

The importance of using communication in confronting healthy risks

Risk communication during pandemics- corona virus as a model

أهمية توظيف الاتصال في مواجهة المخاطر الصحية

اتصال المخاطر في حالة الأوبئة - فيروس كورونا أنموذجًا

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Abstract:

This study aims at identifying the different strategies applied by Algeria since the appearance of Covid 19 and its effectiveness in awareness and sensitization. So, the risk communication is based on the use of a set of techniques and strategies in order to confront the critical situation witnessed by any country such as Humanitarian crises, natural calamities and pandemics, so, it is an important factor in risk management since it is used in different stages like the stage of risk evaluation and management. Algeria, like other countries of the world used strategies in order to confront covid19 and to reduce its risks, and the most frequent strategy: the preventive advocacy which concentrates, on one side on public communication campaigns that sensitize about the risks of this pandemic as well as its ways of propagation and the preventive ways. On the other side, this strategy concentrates on the necessity of the positive participation of individuals in the reduction of risks and this through providing them with necessary information and the required explanations because the problem doesn't stop in giving the daily number of contaminated cases and deaths.

Keywords: Risk communication- Risk management- healthy risk- public health-corona virus

ملخص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن مختلف الاستراتيجيات التي طبقتها الجزائر عند ظهور وباء كورونا 19 ومدى نجاعتها وفعاليتها في التوعية والتحسيس، فاتصال المخاطر يقوم على توظيف مجموعة من التقنيات والاستراتيجيات لمواجهة الوضعية الحرجة التي تشهدها أي دولة كالآزمات الإنسانية، الكوارث الطبيعية وحالات الوباء، فهو عنصر أساسي لإدارة المخاطر إذ أنه يستخدم في مراحل متعددة كمرحلة تقييم المخاطر ومرحلة إدارتها. والجزائر كغيرها من دول العالم تبني استراتيجيات للتصدي لوباء كورونا والتقليل من مخاطره، وعلى رأس هذه الاستراتيجيات استراتيجية الدعوة الوقائية التي تركز من جهة على حملات الاتصال العمومي التي تقوم بالتوعية والتحسيس بخطورة هذا الوباء وكذا طرق انتشاره وكيفية الوقاية منه، ومن جهة أخرى تركز على ضرورة اشراك

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الأفراد للمساهمة الإيجابية في التقليل من الأضرار، وذلك بامدادهم بالمعلومات الضرورية والشروط الازمة، فالامر لا يتوقف عند حد تقديم حصيلة يومية عن عدد الإصابات والوفيات..
الكلمات المفتاحية: إتصال المخاطر- إدارة المخاطر- المخاطر الصحية- الصحة العمومية-فيروس كورونا.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regardless the nature of the enterprise, it is exposed to a set of risks during its activity, these risks can lead to several crises which hinder its goal fulfillment .These risks don't only concern the industrial, construction, public works and insurance sectors but also the healthy one (sector), since health is the concern of all governments during the latest years and it is coincided with the emergence of infections and contagious diseases like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Avian influenza, Ebola, Cholera and Corona Virus Covid 19 which left millions of victims in the world.

In front of this situation, the interest of countries and governments to communication rises which becomes risk communication if it provokes severe health problems because risk communication creates confidence within citizens by informing and providing them with true information.

Algeria, like other countries, gives a big importance to public health, so, it is taking strict preventive and curative measures in order to protect citizens health through gratuitous care or compulsory vaccination and the vigilance of special authorities that denounce any new contaminated case. In this context, we should mention that Algeria witnessed the reappearance of Cholera during Summer 2018, and today, and like all counties of the world, is confronting Corona Virus Covid 19 which killed a lot of people.

In front of this situation, that is, the every day rise of contaminated cases as well as the number of deaths, the need for government communication as well as information and sensibilization emerged and this is done according to the article 17 of health law N° 1418 published on choual 18th, 1432 corresponding to July, 2nd, 2018 starting from what is mentioned above, in this research paper, we try to concentrate (focus) on the importance of using communication in confronting healthy risks especially during world widespread diseases, and we take corona virus covid 19 in Algeria as a modal, consequently, we have asked several questions which seem to be very important in our paper and the questions are:

- 1-What is meant by healthy risks?
- 2-What does risk communication mean?
- 3-What are communicative strategies that we can rely on in order to confront the healthy risks like pandemics?
- 4-How can we use risk communication in order to save the public health during the pandemic of covid 19?

In order to answer these questions, we have relied on the following elements:

- 1-The concept of danger and healthy risks.
- 2-The concept of risk communication
- 3-Risk communication inside risk management.
- 4-strategies of risk communication.
- 5-Risk communication for confronting Corona Virus in Algeria.

2-The concept of danger and healthy risks:

Before starting with the concept of healthy risks, let's start with the concept of danger first, this latter has led to various views in determining its concept, each researcher looks at its concept from his own vision, so someone sees that the danger is the probability of occurring personal damages as

well as damages in financial resources due to unexpected factors for long or short terms (Bouacha, 2011, p. 1)

Danger is also defined as a case of non-certain. Which can be measure (El hachemi, 1999, p. 4) .whereas "willet", he defines danger as a case of a non-certain objective related to the occurrence of an undesirable incident (Abu Bakr & sifou, 2009, p. 28).

Through the given definitions, it is clearly shown that there is no accord on the concept of danger, so, we find those who focus on damages either financial resources damages or personal damages and others concentrate on the case of non-certain. We should mention that the use of risks was linked to insurance and not in sociology only in the eighty's with the german "UBrick Beck" and this perhaps made the definition cited before related to economical sector, we can also say that risks are all that hinder and prohibit us from reaching our goals.

The difference between risk and some similar concepts.

- **Calamity**

It is defined as a destructive incident really occurred resulted into huge human and material damages, these latters can be natural due to nature like, Volcanoes, earthquakes, and storms or technical made by man intentionally or non-intentionally like: negligence or carelessness which requires supports from the government for confronting it (youcef, 2009, p. 49)

From this definition, it is clearly shown that the calamity will provoke serious damages as well as for risks if the enterprise is exposed to it, and consequently, it can cause a threat and then damages to the enterprise.

But the difference between them is that the calamity is a kind of an incident which is really occurred whereas the risks are the probability of the enterprise to be exposed to factors danger and then the possibility of threatening its futures.

- **The problem;**

It is defined as the main factor causing undesirable cases and it usually needs regular efforts in order to be solved and it can lead to a crisis but not real crisis in itself (said, 2000, pp. 12-13).

So, the problem exists and real whereas the risks can be realized and they can affect the goals of the enterprise, that is, they can be realized or not while the problem exists and it needs a solution in order to avoid being a cause for a crisis.

- **The crisis;**

T.Libaert (Libaert, 2004, p. 9), defined the crisis as unexpected incident which makes the reputation and the activity of organization in danger.

From this definition, it is clearly shown that the crisis is an unexpected incident that the enterprise is exposed to it, that is, a danger realized, in the situation in order to avoid damages whereas the risks are a set of factors of danger, these factors are based on probabilities.

What is worth mentioning in this part is talking about healthy risks, that is, the risks that threaten the public health.

According to the dictionary of environment, the healthy risks are current dangers or long term dangers that may touch the public health, and determining and analyzing the risks related to causes that will be left by those risks on public health.

From this definition, it is clearly shown that the healthy risks are all that touch the public health.

In the same context, we find another definition which considers the healthy risks as a direct threat on public health, that is, the health of people, and this requires a suitable answer from health system (risks, preventions of major risks)

Among risks, we find those related to infectious diseases and that can be widespread among people like: Ebola and Influenza.

So, from both definitions, cited above, about the healthy risks, we can say that there is an accord (agreement) that says that the healthy risks are all that threaten the public health, the thing that requires decisions making by authorities. Examples of healthy risks, there are infectious diseases and world widespread ones like pandemics and the best example the corona virus pandemic, the menace (threat) of people's health leads the public authorities to assume the responsibility of taking care of citizens health during wavering and critical situation.

We mention here that the infectious diseases that are widespread during the latest years are mostly transmitted from animals to Man.

And this is really confirmed by the National Institute of Public health in Quebec (NIPHQ) in which it considers the healthy risks all that have negative results on people's health (Cortin valerie & Dionne, 2016, p. 9)

It is worth mentioning that the National Institute of Public Health in Quebec has set a referencial frame in which it explains clearly how to manage the healthy risks in the field of public health in Quebec, in which it sees that risks are all that threaten people's health, as well as, the probability of occurring these negative results because of exposure to a dangerous factor (Cortin valerie & Dionne, 2016, p. 9)

According to the same referencial frame, the risks represent a threat on public health in Quebec, this referencial frame also explains how to manage the healthy risks with the presence of three conditions which are:

- Existence of the cause of danger or the factor of danger and it can be biological like viruses, chemical or physical factor.
- Probability of the existence of the pandemic.
- Existence of uncontrollable situation.

2-The concept of risk communication

The risk communication is defined as the exchange of information, of pieces of advice and opinions, in a real time, between skilled people (experts) and authorities on one hand, and the groups that are exposed and threatened by danger and this latter will affect their life, health, and their economical and social life, on the other **hand** (organization, p. 3)

The purpose of this kind of communication is to make the individuals able to take adequate decision when they are exposed to this threat. This decision making will be based on the given information in order to reduce the effects of risks like pandemics and then taking preventive measures in order to stop the propagation of the illness.

The risk communication needs several communication techniques and different strategies in order to reach the goal.so, it needs mass media, social net works, awareness campaigns, promotion of health...etc

In the same context, the international healthy regulation defined the risk communication as the main condition or the main ability which enables the management of incidents during healthy alerts(International accords on health, p4) here, we can consider the current life of the world today and with the pandemics of corona virus as a healthy alert which threatens the public health of every country as well as economical, social and psychological fields of individuals.

The risk communication is also defined as the use of effective programmes and communicative activities by organizing and inform the target audience, especially External audience, about the projects of the enterprise and about negative or positive incidents occurred to it because the audience must be informed about what happens in the enterprise (Mohamed saad said, 2006, p. 36)

Althrough, this definition is mostly related to economical enterprise, it talks about the external audience like groups of people and individuals and what threatens then because our subject of study is health.

The International Organization of Health also defined the risk communication as the exchange of information, in a real time, pieces of advice and opinions between experts, local authorities, and decision makers, on one hand, and present or exposed people to danger, on the other hand, and this represents a feature of **alert** (organization, Risk communication in situation of emergencies, international health agreements , p. 4)

Risk Communication is used in Human crises, pandemics or natural calamities. In addition to that the risk communication helps people in taking preventive measures in order to protect themselves.

From what is given above, it is clearly shown that the risk communication is the kind used by countries during risks like natural calamities, human crises or pandemics. In our intervention, we deal with communication used in health sector during risks like the case of pandemics.

If we look at previously cited definition, we deduce that the risk communication is different from healthy communication.This latter is defined as one kind of information media which is used for providing people with information ideas recommendations and advice about healthy problems and chronical diseases and all that for informing people and for healthy awareness and not for advertising goods, or products, or services, or brands, etc (Mohamed, 2010, pp. 29-30).

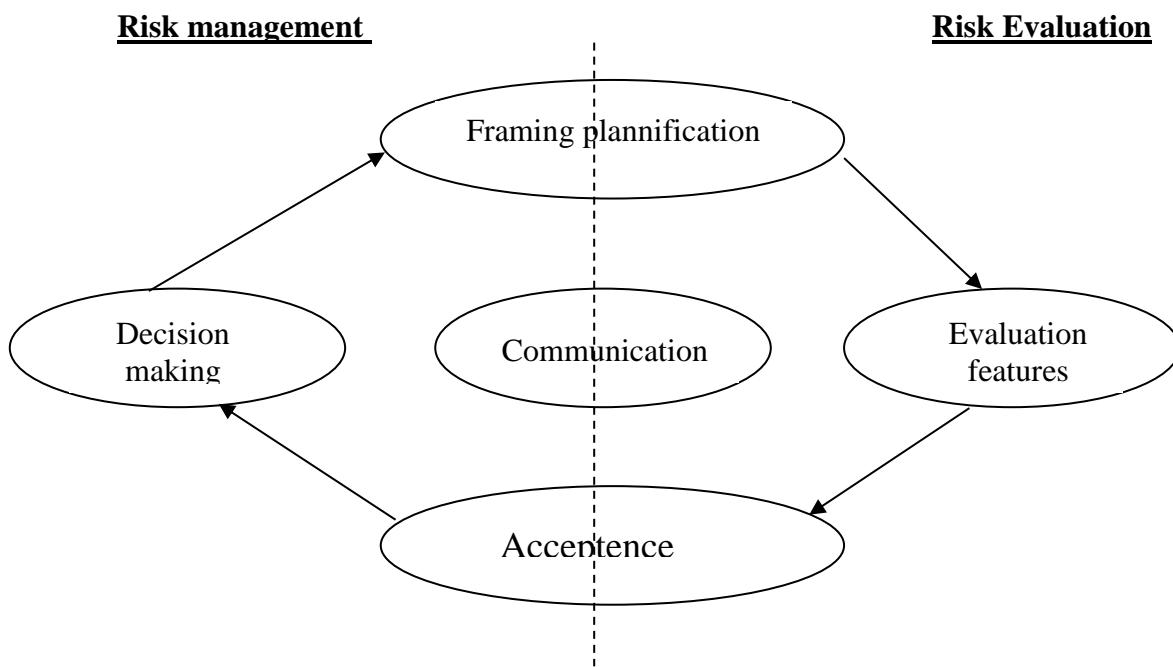
So, the difference that exists between risk communication and healthy risk is that the risk communication is used during risks that threaten public health these risks are determined by the law of health of Quebec with the existence of three conditions which are: previously cited in our research paper whereas, the healthy communication is used with health problems that face people like pandemics...etc and is also used in public and crisis communication...etc

So, the difference lies in the degree of the seriousness of situation and that of threat on the public health.

3-Risk communication in side risk management:

Communication plays a vital role in the risk management, so, it is used in all stages of confronting the healthy risks. According to referencial frame of risk management of public health of quebec, communication is used when evaluating and managing risks, and this is shown through The following figure: (Cortin valerie & Dionne, 2016, p. 9)

Figure N° 1: shows the importance of risk communication: communication in side risk management.



The risk communication follows all steps shown figure n°(01).
: (Cortin valerie & Dionne, 2016, p. 9)

In the first stage: the stage of framing and plannification: in this stage, the communication explains the situation between the responsible authorities (like doctors, local authorities....) and elaborates a communicative plan based on the goals that suit with the objectives of public health.

In the second stage: the stage of evaluation .

The evaluation of risks and the causes of public health. The role of communication lies, here, in explaining the critical situation and the healthy risk and providing the exposing people to danger with necessary information as well as the number of cases that reflect the seriousness of the situation.

In the third stage: the communication explains different decisions that can be taken to stop risks and this through messages.

In the last stage: it is a stage of taking decisions and follow up : the communication intends to inform affected people to take decisions and to follow up the situation especially listening to the reactions of affected people.

AS we said previously, the risk communication uses several strategies and techniques as well as types of communication like; crisis communication, public communication and enterprise (Institutional) communication.

Here is the diagram of Risk communication system in case of Alert (for instance, Pandemics) (**International Accord on Health,p 10**)

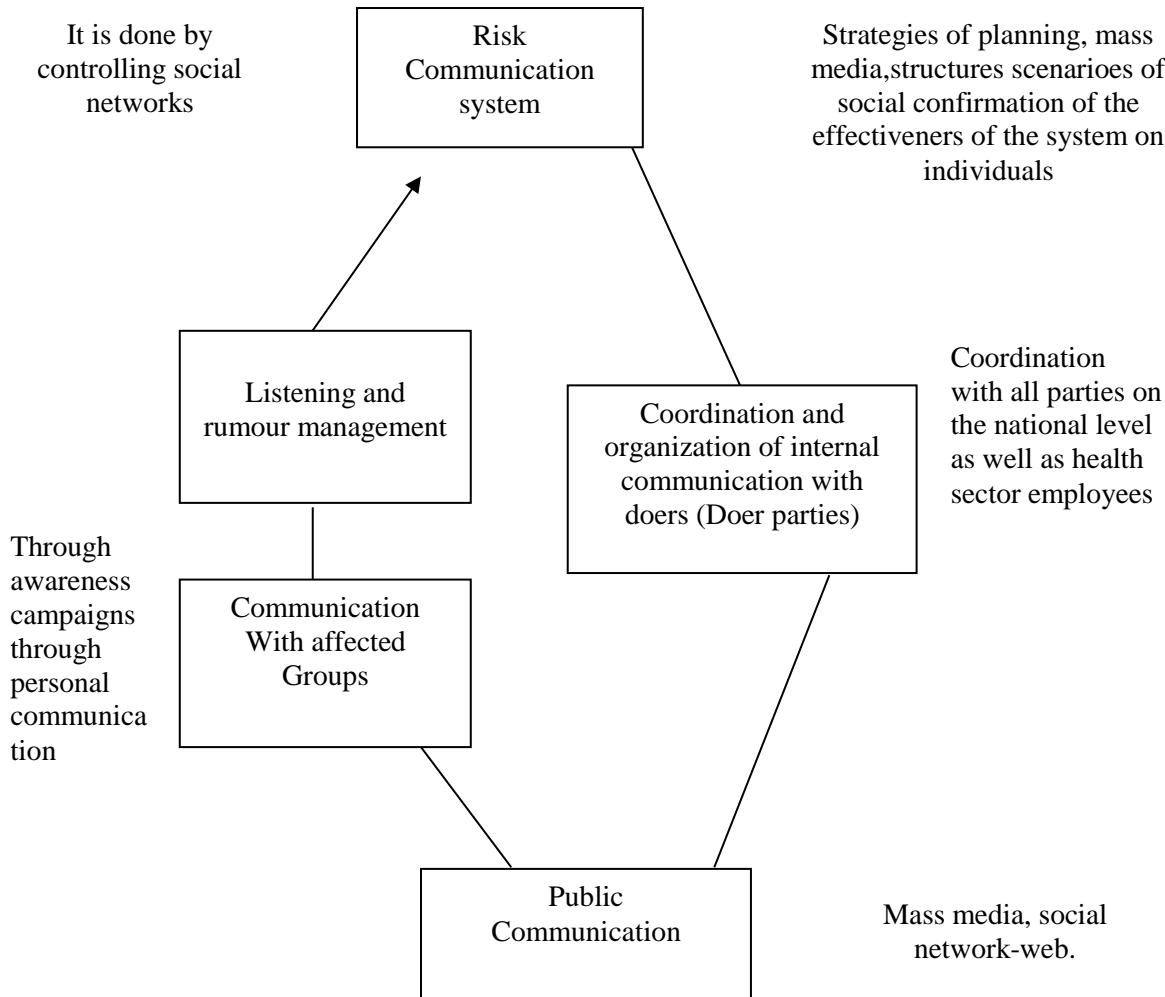


Figure n°2: risk communication system In case of alert (pandemics)

(International Accord on Health,p 10)

According to the above diagram, it is clearly shown that the risk communication in case of Alert should use first strategies, plannings, and elaborate suitable structures in order to realize the objective of risk communication , so, it starts by organizing and coordinating the internal communication with health sector employees, local authorities and the National Ministry in order to get an accord on the current healthy situation.

Then, they agree on the formulation of the necessary communicative messages that will be broadcast to receivers and this through public communication that uses Mass Media and social Media networks or through awareness campaigns or using personal communication with the groups threatened by the disease and then it is necessary to listen and to manage the rumours that can be appeared in this period, this is why , it is necessary to control and to follow the content of Mass Media as well as Social Media networks.

4-Strategies of Risk communication:

From the role played by the risk communication in each stage of risk management especially in healthy risk management , we can deduce the goals of risk communication and which can be related to Public Health goals.So, the main goals of risk communication are:

- On one hand, the creation and saving of confidence between affected and contaminated people by giving them real images on the healthy situation and its risks.

- On the other hand, the risk communication should communicate with affected or concerned people even in the doubted period of responsible to deal with these risks.
- The risk communication makes the individual able to take the suitable decisions in order to reduce the propagation of the disease and to follow the preventive measures

In reality, and as it is previously cited, the risk communication uses a mixture of types of communication like. Crisis communication, public communication, health management and enterprise (Institutional) communication...etc. So, it uses different strategies and the choice of the suitable strategy must submit to some factors (organization, Risk communication in situation of emergencies, international health agreements , p. 7) that are:

- Evaluation of risks by asking questions about the seriousness of risks and how to confront them.
- Risk recognition, that is, the way that these risks are mentally perceived by man and this perception is different from one individual to the other because of the individual differences. So, among the strategies of risk communication, there are: (organization, pp. 13-15).

a) The strategy of preventive Advocacy

This strategy involves the individuals in the problems and even in the crises that can be resulted from these risks, and the goal here is to make affected groups aware of the danger, gain their feelings and sympathies in order to protect themselves from secondary crises that can be dragged down from healthy risks.

b) Discontent and anger management strategy

In the strategy, the responsible authorities should conduct and extinguish the discontent and anger of damaged people through the use of a listening technique, revealing the reality and giving explanations and interpretations.

c) Crisis Communication strategy:

This strategy explains and interprets what happens and tries to address and manage emotions.

d) The strategy of healthy education :

And makes links with all parties through:

- The control of different contents of communication.
- Detection and identification of discontent factors and trying to treat them.

In reality, the use of these strategies varies according to the development of the situation and we can change the strategy whenever necessary.

5-The use of risk communication for confronting corona virus covid 19 in Algeria

Like other countries of the world, Algeria has recorded a number of corona virus infections where the first cases were recorded in Blida and then in the other prefectures.

According to the law of health n°12 18 published on July 2nd 2018, Algeria takes in charge all the preventive measures against contagious or non contagious diseases in order to ameliorate the healthy situation of people and make them conscious about their health (article13).

Algeria is also responsible for promoting communication and information in the field of health (article17) according to the content of legal texts, we find that Algeria and through its structure and healthy institutions, takes in charge the mission of protecting and preventing the people's health, and according to the Algerian laws of health, the prevention aims at:

- Reducing the impact of disease determinants;
- And/or avoiding diseases;

- Stopping or reducing diseases (article 34) for the world wide spreading corona virus, its confrontation submits to international health regulations of the world organization of health.

In this context, Algeria sets up some preventive measures, on the communicative level, in order to protect citizens. The communication which should be applied during the pandemics of corona virus covid 19 is the risk communication which was defined, by the international regulation, as the main condition which can deal with incident and cases of Alert (organization, p. 4).

Algeria has made huge efforts in confronting this pandemic. In the beginning, there was no involvement of authorities and this led to unexpected problems and crises like: shortage price rising and lack of semolina. Which rose the anger of people and then inquired the intervention of trade and Agricultural ministries in the beginning and then other authorities, according to their streams and prerogatives.

For the strategy used, it is previously mentioned that there are four strategies.

The strategy of preventive advocacy, the strategy of discontent and anger management, the crisis communication strategy and the strategy of Healthy education. In reality, each of these strategies has its own principles, but they are still unavailable. For crisis communication, it is not enough to create a crisis all in the Ministry of Health and Hospital Restoration, or to set up web site for the ministry in order to talk about the crisis communication that it posses its techniques that will be used in each stage whereas for the strategy of preventive Advocacy, despite the number of public campaigns broadcast by mass media, social media networks, private channels and the national television in which a lot of awareness and preventive programmes about corona virus were broadcast, but this strategy did not follow and apply the part of individuals involvement. So, it did not give importance to the individuals concern by giving them necessary information about that and the only information given to people was about the daily number of corona virus and this led to rumours, and consequently, people's fear rises more and more. The fear has led to create a certain solidarity between people and this was shown through their solidarity with deprived people as well as those who were in home confinement.

6- Conclusion

The risk communication is the ideal and the mostly communication during pandemics, food crises or naural calamities.

The risk communication needs various types of communication as well as uses appropriate techniques. The risk communication also uses a set of strategies such as. The strategy of preventive advocacy, discontent and anger management strategy, crisis communication, strategy and the strategy of healthy education.

For Algeria, in the frame of confronting corona virus, we can say that the efforts concentrated on the use of public communication campaigns which make people aware and conscious about the seriousness of the pandemic, how is propagated and how to protect yourself from it. In this context, mass media and social media net works were used but the absence of official information led to the propagation of rumours especially on social media networks which rose the fears of people and the creation of secondary crises which required the intervention of other ministries.

So, the risk communication is not limited only in giving the daily rate of victims of corona virus but involves all parties by providing them with necessary information and explanation and creates a certain confidence between them.

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