

## Research Report

# Management of Conflicts within Beer Drinking Settings

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**Abstract-** The study examined the role played by the intake of alcohol in as far as resolution of conflicts is concerned. The qualitative investigative study sought to respond to the following aspects; prominent conflicts experienced in beer drinking places, causes of the conflicts and prominent resolution measures applied. It was guided by the Public Sphere theory propounded by Jurgen Habermas which argues that public sphere is an area in social life where people assemble and liberally discuss detecting societal conflicts and effect solutions. The study observed 2 Clubs; X and Y at Chikwanha Business Centre and Zengeza 4 Aquatic shops in Seke rural and urban respectively, Zimbabwe over a three month period. Observations were consistent every Fridays and Saturdays from 1000 hours till 2300 hours. Data were analysed using latent content analysis to allow examination of the participants' mannerisms and narratives. The study established that beer drinking leads to more intuition, creativity and audacity regarding adoptability of conflict resolution measures. It also revealed that the most drunken parties implemented the most effective and sustainable conflict resolution measures. The study also noted that beer is a necessary commodity for social stability if religious, cultural and economic rules allow.

**Key words:** conflict resolution, conflict management, public sphere, beer, conflict

## **Introduction**

Alcohol is taken by a sizeable population the world over, though there is substantial difference amongst and within countries depending on the level of development and economic productivity. Its intake is part of societal and traditional norms in some societies. Alcohol is any beverage planned for consumption having least possible ethanol content as defined by the responsible authorities. In most situations, alcohol consumption is associated with waste of resources, violence and failure to control an individual's faculties thereby exposing oneself to various dangers. This is especially so in the developing world where economies perform poorly. However, this study sought to focus on the roles played by the intake of alcohol in as far as resolution of conflicts is concerned with special focus on the resolution measures applied. Precisely, the study sought to respond to the following aspects; prominent conflicts experienced in the beer drinking places, age groups involved in the conflicts, causes of the conflicts and prominent resolution measures applied.

## **Contextualization**

Both clubs, *Club X* and *Y* are semi-upmarket places which are located in rural and high density areas of Seke. *Club X*, though in an area designated as rural is largely patronized by urbanites. Both clubs according to the official statistics record an average of 60-85 patrons/day between Monday and Thursday and average 500-750 drinkers/day on Fridays and Saturdays especially after 1500 hours while Sundays record about 80 during the first half of the day and the figure reduces as the day ends. Of the attendees, according to club statistics and observations, about 60% are females (women and girls) while 40% are men. Of the 60% females, about 40% will be in the company of their male partners while the remainder are either sincere women drinkers or commercial sex workers. Both clubs are semi drive-ins with a barbecue area and some enclosures. No opaque beer or other illicit brews are available in the clubs. The two clubs were selected for their popularity and the fact that they attract large attendances from diverse backgrounds.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative investigative study was conducted to establish some of the main conflict resolution methods used by beer drinkers in clubs and bars. The study observed two Clubs; *Club X* and *Y* at Chikwanha business centre and Zengeza 4 Aquatic shops in Seke rural and urban respectively, Zimbabwe over a three month period. Observations were consistent every Fridays and Saturdays from 1000 hours till 2300 hours. The observations were conducted over 24 days (312 hours) with the lead researcher getting assisted by a club security bouncer in each selected setting. The researcher alternated observations to ensure a balanced and effective data collection system.

The security bouncers had been briefed about the scope of the study before undergoing a brief induction on what to gather. They were also handy because they attended to all the conflicts and cases of violence recorded in the respective clubs. The security bouncers were required to record all cases of violence, time of the incident, sex and ages of the parties and how the conflict/violence would have been resolved.

Observations sought to establish prominent conflicts experienced in both clubs, main age ranges involved in the conflicts, causes of conflicts and prominent resolution measures applied. Obtained data compiled according to the day (Friday and Saturday) observed, specifically answered the four research questions before subjecting to content latent analysis for processing. In both clubs, observations were conducted from two permanent positions in each club for wider coverage and exposure to activities in the club, around the barbecue area and the car park.

### **- *Theoretical explanation***

The study was guided by the Public Sphere theory propounded by Jurgen Habermas (Benhabib, 1992; Haine, 1996). Habermas' theory of the Public Sphere embraces a multiplicity of meanings, as well as social arenas where meanings are enunciated, disseminated, and exchanged. The public sphere implies an area in social life where people assemble and liberally discuss detecting societal conflicts and, through those discussions,

effect solutions (Awasom, 2010). It involves private individuals who meet to constitute a public and participate in discussions seeking to resolve contentious issues.

Such public spheres in the form of drinking places not only make an environment for self-expression, but in fact create an arena for expressing programs for public discussion and confirmation (Awasom, 2010). Beer halls and clubs therefore stand as informal forums that link the distance between private and public life, conflicts and peace and relaxation and work (Haine, 1996; Warner, 2002). Contextually, it is considered that some conflicts are resolved over beer with other varied resolution approaches getting applied to appropriate conflicts.

## **Literature review**

In order to clearly have an appreciation of what happens in beer drinking places, the nature of conflicts often recorded, how they are usually resolved and what other roles these places serve in society, the study also looked at other scholars' previous studies and conceptions. It is often against these previous studies that new knowledge and any research gaps may be identified.

### **- *Beer in Zimbabwe***

In Zimbabwe, there are various types of places where beer may be legally consumed. These places range from bottle stores, sports bars, beer-halls, nightclubs to hotels and patronization is to a large extent determined by one's resources, level of integrity, the type of beer consumed, other anticipated extras, discussions to be held and the type of friends associated with.

Alcohol, commonly referred to as beer in Zimbabwe is an organic compound extracted from hydrocarbons and holding one or more hydroxyl (-OH) compounds. Ethanol (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH, ethyl alcohol) is one of these groups of compounds, and is the leading psychoactive constituent in alcohol. In Zimbabwe, consumption and administration of alcohol is constitutionally regulated through the Liquor Act, Chapter 14: 12 and the Traditional Beer Act, Chapter 14:24 (GoZ, 2010). Beer consumption in Zimbabwe is also associated with conflicts, violence and road traffic accidents especially if drinkers either fail to communicate effectively or decide to drive after drinking beyond their capacities.

- ***Beer drinking in clubs***

It is argued that beer drinking bars epitomize public spaces and arenas where people meet to socialise (Warner, 2002). As modernity creeps in, most of the drinking places are improving and offering relaxation services that allow patrons to feel at home. These serene atmospheres have over the years encouraged people to increase their alcohol consumption levels with some quarters reporting that 35% of men and 25% of women in Zimbabwe consume alcohol (GoZ, 2010). This has also impacted on the carnage that continues to rise as a result of excessive intake of alcohol. Permissible Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is 0.08 grams/deciliter (gdl), according to the Road Traffic Act and yet most drunken drivers often record well beyond 1.0 gdl (GoZ, 2010). Blood Alcohol Concentration is the amount of alcohol, in grams, per deciliter of blood.

Most households especially in the high density areas find some reason for liking residence near the service centres. These are the centres where most services are readily available from groceries, medical facilities, communication centres up to entertainment services like bars and drinking places. For some men and women, being close to beer drinking places is convenient for planning purposes. According to Bryceson (2002) and Awasom (2010), drinking places turn out to be exceedingly important as focal points for relaxation and entertainment. Besides accessing beer, the places also provide with some entertainment like high volume music, mass football watching, pool, darts and mass dancing amongst others (Nyamnjoh & Fokwang, 2005). Drinking places also cater for the interests of workers who would have worked hard during the day and want some rest reflecting on their challenges and successes (Bryceson, 2002). It is through leisure and entertainment that people share ideas on various life matters from conflicts, marriages, and economy to politics and others (Nyamnjoh & Fokwang, 2005). The same beer drinking places also serve as places where commercial sex workers are easily available to men who maybe in their need.

Drinking places have through other studies been noted to serve several other roles in society. According to May (1973), there are twin functions of the beer-drinking places;

convivial and utilitarian. According to Warmer (2002), young people consume beer for conviviality, whereas older people consume for indulgent reasons, probably on account of increased pressures and more accountabilities. To some extent, this notion is confirmed by Dodo et al (2012) when they posit that traditionally, people tended to relax over beer killing the evening hours and telling old stories. It has been observed that beer has over the years been used to bring people together for various activities. It has been through these different activities; communal dance ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, communal task work and others that previously hostile parties find opportunities to build bridges while others also exchange notes on various other developmental matters. According to May (1973), 36% of the people who consumed beer in urban Rhodesia took the opportunity for social contacts while 13% cited their inclination in music and dancing. The same research also established that beer drinking places afford settings for the exchange of information about open jobs and available women, news from home and accessible resources in time of need. According to Awasom (2010) colonial local authorities were strongly convinced that beer drinking was an effective way of managing violence and conflicts in society. This explains why they prioritised the establishment of beer-halls in all the high density residential areas that they created. According to popular culture as argued by Bushman & Cooper (1990) and MacDonald et al (2000), beer can make a person either a caring individual or a mad, quick-tempered bully. This is against a background where beer has been proven to reduce cognitive functioning and thus leaving one able to process only a restricted amount of data at one time. Therefore, intoxicated persons' decision making will be influenced by whatever environmental cues are most salient to them (Weisman & Taylor, 1994).

However, studies have also established that disproportionate drinking in the towns is a major basis for juvenile crime, broken marriages, malnourishment in children and lack of education (Awasom, 2010). Beer drinking places also unfortunately have helped spread diseases as some drinkers indulge in unprotected sex. The spread of diseases has naturally become a cost to both households and the national economy at large (MacDonald et al, 1996). Besides excessive drinking, drinking places have also contributed to juvenile delinquency as most of the drinking places never control access to juveniles (Nyamnjoh & Fokwang, 2005). Similarly, some of the places are open almost always so much so that some people do not go home. Besides, the drinking places have become ideal rendezvous

for unfaithful partners. Such behaviours have in some cases led to the collapse of some marriages. Concentration on beer drinking by some parents has also negatively affected the welfare of some homes. In the end, some children are getting malnourished and often dropping out of school due to lack of good food and tuition fees respectively (Warmer, 2002).

- ***Prostitution and Beer***

Most beer drinking places in Zimbabwe offer services beyond beer depending on the nature of the place. Most also allow prostitution activities to prevail as they are seen as drivers of patronage which subsequently increase sales and profits. The blind attention paid by operators of beer drinking places has over the years promoted prostitution, the spread of sexually transmitted illnesses and the break-down of families. There are epidemiological studies which point to an association between beer, sexual activity and sexual risk behaviour (Woelk et al, 2001). Epidemiological studies carried out in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Central African Republic have established substantial associations between beer consumption and high-risk sexual behavior (Mnyika et al, 1997; Ndinya-Achola, 1997), prevalent sexually transmitted diseases (STI) (Gwati et al, 1995) and widespread HIV infection (Bassett et al, 1996). Therefore, these places end up being abused and generating family problems and illnesses.

Consumption of alcoholic beverages in general and beer in particular is associated with higher rates of extramarital sexual activity, paying for sex and multiple sex partners (Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office, 1999). A 1989 study of female sex workers in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe revealed that more than half their male clients were drunk during sex (Wilson et al, 1990). This therefore points to the fact that the use of beer and other psychoactive elements play an important role in the transmission dynamics of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- ***Alcohol influenced conflicts***

While some scholars (Warner, 2002; Bryceson, 2002; Awasom, 2010; Dodo et al, 2012) concur that beer has various positive roles in society, there is another school of thought which sees the effects of beer differently. This school of thought believes that beer often leads to people's failure to control their faculties so much so that they uncontrollably

engage in violence and unnecessary arguments (Willis, 2002; Nyamnjoh & Fokwang, 2005). Often, drinkers who always engage in violence are characterised by excessive consumption which usually leads to a condition called Alcohol Dependence (Woelk et al, 2001). Alcohol Dependence is a classification of mental and behavioural conditions, defined as a collection of behavioural, physiological, and intellectual phenomena in which alcohol consumption takes on a much higher priority for a particular individual than other behaviours that at one time had more significance.

Alcohol intake has often led to various conflicts. In some cases, it is the intoxication that influences conflicts while in others; it is the perception by the sober about the drinkers that also perpetuates conflicts (Willis, 2002). Some of the most prominent conflicts recorded include physical fights over lovers (boyfriends/girlfriends), space, perceptions, and suspicions of either theft or lover-snatching amongst others. Public and domestic violence are some of the most common conflicts triggered by excessive beer drinking (Awasom, 2010). Disproportionate intake of alcohol usually leads to a dysfunctional mental and cognitive system, which subsequently affects the drinker's perception about other people (Mnyika et al, 1997; Ndinya-Achola, 1997). It is often that misjudged perception which then instigates conflicts.

Beer drinking alone is not a problem and it does not also lead to conflicts. However, the problem only comes when there is over-consumption and the drinker fails to manage the effects (Woelk et al, 2001). Often, when some people drive post-drinking beer, they will not be in control of their driving capabilities so much so that they expose other motorists and pedestrians to risks of accidents (MacDonald et al, 1995). Basically, heavy drinking extremely disturbs coordination, judgement and other motor skills (Willis, 2002; Awasom, 2010) subsequently leading to road accidents.

There are also instances when intoxication can lead to behavioural or physical abnormalities. According to Weisman and Taylor, (1994) and Awasom (2010), there are some intoxicants which have severe physiological effects on the drinkers' outlook. This is common with people who take some of the illicit intoxicants like *msombodia*, broncleer, and various other home-made spirits.



## Findings

Following an analysis of all the data, the results are presented in response to individual questions that were set initially; prominent conflicts experienced in the beer drinking places, age groups involved in the conflicts, causes of the conflicts and prominent resolution measures applied.

### - *Prominent conflicts experienced per given day*

After the collection of data and its respective analysis, it was established that the two weekdays that were selected for observation and analysis had completely different characteristics and activities. It is because of the different activities that conflicts recorded on respective days also differ. However, the study established the following prominent conflicts in all the 24 days of the research; disputes over partners, theft of valuables, jealous by partners, poor communication or perception, disputes over seats or space and choice of television channel to watch. These are according to this study defined as the main conflicts because they sparked disorder, instability, fighting and restlessness among the patrons.

The study noted that there were more activities and more conflicts on Fridays than there were on Saturdays. Cumulatively, conflicts within the defined category that were recorded on Friday and Saturday were 146 and 110 respectively. According to the observations and narratives from the security bouncers, Fridays were traditionally used as resting days when workers also take time to meet with friends and relax as postulated by Habermas in the Public Sphere theory, enroute to their respective homes. Saturday is used to recover from Friday's activities and fatigue and workers normally rest with the families at home. In that regard, drinking places ensure that there is adequate entertainment to keep the patrons relaxed and peaceful.

**Fig. 1** Frequency of Conflicts

Conflict	Fri		Sat		Total		%	
	<i>Club X</i>	<i>Club Y</i>	<i>Club X</i>	<i>Club Y</i>	<i>Club X</i>	<i>Club Y</i>	<i>Club X</i>	<i>Club Y</i>
Partner	19	16	16	12	35	28	26.7	22.4
Theft	11	13	8	10	19	23	14.5	18.4
Jealous	10	11	8	5	18	16	13.7	12.8
Communication	17	14	14	10	31	24	23.6	19.2
Space	12	15	10	13	22	28	16.7	22.4
Entertainment	4	4	2	2	6	6	4.5	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>125</b>		

It was established that there are more conflicts in *Club X* (131) than *Club Y* (125). The generally observed trend is that there are more conflicts on a Friday which recorded 73 and 73 compared to Saturday with 58 and 52 in *Club X* and *Y* respectively. It was also established that there were more conflicts in *Club X* over partners (35), over poor communication or patron misperception (31), disputes over seating space (22), conflicts over allegations of theft (19), confrontation by jealous partners (18) with patrons disputing over the television channel to watch recording the least (six). With regards to *Club Y*, there were more conflicts over partners (28), over poor communication (24), disputes over space (28), conflicts over allegations of theft (23), confrontation by jealous partners (16) with patrons disputing over the television channel to watch recording the least (six).

What was evident from the 24-day study is that more people fail to compromise if it involves people of different sex. In other words, beer drinkers take no chances on issues involving their partners. It also shows that most drinkers are poor communicators who often prefer violence as the best choice for resolving conflicts. *X* had more partner conflicts than *Y* because there are more commercial sex workers who frequent because of the existence of booking rooms within the club.

- ***Main age ranges involved in the conflicts***

According to the recorded conflicts within the 24-day period, it was generally observed that most (over 50%) of the parties to the conflicts were youthful. There are no rules in the two clubs that require patrons to reveal their ages. Therefore, these were only estimates. However, what was established from the observations is that there were conflicts pitting women. There were also conflicts where men fought either over or for their women. No conflicts were ever recorded pitting women against men.

- ***Causes of conflicts***

All of the recorded and observed conflicts were as a result of the following; disputes over partners, with some patrons conflicting over either control or time with commercial sex workers or free women in the bars (24.5%) and theft of valuables like mobile phones and wallets (16.4%). Some conflicted due to poor communication or wrong perceptions over other patrons (21.4%), jealous by some over-protective partners (13.2%) and disputes over seats or parking space (19.5%). The least recorded cause of conflicts was the choice of television channel to watch (4.6%). There were some patrons who were demanding to watch channels broadcasting live football while others wanted to watch musical channels. The percentages are totals of the two cases. It was also established from the security bouncers that most (60%+) of the conflicts involved patrons who were severely drunk; patrons who could not take charge of their mental systems.

- *Prominent resolution measures applied*

**Fig. 2** Common resolution approaches

Conflict	Negotiation		Fight		Silence		Arrest		Other		Total	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Partner	9	8	24	17	2	3	0	0	0	0	35	28
Theft	0	1	10	9	2	1	6	10	1	2	19	23
Jealous	4	5	12	11	0	0	0	0	2	0	18	16
Communication	10	10	11	8	7	6	1	0	2	0	31	24
Space	9	16	10	8	0	2	0	0	3	2	22	28
Entertainment	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	2	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>125</b>

The study established that while there were various forms of conflicts recorded in the two cases, there were equally varying resolution approaches that were applied. The most common method applied in both cases was fighting where 67% and 53% were recorded in X and Y cases respectively. X recorded highly in fighting because of its location in the rural areas and its patronization by the rural residents whose appreciation of negotiations and other peaceful means to conflict resolution was low. Similarly, negotiation as a conflict resolution measure recorded 34% and 42% in X and Y cases respectively clearly showing traits of violence in the rural area-based case compared to the urban-based case. The 10% and 7% recorded in Y and X cases respectively also shows that more urban people appreciate the roles of the law enforcement agencies as conflict prevention and resolution entities. However, comparatively, the use of law enforcement agents was low in both settings. It was observed that while silence is not a popular approach to conflict

resolution, it recorded 11% and 14% in X and Y cases respectively. Other means of resolving conflicts included walking away and compensation.

- *Other roles of beer drinking*

The study also established that beer promotes reciprocity among friends, an important virtue in humanity towards the creation of relationships. Reciprocity has over the years nurtured relationships and the spirit of good neighbourliness. Three patrons who were part of conflicting group accused the other part of being stingy and failing to return the favours.

*“Hamumwike\_doro\_nemi, makaomera. Asi mungabve kumba kwenyu kusvikodhakiswanevamwe”*

(You are not good drinking partners, you are mean. How can you come to the bar expecting to get free beers)

An opportunity to socialize is also created through beer drinking. However, the socialisation aspect only comes if there spirit of reciprocity is cultivated. Over time, beer drinking in public drinking places offers opportunities for borrowing money, exchanging information, learning new skills and ideas and getting information about job opportunities.

One drinker involved in a conflict remarked;

*“Munotitadzisa kufara kumabhawa kwatinosangana neshamwari, tichimwa, tichikweretesana, tichidzidza, tichinyengana. Imbwadzevanhu, hamunamari!”*

(You disturb peace in the bars where we meet drinking, borrowing money, exchanging ideas and engaging in extra-marital sex. [insults] You have no money)

Beer provides courage to face enemies. This was established when one young lady confronted another huge man over an alleged insult. Through observations, it was unlikely that such a young lady could violently confront a huge and fierce man without any fear. Upon confronting the man, the lady shouted;

*“Iwe, watichii, watindirichii? Ndakambodyamariyako, wakambondisvira, ndakambouya kumbakwako?”*

(You! what have you said about me? Have you ever given me money, have we ever had sex, have I ever been to your house?)

Beer drinking was also established to be a facilitator of peace and harmony both in the community and individual households. According to some beer drinkers in the clubs, beer drinking helps people forget problems as they temporarily lose memory of what might be troubling them in life.

## **Discussion**

The study established that there were more activities and more conflicts on Fridays than there were on Saturdays. Some of the most noted conflicts included disputes over partners, theft of valuables, jealous by partners, poor communication or perception, disputes over seats or space and choice of television channel to watch. However, the study established that in almost all the conflicts, women were involved and that most men who engaged in conflicts sought to either impress women or to defend their women partners.

It was also noted that the most drunken conflict parties were the ones who were extreme in their approaches (conflict or resolution). It was established that most of the successfully resolved conflicts (60%+) were either facilitated/brokered or led by the most drunken parties who drew courage from being drunk. They also reasoned in a drunken manner but which impacted most on all the involved parties. It was also realised in both settings that it was the most drunken parties who raised voices most thereby drawing the required attention and subsequently winning the people's support.

It was the study's finding that some beer drinking places are focusing on the improvements in their facilities as an attempt at reducing conflicts. This is against a background where some conflicts are emanating from scrambles for furniture, sitting areas, parking space, entertainment facilities, toilet usage and general spacious forecourt. The use of modern facilities and improved service is regarded as effective in either preventing or resolving conflicts as there will be effective and efficient use of resources.

It was proven that beer influences creativity and intuition which help drinkers to think of various means towards attending to conflicts that are experienced in beer drinking

places. Some of the means adopted by beer drinkers in resolving conflicts are rarely thought of by sober minds. In some cases, the ingenuity shown in applying some of the resolution measures compare not with those applied by sober people.

The most outstanding finding in the study was that some people failed to compromise if it involved people of different sex. In other words, beer drinkers take no chances on issues involving their partners. It also shows that most drinkers are poor communicators who often prefer violence as the best choice for resolving conflicts. However, beer was seen to be an effective factor in promoting reciprocity and socialisation among friends and strangers.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that alcohol plays a huge part in the development and implementation of conflict resolution in most communities. Beer drinking has been observed to play a significant role in the conviviality and vitality of life in the bars. The research concludes that social values advanced by the consumption of alcohol originate from acknowledgement of their role in reducing social spaces and solidifying group connections. These principles develop around companionship, social amity and collective morale as aptly explained in the Public Sphere theory by Jurgen Habermas.

The study established that disputes over partners, theft of valuables, jealous by partners, poor communication or perception, disputes over seats or space and choice of television channel to watch are the most prominent conflicts recorded in the two clubs. Therefore, given the gravity of the conflicts, there is need for the adoption of some effective resolution approaches which ensure sustainability. The study also established that beer drinkers take no chances on issues involving their partners. The study concludes that most drinkers are poor communicators who often prefer violence as the best choice for resolving conflicts.

It was established that the most common conflict resolution method applied in both Clubs (*X* and *Y*) is fighting where 67% and 53% were recorded respectively. This approach to conflict resolution resonates well with a community that is heavily influenced

by politicized violence and poverty. There is also an influence of the two clubs' location in the rural areas and their patronization by rural residents whose appreciation of talks and other peaceful means to conflict resolution is low. It is therefore the study's conclusion that conflicts recorded in the two clubs are to a great extent influenced and driven by the rural complexion in the majority of the patrons.

It was also established that the most drunken conflict parties were the ones who were extreme in their approaches. The most drunken parties were noted to be more supportive of either the talks or violence. They reacted extremely in whatever situation. In the same light, the most successfully resolved conflicts (60%+) were either facilitated/brokered or led by the most drunken parties who drew courage from being drunk.

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