



Qualitative Study on Managing Students' Welfare Services and ... Adeyanju, S. I. & Shaibu, L. (2026)

Qualitative Study on Managing Student Welfare Services and Educational Stability during the period of Post ASUU Strike in Nigerian Public Universities: A Review

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Abstract

This study adopts a narrative literature review and integrative synthesis to examine the effects of the ASUU strike on student welfare and educational stability in Nigerian public universities. The review draws on published scholarly literature, policy-related discussions, and conceptual studies on strike actions, student welfare, learning continuity, and post-strike academic reintegration. Through a theory-informed synthesis of the literature, the study analyses how existing research defines welfare benefit coverage during strike periods, measures welfare conditions during resumption, and links welfare administration with indicators of educational stability. The review shows that existing studies are largely based on cross-sectional evidence, with limited longitudinal and multi-institutional analysis. It also finds that many proposed interventions—such as expanded welfare support and online counselling—remain largely theoretical and insufficiently validated empirically. Across the literature, strike actions are consistently associated with psychological stress, compressed academic calendars, and weakened instructional quality, yet there is little development of predictive or integrative models that account for broader outcomes such as student retention, timely graduation, and SIWES completion. A major contribution of this review is the development of a conceptual synthesis framework that connects culturally relevant theoretical perspectives—including Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Frustration-Aggression theory, and Social Disruption theory—with SDG-4 and SDG-3 benchmarks for educational quality and well-being. Based on this synthesis, the study advances a welfare-led stabilization paradigm that emphasizes the interdependent roles of students, lecturers, parents, and university administrators, and reconceptualizes welfare as an operational predictor of educational stability rather than a peripheral support measure. The review, therefore, provides a basis for longitudinal, multi-institutional, and policy-relevant research capable of improving reintegration, academic continuity, and overall educational quality in Nigerian public universities.

Keywords: ASUU strikes, Educational stability, Student welfare services, Nigerian public universities, Post-strike recovery

Introduction

The welfare of the learners of the higher education system and the welfare of the system's operators are two delicate strands of the whole system that must remain in tension to ensure the stability of the nation's higher education system. This equilibrium has been disturbed in a series of industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, a body representing the teaching staff of federal and state government-owned universities in Nigeria. In confrontation with the Federal Government, ASUU has several times withheld its services due to funding deficits, non-implementation of collective agreements, poor conditions of service, and loss of university autonomy since the return to civil rule in 1999. The late 1980s saw the emergence of militant trade unionism linked to the Structural Adjustment period, which has now become a regular means of negotiating the continued existence



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of the public university system; students are now "the collateral damage of these strikes as their studies are disrupted and they stay longer at university before they graduate" (Ibrahim, 2022). In this research, the welfare of students is defined as the organized provision of support services, including counselling, health care, accommodation, scholarships, feeding, recreation, and educational assistance, provided by universities to ensure students' physical, psychological, social, and intellectual well-being. Educational stability, on the other hand, refers to the regular advancement of students through the planned curricular schedule and on time to competency and graduation. If a strike extends over time, shortens the academic calendar, displaces students from school campuses, and undermines institutional support systems, then both constructs are violated. This section highlights the lack of mapping of welfare services throughout the strike cycle, the lack of evidence of educational stability in the post-strike period, and the lack of linking of the administration of welfare services with the continuity of learning. Aside from a few exceptions, existing research has mainly relied on cross-sectional strike snapshots and ignored full-cycle mapping, while requesting online counselling and extended welfare coverage without any basis on longitudinal data (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2025; Adebawale, 2023). There is limited evidence of indicators of post-strike stability, as literature shows that it negatively affects performance and/or calendar disruption; however, multi-institutional, indicator-based measures are lacking (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023; Nwakile et al., 2025). Furthermore, there is no strong integrative model linking welfare adequacy to educational stability, although scholars have highlighted that welfare needs can affect educational stability and that welfare can help reduce antisocial behaviours (Fasanmi, 2025; Omodan, 2020).

This paragraph emphasizes the lack of psychological recovery, recovery trajectories, and predictive modelling. Fortunately, there is no baseline-to-recovery mapping or re-entry to learning for Nigerian cohorts, despite documented anxiety, depression, burnout, and financial stress during strikes (Kwarteng et al., 2025; Ewah et al., 2024; Ewah et al., 2023). Even though there are existing models in the literature addressing mental health and motivational outcomes, such as those predicting mental health, there is a need for models in which welfare administration predicts stability, such as retention, timeliness of graduation, or resit rates in the field of education. While there are existing models in the literature that focus on mental health and motivational outcomes, there is a need for models that focus on welfare administration predicting stability, such as educational stability outcomes like retention, timeliness of graduation, or resit rates.

This paragraph will include cross-level moderation, integration with mechanism theory, and alignment with the SDGs. Research has been conducted on students and not on the multi-actor dynamics (lecturers, parents/guardians, administrators) and cross-level moderators that influence welfare-stability, and requires an integrative approach that incorporates stakeholders other than the student (Ewah et al., 2023; Nwanyanwu et al., 2023; Oyeboode & Obaka, 2022). The theoretical grounding is in Western frameworks and requires a culturally contextualized theory of post-strike welfare-stability recovery that incorporates Maslow, Frustration-Aggression, and Social Disruption. Finally, there is limited evidence of quantified links with SDG-4 and SDG-3, which limits the external validity of Nigeria's education quality and wellbeing indicators and their relevance to SDG-3 (Onyeka et al., 2024; Ogunjobi et al., 2024). The ten gaps above converge into one unanswered empirical question facing the administration of student welfare services in Nigerian public universities after the call off of the ASUU strike: how does the administration of student welfare services in Nigerian public universities mediate, moderate, or determine educational stability after the call off of the ASUU



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strike? There is a substantial existing body of literature that provides the antecedent (strike exposure), the moderators (age, gender, parenting, and institution type), some of the criterion variables (performance, mental health, and retention), and theoretical lenses, but none of the existing literature has been able to tie them together to manage the welfare-reliant recovery of educational stability. This study is well-suited to fill this gap.

Historical Trajectory of ASUU Strikes in Nigeria

The industrial action by academic staff of Universities in Nigeria is not an anomaly. Nwanyanwu et al. (2023) stated that the history of the ASUU strikes spans the years from 1981 to 2020, during which the union has been able to paralyse academic activities for months at a time. Some of the longest disruptions were produced during the pre-democracy stage, namely the six-month shutdown in 1981, the six-month action in 1988, and subsequent strikes in 1992 (six months), 1993 (three months), and 1994 (six months) (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023). Stoppages that occurred almost every year between 1996 and 2001, with the 1996 one closing universities for as long as 210 days, compared with the other 1999–2001 stoppages, which lasted between 1 and 7 months (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023). The greatest intensity is during the post-1999 democratic period, however. The pattern which Oyeboode and Obaka (2022) observed is that ASUU "bases its strikes on insensitivity of the political class to their plights, bad conditions of service and unfavourable national policies". Strikes occurred in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005 (two weeks), 2006, 2007, 2008 (one week, partly in solidarity with dismissed Ilorin lecturers), 2009 (four months), 2010 (five months), 2011 (two months), 2013 (five months), 2017 (one month), and 2018 (three months) (Ngonso et al., 2024; Oyeboode & Obaka, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic era initiated the longest action ever recorded, a strike proclaimed on 23 March 2020 due to problems of registration in OPPIS, which lasted a total of nine months, according to Ngonso et al. (2024). Targba and Osuji also noted that this disruption in 2020 "caused the academic calendar to be completely disrupted for the whole year" (2023), meaning that the average four-year degree is now taking "at least 5 years or more" (Targba & Osuji, 2023). The most recent spasm (2022), which lasted for 8 months, was triggered by the series of failures by the government to honour agreements since 2009 (Abayomi, 2024). The government's inaction in implementing a decade-old agreement with the union sparked the 2022 ASUU strike, according to Ewah et al. (2023). Since 1999, the cumulative days lost to ASUU strikes at Nigeria's flagship institution, the University of Ibadan, have surpassed 1420 – nearly 4 years of lost teaching time. It was reported that the university is ranked 1172 in the world with very poor indicators of impact and excellence (Abayomi, 2024).

The 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement and the Funding Crisis

The structural context of the recurring strikes is the 2009 Federal Government–ASUU Agreement. The pact documented in the primary sources has vowed to give significant resources to revitalise universities; lend support to state universities; increase allocation to the education sector to 26 per cent of the budget from 2009 to 2020; pay earned academic allowances and create a Research Development Council with provision of research equipment (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023). The authors, Ogunjobi, Odusanya, and George, reported that "the price tag for implementing this, in the 2009–2011 period, is the sum of \$9,484.58 per student in each state university, and \$3.91 billion, annually, in all the regular federal universities, for federal funding to come from Nigeria" (2024). The government further assured us that "state and federal governments should spend at least 26% of their annual budgets on education, which should include 50% for universities" (Ogunjobi et al., 2024). Most of these pledges were not realized. Nwanyanwu et al. indicated that Nigeria was spending only a small fraction of the agreed percentage on education in the early 2020s, putting ASUU's claims



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in the context of the country's poor allocative performance compared with other nations like Zambia (11.5%) and South Africa (6.5%) (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023). Ibrahim further stated that the “closure of the universities” and the “sending out of the students” to their homes for three to six months “bargains” with the government for the acceptance of ASUU demands while both parties have interests in exploiting the strike, whether good or bad, for their own ends (Ibrahim, 2022). Regardless of politics, what has happened is that the agreement framework has not proved to be a useful stabilising mechanism for the system.

Impact on Students: Academic, Psychological, Socioeconomic

1. Academic performance and curriculum disruption

Monogbe discovers that “incessant ASUU strike negatively influences the quality of education and the performance of the students in the Nigerian universities such that an increase in ASUU strike can reduce the performance of students in the Nigerian universities” (O, 2019). In the medical school of the University of Ibadan, Ezinne et al. conducted a survey on 242 clinical students and found that 119 (49.2%) had experienced strike action at least 5 times during their studies; 196 (81%) felt that strike action affected their motivation to study, and 38 (15.7%) had experienced a re-sit in examinations. Strikes significantly affected motivation (OR = 3.10; 95% CI = 1.113–8.620), long-term retention of medical knowledge (OR = 0.46; 95% CI = 0.257–0.815), and the likelihood of re-sits among students above 25 years (OR = 1.17; 95% CI = 1.025–1.327) and among male students (OR = 4.91; 95% CI = 1.618–14.894) (Ezinne et al., 2024). Ntiasagwe (2020) observed that cumulative calendar erosion led students at Imo State University to complete a bachelor's degree in six or seven years, rather than the four-year program.

2. Psychological and mental health consequences

The mental health burden has been reported by various studies. In Nigeria, Ewah et al. administered the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) to 317 university students whose academic pursuits had been affected by strikes. Strikes did not just cause inconvenience; they were linked to adverse psychological effects, financial difficulties, and increased risk of substance use (Ewah et al., 2024). The UNIACADS-P2S study protocol of the same team also highlighted other stressors on parents and guardians who are “still paying fees even during the strike period” and who may also be impelled to pursue foreign or private placements for their children, even when they would need to contribute more money (Ewah et al., 2023). Kwarteng et al. (2025) took this line of thinking further to students of optometry, concluding that “frequent strikes by academic unions, most notably the Academic Staff Union of Universities, can result in extended university closure, disruption of the academic calendar, and delays in program completion, which can have a significant impact on the anxiety, depression, and academic burnout of students. In response to the 2022 strike, Nwakile et al., in a qualitative study that utilised the Opportunity Structure Theory framework and interviewed 58 final-year TVET learners across three geopolitical zones, found three main themes: academic transition challenges and institutional compression; psychological fatigue and emotional disengagement; and adaptive coping strategies. Some students indicated “concentration difficulties, burnout, and motivational decline, due to the lack of a structured reintegration support” (Nwakile et al., 2025).

3. Lifestyle, social vices, and coping

In the descriptive study conducted by Oladejo and Ijmayowa at Olabisi Onabanjo University, boredom was reported as the most common lifestyle impact, followed by worry and anxiety, and mental disturbances were the least reported. Social media engagement, prayer, relaxation, and, to a lesser degree, skill acquisition and informal employment were the coping mechanisms observed among students (Oladejo & Ijmayowa, 2024). However, Nwanyanwu et al. reported that the ASUU



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strike has led to poor academic performance among some students, as well as causing them to engage in such activities as drug abuse, kidnapping, financial crimes, prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunker activities, and other activities; they stated that "the idle mind is the devil's workshop" (Nwanyanwu et al., 2023). In contrast, students' awareness, how they are treated at the institutions, and the length of the strike are all related to whether they react constructively or engage in risky behavior.

Student Welfare Services in Nigerian Universities: A Theoretical Lens

Sustained welfare service provision in Nigerian Universities is charted out theoretically using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (As modified by Fasanmi). On the basis of Maslow's theory, learners with their basic needs not satisfied cannot be promoted to higher order of learning and academic integration; as such, "failure to address these basic issues at the outset of a student's programme of learning can result in absenteeism and the subsequent lack of academic integration, which is a major reason for reasons for learners to drop out" (Prescott & Simpson, 2004). According to Fasanmi (2025), "Clear policies are in place to guide the management of students' affairs in the universities, but the authorities lack engagement with the students in the management of students' welfare services, and this sometimes leads to students' unrest. Omodan validated this from the perspective of Human Relations Theory of Management, which states that "the availability of student personnel services like social services and amenities like pipe-borne water, electricity, well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and hostel accommodations that will make life easy for the students on campus is essential for peaceful management of the university system" (Omodan, 2020). Later, the same author noted that the provision of student welfare services reduces the rate of student anti-social behaviour on campus (Omodan, 2020). Fasanmi and Seyama further reported specifically that "mental health services, financial aid, housing, career services, and other student support services are areas of concern regarding the adequacy of services provided to students, while some welfare services, such as health care, are perceived as adequate by most students" (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2025). Adebowale then advocated for the introduction of "online counselling services" in the Nigerian Universities based on the "growing, strident, and persistent reports of maladaptive behaviors, including suicidal ideation and behaviors among university students" (Adebowale, 2023).

Educational Stability: Threats and Existing Frameworks

The second leg of this study is educational stability. In her recent study, Fasanmi (2025) examined the impact of students' welfare on their educational stability using Maslow's theory of motivation as a framework. The results of the study showed that "students' welfare needs impact on the students' educational stability," including inadequately managed welfare, students' reintegration under compressed calendars, and reduced academic quality. The 2022 strike reduced what a 15-week academic programme meant to be a semester to a 'catch-up window,' and universities had to 'push out' students in order to accommodate new intakes, thus resulting in 'half-baked individuals' being pushed into the work force (Onyeka et al., 2024). After the resumption of strikes, Nwakile et al. (2025) noted in their retrospective that compressed academic calendars, interrupted placements of the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), and inadequate supervision of projects were detrimental to students' academic depth and vocational preparation. In this context, Fasanmi and Seyama studied module design and recommended a "flipped lectures" concept, which enables students to be independent to a certain degree, so that they can carry out some of the academic work during strike, as well as contingency plans embedded in the delivery of the curriculum (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2024). To capture both students, lecturers, and parents/guardians, with their "physical and psychological impact of the University academic strike" under-studied, Ewah et al. (2023)



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proposed the UNIACADS-P2S study framework. These new models, while helpful, are mostly equivalent to fragments; a comprehensive, post-strike approach to welfare-stability integrated into the context of student affairs administration remains to be developed.

Knowledge Gap and Theoretical Anchoring

Although much has been researched on ASUU strikes, the following are key theoretical/ empirical gaps in existing literature:

- 1. Welfare-fragility gap:** While existing literature reports the experiences of students during strikes, less attention has been paid to the role of welfare services in its multiple dimensions as stabilising factors during, and before and after, a strike.
- 2. Post-strike recovery gap:** Much research on strikes tends to be cross-sectional at the initiation/ peak of strikes, with few attempts made to investigate the post-strike phase in detail, particularly the contribution of student welfare services to reintegration and retention (Nwakile et al., 2025).
- 3. Predictive/stability framework gap:** The majority of research focuses on the disruption aspect of strikes and their associated negative outcomes, such as poor grades, dropout, and delay, rather than on the conditions that enable educational stability both during and post-strike. The research is thus grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Fasanmi, 2025; Prescott & Simpson, 2004), Fasanmi and Seyama's (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2025) formulation of Frustration-Aggression Theory, and the adoption of Social Disruption Theory (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2024) in exploring the influence of management of student welfare services on educational stability in the context of Nigerian universities post-ASUU strikes. This research is significant given the persistent recurrent nature of ASUU strikes and failure by government to reach a peaceful accord, hence "the phenomenon of ASUU strikes has continued to be recurrent since the country's transition to democracy in 1999" (Ewah et al., 2024); hence the persistent inability of governments to honour agreements ensuing from collective bargaining agreements, in collaboration with the university union, remains a crucial macro-economic cause of strikes in Nigeria (Ogunjobi et al., 2024).

Interaction Between Student Welfare Services and Educational Stability in Post-Strike Environments

The union between student welfare services and educational stability appears to be gradually unfolding as the most crucial factor in the sustainability of institutions following industrial actions. It has long been documented in literature that educational stability, which refers to on-time graduation, continued study, and preservation of learnt information, was significantly hampered following industrial actions embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, leading to some average 4-year degree programs extending up to six or seven years (Nwanyanwu et al, 2023). Evidence by Ezinne et al indicated that there was a significant decline in the students' academic motivation after the strike, with 81% of the respondents reporting poor levels, and that there was a three times increase in losses in medical students' motivation (OR =3.10), with measurable decay of knowledge storage for up to five years (Ezinne et al, 2024). The necessary scaffolding required to counter such academic decay lies in welfare services. Fasanmi maintained that it is indeed insufficient management of welfare services that directly leads to erosion of students' educational stability because, no students will really be able to achieve academic reintegration so long as the essential, negative 'dissatisfiers', the basic 'clean' welfare-related factors such as safe and affordable accommodation, adequate health, welfare benefits, and financial security are not satisfied (Fasanmi, 2025; Prescott & Simpson, 2004). Though the on-campus Health services were generally considered



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satisfactory, a major gap exists in the delivery of health services regarding access to mental health services and the availability of student financial aid (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2025). It is important that such a void is addressed, considering the overwhelming role psychological Distress, including anxiety and burnout, played in the students' difficulties to reintegrate back on campus post the industrial actions, with such impact on professional courses as the dominant cause of their difficulty in reintegration into academia (Kwarteng et al, 2025; Nwakile et al, 2025). Most, if not all, are of the view that the absence of a robust reintegration system and 'crash' programme implementation is likely to have created graduates with severely depleted skills that would compromise their ability to serve their profession, which indicates why systematic support services must be maintained (Nwakile et al, 2025; Onyeka et al, 2024). Thus, counselling and welfare systematically administered would form part and parcel of returning the learning process of students who return to campus back to equilibrium (Adebowale, 2023; Omodan, 2020).

Patterns, Gaps, and the Synthesis of a Stabilization Framework

A review of post-strike literature shows the recurring patterns of systemic fragility. These mainly comprise collaterals, such as tripartite experiences: academic transition, psychological burnout, and economic strain (Ewah et al., 2024; Ibrahim, 2022). Age, sex, and socioeconomic status are consistently highlighted as moderators (i.e., male and older students are more likely to have resits) (Ezinne et al. 2024), with other stakeholders, such as parents and host communities, incurring additional burdens (Ewah et al. 2023; Oyeboode and Obaka, 2022). Nonetheless there is a paucity in scholarly conceptions: studies to date focus more on immediate impacts and there is very little that demonstrates how administrative welfare systems can serve to predicatively stabilise academic outcomes; Fasanmi and Seyama identify a missing aspect of contingency planning; the inadequacy of modules in equipping universities to accommodate flexibility such as “flipped lectures” during and post strikes (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2024). An Integrative approach, therefore, is proposed whereby education is conceptually anchored to predictive welfare management and where Human Relations Theory, which suggests the place of infrastructure (e.g., pipe water, electricity, laboratory) in diffusing strikes (Omodan, 2020), converges with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory where the academics cannot be deepened until post-strike fatigue (mental and material) is assuaged (Fasanmi, 2025; Nwakile et al., 2025). A paradigm shift from the current “catch-up” to a welfare-driven recovery process is key to academic stability in Nigerian universities post-strike (Fasanmi and Seyama, 2024; Onyeka et al., 2024).

Justification of the Study

Because of the predictable cycle of ASUU strikes, management of post-strike welfare support can't just be a once-off. For instance, only the 2022 ASUU eight-month strike resulted in documented anxiety and depression in the UNIACADS-P2S-ready cohorts (Ewah et al., 2023, 2024) and had measurable adverse effects on the long-term retention of medical school knowledge (Ezinne et al., 2024). If we continue without adequate welfare support - such as increased counselling, housing aid, financial aid, health support, and support during compression - the reintegration of students in compressed calendars will undermine the quality of education and even the nation's ability to provide it more generally (Targba & Osuji, 2023). Under conditions in which there is a global push for UN SDG4 (quality education) and SDG3 (good health and well-being), the issue stands as follows: “The problems of school dropouts in the present will shape the future economy of the nation”, as Onyeka and Dara pointed out, “The consequences of school dropouts could make Nigeria unable to meet with



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SDG's 3 & 4 in future. .Also the nation could be unable to meet with UNSDG 8 in future" (Onyeka et al., 2024).

Conclusion

It is the fact that ASUU strikes keep on repeating themselves that Welfare post-strike management should therefore continue to be a persistent and not an isolated phenomenon; indeed, even the 2022 strike alone made UNIACADS-P2S-ready cohorts a group to document anxiety and depression experiences, and has led to a decline in long-term knowledge retention among medical students. Unless adequate structural, administrative, and infrastructural welfare support – counselling, housing, bursary/stipend/ scholarship, medical care, and academic condensation buffer support – is given to students, their reintegration to the compressed academic calendar can still continue to undermine their stability in their quest for good and effective education, with the associated ripple effects on the Nigerian education sector. With the global spotlight on SDG 4 and SDG 3 of the UNSDGs, it is indeed pertinent to further reiterate Onyeka and Dara's claim that: 'Present-day challenges of students out of school could very well affect Nigeria's future ability to meet not only the UNSDGs that relate to education, but also those relating to future employment and the future economy.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are derived from the above conclusion:

1. The University administration must develop a longitudinal, multi-institutional framework for welfare stability that utilizes welfare adequacy as a main pillar to support learning continuity. Identify the welfare adequacy indicators for retention, completion within prescribed time, SIWES, etc., and operationally define them in pre-, during-, and post-strikes, collect this data across institutions using a common methodology, and share the same for comparative purposes.
2. Governments should ensure a comprehensive frame-work on stability; emphasizes interplay between actors at different levels (student, lecturer, parent, management); applies culturally located theories (e.g., Maslow's theory, frustration-aggression, social disruption theories) in the spirit of SDG-3 and SDG-4; Shift from post facto "catch up" approach to proactive welfare and well-being driven approach for stabilization by implementing innovative pilot interventions coupled with rigorous monitoring and evaluation approach for optimal reintegration, deepening in the academic domain, and in improving the future of quality of education in general.

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