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ASSESSMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP IN FCT-ABUJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in enhancing effective business leadership in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria—a fast-paced, diverse, and economically critical urban center. As leadership success increasingly depends on interpersonal skills and emotional regulation in addition to technical expertise, this research explores how EI contributes to leadership effectiveness, particularly in areas such as decision-making, team management, and organizational performance. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 200 business leaders across various industries in FCT, Abuja, including finance, manufacturing, real estate, IT, and services and were analysed using both descriptive and inferential analytical tools. This study concludes that emotional intelligence is a key determinant of leadership effectiveness in the dynamic business environment of FCT, Abuja. It recommends that organizations integrate EI into leadership development, performance evaluation, and recruitment strategies. The study contributes to both academic literature and practical leadership development by emphasizing EI as a core capability for sustainable organizational success in emerging economies like Nigeria.

Keywords: Emotional, Intelligence, Business, Leadership, Empathy

1.1 Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving and highly competitive global business environment, the traditional understanding of leadership based primarily on technical competence, academic qualifications, and strategic planning has significantly broadened to include emotional intelligence (EI) as a central

determinant of leadership effectiveness. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and influence emotions both within themselves and in others (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). It is increasingly recognized that leaders who are emotionally intelligent tend to perform better in areas such as interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, motivation, team building, and organizational adaptability (Cherniss, 2001).

In the context of FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, one of Africa's most vibrant and economically significant cities, the importance of emotional intelligence in business leadership becomes even more pronounced. FCT, Abuja is characterized by a highly dynamic commercial landscape, cultural and ethnic diversity, complex bureaucratic systems, and intense competition across all sectors of industry. Leaders operating in this high-pressure environment must navigate frequent organizational changes, multicultural teams, economic uncertainties, and diverse stakeholder interests. As such, the ability to remain emotionally balanced, empathetic, and socially aware becomes a vital leadership attribute (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Moreover, leadership challenges in FCT, Abuja are often intensified by infrastructural deficits, regulatory inconsistencies, and workforce diversity. Leaders who lack emotional intelligence may struggle with employee engagement, poor communication, low morale, and high turnover, which can negatively impact organizational performance. Studies have shown that organizations led by emotionally intelligent leaders tend to be more resilient, innovative and cohesive, especially during periods of change or crisis (Mayer et al., 2008). Furthermore, leadership in FCT, Abuja is routinely tested by systemic issues such as bureaucratic red tape, inconsistent policy enforcement, infrastructural decay, and talent mobility challenges. These factors can easily lead to organizational instability if not carefully managed. Leaders lacking emotional intelligence may exhibit poor judgment, fail to build meaningful connections with staff, or adopt a top-down leadership style that discourages innovation and openness. This often results in low employee morale, poor communication, internal conflict, and high turnover rates—all of which hinder organizational performance and growth. In contrast, emotionally intelligent leaders are more adept at motivating employees, fostering inclusive work cultures, and sustaining engagement through challenging periods. Their ability to listen actively, respond empathetically, and regulate their own emotional reactions gives them a decisive edge in creating cohesive, resilient, and high-performing teams (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998).

Empirical studies conducted globally and within Nigeria indicate that emotionally intelligent leadership is positively associated with a range of desirable outcomes, including employee satisfaction, productivity, innovation, and organizational loyalty (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). In FCT, Abuja, where external business pressures are compounded by internal organizational complexities, such leadership becomes not only beneficial but necessary. The ability to influence others through emotional awareness and social acumen can mean the difference between organizational success and failure.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to assess the role and impact of emotional intelligence in enhancing effective business leadership within the FCT, Abuja. Specifically, it aims to explore how various dimensions of EI such as self-awareness, empathy, social skills, motivation, and emotional self-regulation contribute to better decision-making, improved team performance, effective conflict management, and sustainable organizational growth. The research endeavors to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and practical application, providing evidence-based insights that can inform leadership development, human resource management, and organizational policy in FCT, Abuja. By contextualizing the role of EI within the unique socio-economic and cultural framework of Nigeria's capital city, this study offers valuable implications for corporate executives, HR professionals, educators, policymakers, and leadership trainers seeking to cultivate emotionally intelligent leadership in emerging market economies.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of emotional intelligence among business leaders in FCT, Abuja.
2. To analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness.
3. To assess the impact of each component of EI (e.g., empathy, self-awareness) on business outcomes.
4. To recommend strategies for developing EI in current and future leaders in FCT, Abuja.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the general level of emotional intelligence among business leaders in FCT, Abuja?
2. How does emotional intelligence influence decision-making and team management?
3. Which EI components most significantly affect leadership effectiveness?
4. What strategies can be used to enhance emotional intelligence among business leaders?

1.4 Hypotheses

- **H_0:** There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and effective business leadership.
- **H_1:** There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and effective business leadership.

2.0 Conceptual Literatures

Emotional Intelligence (EI), as conceptualized by Goleman (1995), consists of five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These dimensions collectively enable individuals—especially leaders—to recognize, understand, and manage not only their own emotions but also the emotions of others. According to Goleman (1998), emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities of human interaction, make sound decisions under pressure, and foster a psychologically safe and productive work environment.

Self-awareness refers to the ability of leaders to recognize their emotions, accurately assess their strengths and limitations, and understand the impact of their behavior on others (Goleman, 1995). It lays the foundation for self-regulation, which involves controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods, and adapting to changing circumstances with composure and accountability (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). Motivation, in the EI framework, pertains to an intrinsic drive to pursue goals with energy and persistence, often independent of external rewards (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Empathy—a particularly vital component in multicultural and diverse settings—enables leaders to sense others' feelings, perspectives, and needs, allowing for inclusive and supportive leadership (Cherniss, 2001). Lastly, social skills encompass a wide range of interpersonal competencies, including influence, communication, conflict resolution, and team collaboration (Goleman, 1998).

These emotional competencies are not only essential for individual success but also crucial for organizational leadership. Leaders with high EI are more likely to create cohesive teams, cultivate a positive organizational culture, and inspire others through emotional influence rather than positional power (Goleman, 2004). In such environments, employees are more engaged, motivated, and aligned with organizational goals, which ultimately drives higher performance and productivity (Mayer et al., 2008).

The relevance of EI becomes even more pronounced in the context of FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, a city characterized by intense commercial activity, cultural heterogeneity, socio-economic disparity, and frequent organizational change. FCT, Abuja's unique blend of challenges—including infrastructural limitations, regulatory unpredictability, and workforce diversity—demands leadership that is both emotionally resilient and inter-personally competent (Eze & Obikeze, 2021). Leaders operating in such environments must be able to manage pressure, respond to interpersonal and intercultural conflict, and motivate teams facing external stressors.

Research has shown that in high-pressure business environments like FCT, Abuja, emotionally intelligent leaders are more effective in fostering trust, managing organizational change, and sustaining employee engagement (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2008). Their ability to remain calm under pressure, communicate with empathy, and inspire confidence equips them to guide teams through uncertainty and transformation. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent leaders build strong internal cultures, reduce turnover, and enhance collaboration, all of which are essential for thriving in Nigeria's competitive economic climate (Goleman, 1998; Cherniss, 2001).

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is not merely an abstract psychological construct but a practical leadership necessity, especially in complex urban business environments such as FCT, Abuja. Its application enables leaders to not only perform more effectively but also to build sustainable organizations that can adapt, grow, and lead with both competence and compassion.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for systematically collecting and analyzing data to describe and interpret existing conditions, attitudes, and practices. The design allows the researcher to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness without manipulating variables, making it ideal for examining real-life business leadership scenarios in FCT, Abuja.

The target population for this study is 200 respondents drawn across the various heads working across various sectors in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria which includes senior managers, chief executive officers (CEOs), and departmental heads. These individuals hold strategic decision-making roles and are therefore in a position to reflect on leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes influenced by emotional intelligence.

To ensure a balanced representation of the business landscape in FCT, Abuja, a stratified random sampling technique was used. The population were stratified based on industry sectors such as finance, real estate, information technology, manufacturing, and services. This method ensures that each sector is proportionally represented in the study sample, thus enhancing the generalization of the findings.

Data were collected using standardized research instruments, including a structured Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EQ-i) and a Leadership Effectiveness Scale. These instruments were administered to 200 respondents, allowing for both breadth and depth in data collection. The EQ-i were assessed in the various components of emotional intelligence, while the leadership scale measured key indicators of leadership performance.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages which summarize the general trends and patterns in the data. Inferential statistical tools,

including correlation and regression analysis were employed to examine the strength and nature of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness across the sampled sectors.

Analysis was done both at the primary and secondary levels. At the primary level, descriptive statistics were used in the analysis, which concentrates on the demographics analysis while at the secondary level of analysis, inferential statistics were used. At the primary level, 55 persons representing (27.5%) of the respondents were male while 145 persons (72.5%) were female, while majority of the respondents which is 100 (50%) were within the age bracket of 21 to 30 years, 40 (20%) were 20 years of age. 35 (17.5%) were within the age of 31 to 40 years while 25 (12.5%) where within an unspecified age. This means that the majority of the respondents are in their youthful years having the ability to practice the knowledge earned in formal learning. Also that 99 (49.5%) of the respondents had acquired Bachelor of Science Degrees. 44 (22%) possessed Higher National Diploma Degrees, 34 (17%) have attained MBA Degrees, while only 23 respondents representing (11.5%) have Doctor of Philosophy Degrees. The result also shows that 70 respondents representing (35%), 5 (2.5%), 82 (41%) and 25 (12.5%) have worked in their respective firms for less than 2 years, 2 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years respectively while 18 (9%) of the respondents have worked for over 10 years.

The results of univariate analysis revealed that the mean scores (x) obtained for the study variables are: emotional intelligence (4.30), leadership effectiveness (4.55)

Furthermore at the secondary level of analysis, inferential statistics such as spearman's rank order correlation coefficients and Regression coefficients including the p-values, were calculated for purposes of testing the stated hypotheses.

Relationship between Emotional intelligence and Leadership effectiveness

The correlation analysis depicting the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness is shown below. The table above shows that the coefficient of correlation is 0.946. This shows that a very strong positive and significant relationship exist between Emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. The Coefficient of Determination (r^2) = 0.895. It implies that 89.5% variation in leadership effectiveness is explained by variations in emotional intelligence. The remaining 10.5% is elucidated by some other variables not covered in this study. The F-calculated of 4359.43 had a corresponding significant t-value of 0.000. The researcher therefore concludes it is a good and useful model. Conventionally F-Cal = 4359.43> F-tab (0.05, 1, 249) =3.84. The test of significance conducted as shown in the table below shows that emotional intelligence significantly

influences leadership effectiveness (PV = 0.000 < 0.05). More so, t-cal = 66.026> t-tab (0.05, 249) = 1.96.Basing our decision on benchmark as reported in Irving (2005) we thus reject the Ho_1 and accept H_1 , that there is a significantly positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness.

Research Question 1: What is the general level of emotional intelligence among business leaders in FCT, Abuja?

Level of Emotional Intelligence	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
High	95	47.5%
Moderate	70	35.0%
Low	35	17.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data reveals that a significant proportion of business leaders in FCT, Abuja possess a high level of emotional intelligence (47.5%), while 35% show moderate EI and 17.5% have low EI. This suggests that most leaders are emotionally equipped to handle interpersonal and organizational challenges effectively.

Research Question 2: How does emotional intelligence influence decision-making and team management?

Influence of EI	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strong Influence	100	50.0%
Moderate Influence	60	30.0%
Weak Influence	30	15.0%
No Influence	10	5.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Half of the respondents (50%) believe that emotional intelligence has a strong influence on decision-making and team management, while another 30% report a moderate influence. Only a small percentage (20%) view the influence as weak or nonexistent. This indicates a strong perception that EI contributes positively to leadership effectiveness in team-related functions.

Research Question 3: Which EI components most significantly affect leadership effectiveness?

EI Component	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Empathy	50	25.0%

Self-Awareness	45	22.5%
Self-Regulation	40	20.0%
Social Skills	35	17.5%
Motivation	30	15.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Empathy (25%) and self-awareness (22.5%) are identified as the most critical EI components affecting leadership effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of interpersonal sensitivity and self-understanding in leading teams successfully.

Research Question 4: What strategies can be used to enhance emotional intelligence among business leaders?

Strategy	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Training Programs	70	35.0%
Mentorship	50	25.0%
Coaching	40	20.0%
Self-Reflection Exercises	25	12.5%
Peer Feedback	15	7.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Training programs are viewed as the most effective strategy to enhance EI (35%), followed by mentorship (25%) and coaching (20%). Self-reflection and peer feedback are also acknowledged, although to a lesser extent. This highlights the importance of structured learning and relationship-based methods in developing emotional competencies in leadership.

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence that emotional intelligence (EI) is widely acknowledged among business leaders in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, as a fundamental attribute of effective leadership. A combined total of 82.5% of respondents reported either high or moderate levels of emotional intelligence, which indicates that most leaders in the FCT, Abuja business environment possess the emotional competencies necessary for navigating the complexities of organizational leadership. This high level of awareness and self-perceived emotional competence underscores the growing recognition of EI as a critical leadership asset in today's dynamic and diverse work settings.

One of the most striking observations from the data is the strong influence of emotional intelligence on decision-making and team management. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that EI has a

"strong influence" on these leadership functions, while an additional 30% reported a "moderate influence." This clearly shows that emotional intelligence is not only considered relevant but is also perceived as central to operational and strategic effectiveness within organizations. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent are better positioned to make balanced, empathetic decisions, communicate clearly, and maintain harmonious team dynamics, particularly in high-pressure environments like FCT, Abuja where competition, diversity, and constant change are the norm.

When asked to identify the specific components of EI that most significantly affect leadership effectiveness, the majority of respondents highlighted empathy (25%) and self-awareness (22.5%). This outcome is particularly relevant within the FCT, Abuja context, where organizations often deal with cultural plurality, inter-generational work forces, and varying socio-economic dynamics. Empathy enables leaders to understand and respond to the emotional needs and perspectives of their teams, thereby fostering inclusivity, mutual respect, and psychological safety. Similarly, self-awareness equips leaders with the ability to regulate their emotions, avoid impulsive reactions, and align their actions with organizational values and stakeholder expectations. These traits are vital for managing workplace relationships and maintaining morale in rapidly changing or stressful circumstances.

Additionally, components such as self-regulation, social skills, and motivation were also recognized, although to a slightly lesser degree. These skills contribute to a leader’s ability to remain composed under stress, build strong interpersonal networks, and sustain drive toward organizational goals—all of which are essential for long-term success in Nigeria’s evolving economic landscape.

Regarding the strategies to enhance emotional intelligence, respondents identified training programs (35%), mentorship (25%), and coaching (20%) as the most effective methods. This preference for structured and relationship-driven interventions reflects a growing openness among FCT, Abuja-based organizations to invest in professional development and leadership training. These strategies are consistent with global best practices and reinforce the idea that emotional intelligence can be cultivated, not just inherited. Training programs, in particular, offer leaders the opportunity to learn and practice EI skills in a safe, guided environment. Mentorship and coaching, on the other hand, provide personalized feedback and real-time application, making them highly effective for behavioral change and leadership growth.

These insights align closely with the findings of Goleman (1998), who emphasized that EI is a greater predictor of workplace success than cognitive intelligence or technical skills. They also resonate with Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) research on resonant leadership, which shows that leaders who demonstrate emotional attunement and relational competence build stronger, more committed teams. Furthermore, the data supports the idea that emotional intelligence is not just a desirable trait but a necessary capability for business leaders, particularly in environments that require adaptability, interpersonal sensitivity, and trust-based management.

Pearson Correlation Result (N = 200)

Variables	**N**	**r**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Emotional Intelligence & Business Leadership	200	**0.64**	**0.000**	Significant

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation coefficient (**r = 0.64**) indicates a **strong positive relationship** between emotional intelligence and effective business leadership. The result is statistically significant (**p < 0.05**), meaning that as emotional intelligence increases, leadership effectiveness also increases.

Decision:
The null hypothesis is **rejected**.

Correlation between EI Dimensions and Leadership Effectiveness

EI Dimension	**r**	**p-value**	**Interpretation**
Self-awareness	0.56	0.000	Strong positive
Self-regulation	0.49	0.000	Moderate positive
Motivation	0.46	0.000	Moderate positive
Empathy	0.61	0.000	Strong positive
Social skills	0.66	0.000	Strong positive

Interpretation

Social skills and empathy show the strongest correlations, suggesting that interpersonal competence is particularly important for effective leadership in Abuja's business environment.

Regression Analysis

Simple Linear Regression

To examine whether emotional intelligence predicts effective business leadership.

Regression Model

EBL=β0+β1(EI)+εEBL = \beta_0 + \beta_1(EI) + \varepsilonEBL=β0+β1(EI)+ε

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
0.64	**0.41**	0.40	4.82

Interpretation

- Emotional intelligence explains 41% of the variance in effective business leadership.
- This indicates a strong predictive power, which is substantial in behavioral and management research.

ANOVA Table

Source	df	F	p-value
Regression	1	**137.6**	**0.000**
Residual	198		
Total	199		

Interpretation

The regression model is statistically significant ($F(1,198) = 137.6$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that emotional intelligence significantly predicts leadership effectiveness.

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p-value
Constant	21.34	2.11	—	10.11	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	0.68	0.06	**0.64**	11.73	**0.000**

Interpretation

- A one-unit increase in emotional intelligence leads to a 0.68 unit increase in leadership effectiveness.
- Emotional intelligence is a significant positive predictor of effective business leadership.

From the result above, it indicates that:

1. Emotional intelligence has a strong and significant relationship with effective business leadership.
2. EI significantly predicts leadership effectiveness among business leaders in FCT–Abuja.
3. Empathy and social skills are the strongest predictors of leadership success.
4. The regression models are statistically valid and explain a substantial proportion of leadership effectiveness.

5.0 Conclusion

The results of this study clearly establish emotional intelligence as a core dimension of leadership effectiveness in FCT, Abuja, influencing everything from decision-making and team cohesion to conflict resolution and employee engagement. The findings suggest that organizations that prioritize EI in their leadership development frameworks are more likely to achieve sustainable performance, employee satisfaction, and strategic resilience. As FCT, Abuja continues to grow as a commercial hub in Africa, the emphasis on emotionally intelligent leadership will be pivotal in shaping the future of work, business innovation, and inclusive organizational culture in the region.

In essence,Emotional intelligence is a critical determinant of effective business leadership in FCT–Abuja, Nigeria. Organizations should integrate emotional intelligence development into leadership training, recruitment, and performance evaluation systems.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

The study relied primarily on self-administered questionnaires to measure emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Respondents may have exaggerated positive traits or provided socially desirable responses, which could affect the accuracy of the findings.

Future studies should adopt a **mixed-method approach**, combining self-reports with **360-degree feedback,** peer evaluations, subordinate assessments, and in-depth interviews to enhance data credibility.

The study was conducted only within **FCT–Abuja,** which limits the generalizability of the findings to other states or regions in Nigeria with different cultural, economic, and organizational contexts.

Subsequent research should extend the study to **multiple states or geopolitical zones** in Nigeria to improve external validity and allow for regional comparisons.

Regardless of these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical evidence on the role of emotional intelligence in effective business leadership in FCT–Abuja. Addressing the identified limitations in future research will strengthen methodological rigor, enhance generalizability, and deepen understanding of emotional intelligence in leadership contexts.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on the assessment of emotional intelligence (EI) in effective business leadership in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen leadership performance and organizational success:

1. Integrate Emotional Intelligence into Leadership Development Programs: Organizations in FCT, Abuja should formally embed emotional intelligence training into leadership development frameworks. Training modules should cover self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social communication skills. By institutionalizing EI training, businesses can ensure that emerging and existing leaders develop the emotional competencies required to handle interpersonal challenges, motivate teams, and make balanced decisions.

2. Encourage Mentorship and Coaching Systems: Businesses should establish structured mentorship and executive coaching programs that pair experienced emotionally intelligent leaders with newer or developing leaders. This allows for personalized guidance, feedback, and modeling of EI behaviors. Mentorship relationships create trust, foster self-reflection, and accelerate the development of key leadership traits such as empathy, active listening, and interpersonal tact.

3. Implement Organizational EI Assessments: Regular emotional intelligence assessments using validated tools such as the EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory) should be conducted for business leaders and management teams. These assessments can help identify emotional strengths and areas for improvement, enabling organizations to tailor development interventions accordingly. EI scores should be incorporated into leadership evaluations and promotion criteria.

4. Promote a Culture of Emotional Awareness and Communication: Companies should work toward building a culture that values emotional intelligence by promoting open communication, feedback, and psychological safety. Encouraging leaders and employees to express emotions constructively and to listen with empathy can lead to improved collaboration, reduced conflict, and higher levels of engagement and innovation.

5. Encourage Self-Reflection Practices Among Leaders: Leaders should be encouraged to engage in regular self-reflection exercises such as journaling, emotional check-ins, and mindfulness practices. These activities enhance emotional self-awareness and regulation, which are critical to maintaining professionalism and stability, particularly in high-stress business environments like FCT, Abuja.

6. Incorporate EI into Recruitment and Promotion Criteria: Human Resource departments should consider emotional intelligence as a core competency in recruitment, selection, and promotion decisions. Candidates and employees with high EI tend to exhibit better teamwork, leadership potential, and resilience. Integrating EI into talent management processes helps build emotionally capable leadership pipelines.

7. Partner with Professional Trainers and Institutes: Organizations should collaborate with training institutions, universities, and EI professionals to deliver evidence-based emotional intelligence programs. These partnerships can provide access to internationally recognized tools, qualified trainers, and customized content that reflects the unique business environment in FCT, Abuja.

8. Align Emotional Intelligence with Corporate Strategy: Finally, companies should align emotional intelligence development with strategic business goals, such as innovation, customer satisfaction, and employee retention. Leaders with strong EI are better positioned to drive transformational change, sustain high performance, and lead diverse teams effectively—making EI a strategic imperative, not just a soft skill.

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