia" (Slama, 2020: 105). Facebook and WhatsApp are the main platforms used by NU Tasikmalaya to mobilize support and disseminate information related to political and religious activities. Through social media, these messages can be spread quickly and widely, allowing NU to reach a larger audience than traditional methods of communication.

However, one of the major challenges in the use of social media is the dissemination of information that is not always accurate. "Social media on the one hand can strengthen political communication" (Bunt, 2019: 52), but on the other hand it is also vulnerable to the spread of unverified or even misused information for political purposes that are contrary to the vision and mission of NU. In Tasikmalaya, this can be seen in the dissemination of political messages that are sometimes manipulated by outsiders, thus causing confusion among the public about what is actually NU's position on certain political issues.

To minimize this negative impact, NU Tasikmalaya needs to strengthen supervision of information disseminated through digital platforms. "Tighter control over messages conveyed on social media can help keep an organization's political engagement inclusive and avoid potential polarization in society" (Woodward, 2018: 92). NU Tasikmalaya leverages platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to quickly disseminate political and religious information, which allows for a wider reach compared to traditional methods of communication. The use of social media by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya in spreading political messages shows an impact in expanding the reach of information.

Social media expands the reach of political communication, although it also risks spreading inaccurate information. In this case, NU Tasikmalaya's use of Facebook and WhatsApp allows organizations to reach a larger audience compared to traditional communication methods, thereby accelerating the spread of political and religious messages. However, it should be noted that the main challenge in the use of social media is the dissemination of information that is not always accurate or even misused. Strict control over messages conveyed through social media can help maintain the integrity of political communication and avoid potential polarization. In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, stricter supervision of information disseminated through digital platforms is needed to ensure that political messages remain in line with the organization's vision and mission and avoid confusion among the public.

Social Impact of NU's Involvement in Politics

The social impact of NU Tasikmalaya's political involvement is quite significant, especially in terms of increasing political awareness among the community. According to interviews with several members of NU Tasikmalaya, their involvement in politics has helped create a greater awareness of the importance of electing leaders who fight for the interests of Muslims. "Religious organizations such as NU play an important role in mobilizing political participation and creating solidarity among the people" (Hefner, 2017: 88). Religious organizations such as NU play an important role in mobilizing political participation and creating solidarity among the people.

However, NU's involvement in politics is not completely free from negative impacts. "In some cases, the political involvement of religious organizations can create social fragmentation where certain groups feel marginalized" (Azra, 2014: 39). In Tasikmalaya, strong political support for one candidate often leaves other groups feeling unaccommodated, which can trigger social tensions. Therefore, NU Tasikmalaya needs to ensure that their political involvement remains inclusive and does not cause divisions in society.

"The political involvement of religious organizations can increase people's political awareness and strengthen a sense of solidarity" (Caldwell, 2021: 55). In the context of NU Tasikmalaya, their active involvement in politics, including campaigning and advocacy, has helped to clarify the importance of electing leaders who fight for the interests of Muslims, as seen in the results of interviews with NU members. "Biased political support for a particular candidate often leads to social tensions and feelings of exclusion among other groups" (Siddiqi, 2018: 102). In Tasikmalaya, these tensions arise due to strong political support for one candidate, which often leaves other groups feeling unrepresented. Therefore, NU Tasikmalaya needs to ensure that their political involvement remains inclusive to avoid divisions in society.

The social impact of the political involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Tasikmalaya is very significant, especially in increasing people's political awareness. The results of interviews with members of NU Tasikmalaya show that their involvement in politics has increased awareness about the importance of choosing leaders who support the interests of Muslims. "NU plays a central role in shaping the political views of the community through religious activities that educate the people about their political responsibilities" (Anwar, 2022: 72). This is seen in activities such as lectures at mosques and recitation that support active participation in general elections and policy advocacy.

NU Tasikmalaya's political involvement also creates solidarity among members and communities. "Political mobilization by religious organizations can strengthen a sense of community and solidarity among the people, which has a positive impact on political participation" (Aminah, 2019: 98). In the context of NU, activities such as counseling and political campaigns at the local level play an important role in encouraging greater political participation and building a sense of social responsibility among members.

However, this social impact is not without its challenges. "Political involvement by religious organizations can result in the exclusion of certain groups who feel marginalized by the political support provided" (Darmawan, 2021: 87). This shows the need for NU Tasikmalaya to be more careful in ensuring that their political involvement does not create social tension or division in society, and to keep all members feeling represented and inclusive.

Theoretical Analysis: Framing in Political Communication of NU Tasikmalaya

NU Tasikmalaya's involvement in politics through the delivery of religious messages, voter mobilization, and the use of social media shows how important the role of this organization is in shaping political views and social dynamics in Tasikmalaya. Social media has given NU Tasikmalaya an effective tool to spread political messages, but it also brings challenges in terms of information control. NU needs to be careful in keeping their political involvement inclusive and not causing social fragmentation. Through tighter supervision of disseminated information and the use of framing theory and agenda-setting in the delivery of messages, NU Tasikmalaya can continue to play an important role in the political and social dynamics in Indonesia.

NU Tasikmalaya's involvement in politics can be analyzed through framing theory. "This theory explains that framing is a way of framing how organizations or individuals frame political messages to influence public perception" (Entman, 2018: 85). In the case of NU Tasikmalaya, the messages conveyed through religious lectures and social media are framed in the context of Islamic values that support social justice and the welfare of the people. In this way, NU was able to shape a political narrative that mobilized support among its members.

In addition, "agenda-setting theory is also relevant in analyzing how NU Tasikmalaya uses social media to shape political agendas in society" (McCombs and Shaw, 2021: 130). Social media allows NU to set important issues that must be paid attention to by the community, such as social justice and economic empowerment. By setting this political agenda, NU can direct public discussion and influence people's political preferences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NU Tasikmalaya's involvement in politics has a significant impact both in terms of political mobilization and social change. The religious messages conveyed by NU play an important role in shaping people's political views, especially in the context of social justice and the welfare of the people. Social media is an effective tool in spreading these messages, despite challenges related to the dissemination of inaccurate information. To minimize the negative impact, NU needs to be more careful in controlling the information disseminated through digital platforms and keeping their political involvement inclusive.

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