

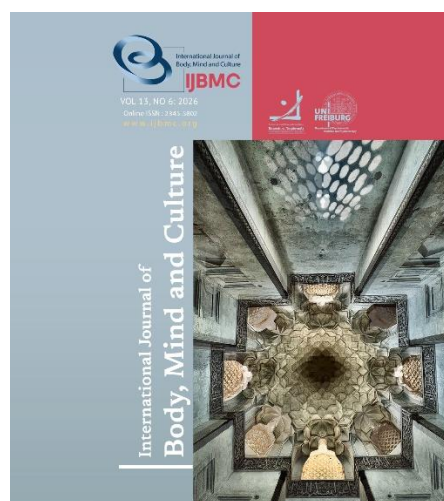
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Proactive Personality, Psychological Capital, and Work Readiness among Prospective Teacher Students: A PLS-SEM Mediation Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the direct effect of proactive personality on work readiness and to test the mediating role of psychological capital among prospective teacher students.

Methods and Materials: A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used. The study involved 100 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at University X in Samarinda, Indonesia. Participants were selected through simple random sampling from a population of 787 students using computer-generated random numbers. Data were collected using scales measuring work readiness, proactive personality, and psychological capital. The measurement and structural models were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. Model quality was assessed through factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted, discriminant validity, variance inflation factor, standardized root mean square residual, and normed fit index.

Findings: The measurement model showed acceptable reliability and validity after modification, with AVE values ranging from 0.606 to 0.822 and composite reliability values ranging from 0.843 to 0.892. The structural model showed acceptable fit, SRMR = 0.088 and NFI = 0.912. Proactive personality had a significant direct effect on work readiness ($\beta = 0.741$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = 0.627$) and on psychological capital ($\beta = 0.834$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = 2.287$). Psychological capital did not significantly predict work readiness ($\beta = 0.134$, $p = .186$, $f^2 = 0.021$). The indirect effect was also non-significant ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = .190$).

Conclusion: Proactive personality directly predicted work readiness, whereas psychological capital did not mediate this relationship.

Keywords: Proactive Personality, Psychological Capital, Work Readiness, Prospective Teachers, PLS-SEM.

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Introduction

The transformation of the workplace, characterized by accelerated technological advancement, digital disruption, and high demands for adaptability, is changing the competencies required of university graduates. These changes require students not only to master academic knowledge but also to possess strong work readiness to enter an increasingly competitive job market. Furthermore, the industrial world is increasingly emphasizing the importance of soft skills such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving as complements to students' technical competencies (Lucero, 2024; Marijani et al., 2023). At the same time, the ability to adapt to rapid change, including resilience, is becoming a crucial indicator of graduates' ability to survive and thrive in a dynamic work environment (Mkhize & Reddy, 2025).

Although universities have integrated Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curricula, various studies show that many students still do not achieve optimal levels of work readiness. Students, particularly those from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) who are expected to become future educators, often experience a gap between academic competence and professional readiness. This situation highlights the need for a deeper understanding of personal and psychological factors to predict and enhance work readiness. FKIP students are also required to apply pedagogical competence effectively in a constantly changing educational environment, so work readiness cannot rely solely on formal academic achievement. Therefore, understanding internal psychological factors such as proactive personality and psychological capital is increasingly important for bridging the gap between professional demands and students' actual abilities (Ullah et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2022).

Research attention has then shifted to personality factors such as proactive personality, which is an individual's tendency to take initiative, seek opportunities, and make positive changes in the environment. Individuals with proactive personalities are believed to be better able to navigate workplace uncertainties and develop the personal capacity to meet professional demands (Ike et al., 2025). However, previous research has not consistently shown the strength of the role of proactive personality in work

readiness (Alya et al., 2024), especially among education students.

To understand the relationship among proactive personality, psychological capital, and work readiness, this study is based on the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR Theory), which posits that individuals strive to acquire and develop resources to meet environmental demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Proactive personality is seen as a dispositional resource that encourages the formation of more dynamic psychological resources, namely PsyCap. In addition, the Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) framework reinforces the view that PsyCap, consisting of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, is a state-like psychological capacity that can be developed through positive experiences and proactive behavior (Luthans, 2002). The integration of these two theories provides a logical basis for suggesting that proactive personality not only directly influences work readiness but also, indirectly through PsyCap, plays a crucial role in helping students adapt to the demands and dynamics of the workplace.

In addition to personality, psychological factors such as psychological capital, comprising hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, have been widely recognized as strong predictors of how individuals face academic and professional challenges (Ingusci et al., 2026; Sulistiobudi & Kadiyono, 2023). Psychological capital enables students to build self-confidence, resilience, and a positive orientation, thereby fostering work readiness. However, there remains a gap in the literature that simultaneously examines how proactive personality influences work readiness via PsyCap as a mediator, particularly among FKIP students in Indonesia.

Research on student work readiness has developed from various perspectives, but studies specifically integrating the three main variables: proactive personality, psychological capital, and work readiness are still very limited. Most previous studies examined the relationship between the two variables separately, such as the influence of proactive personality on work readiness (Caballero et al., 2011; Nugroho et al., 2024) or the role of PsyCap in work readiness (Alya et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2024). The lack of approaches integrating these three constructs has led to an incomplete understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking personality and work readiness. An integrative approach

is crucial to explaining how a person's proactive nature shapes their psychological resources, ultimately influencing their work readiness.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research focusing on students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) as the primary population. FKIP students have unique characteristics because they are projected to become professional educators who must be adaptable, proactive, and resilient in the face of the ever-changing dynamics of the educational world. However, the literature discussing work readiness among FKIP students is relatively limited compared to other fields of study. This is crucial, as prospective teachers require a combination of academic abilities, social skills, and adequate psychological readiness to play an effective role in the educational workplace.

Another limitation arises from the methodological approach. Although the relationship among personality, psychological capital, and work readiness is complex and involves latent constructs, few studies have used the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. This approach is highly appropriate because it can handle complex theoretical models, moderate sample sizes, and psychological data that is not always normally distributed. The limited use of PLS-SEM in related research means that many theoretical hypotheses are not tested with adequate analytical rigor.

Therefore, research that integrates these three variables in the context of FKIP students using the PLS-SEM approach has strong novelty. This type of research not only fills gaps in the literature but also provides practical contributions for educational institutions in designing more targeted interventions. This research can help universities identify internal factors that need strengthening to ensure graduates are truly prepared to meet the professional demands of the educational workforce.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the role of psychological capital as a mediator between proactive personality and work readiness in prospective teacher students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at X University of Samarinda. Research hypotheses: Proactive personality has a direct effect on work readiness (H1). Proactive personality directly affects psychological capital (H2). Psychological capital directly affects work readiness (H3). Psychological

capital mediates the relationship between proactive personality and work readiness (H4).

Methods and Materials

Study Design

This study employs a quantitative research method with work readiness as the dependent variable, and proactive personality and psychological capital as the independent variables. The focus is on understanding how these psychological traits influence students' readiness to enter the workforce.

Participants

The study population comprised all undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at University X in Samarinda during the academic year (N = 787). The sampling frame was obtained from the official student enrollment list provided by the faculty administration. Simple random sampling was used to ensure that each member of the population had an equal probability of being selected. The sampling procedure followed two steps: (1) all student names in the sampling frame were assigned a numerical code (1-787), and (2) 100 participants were selected using a computer-generated random number list created through the random number generator function in Microsoft Excel. The sample reflects the characteristics of teacher education students; however, the findings cannot be generalized, as they did not involve other faculties. This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of University X. The researcher provided explanations and obtained informed consent from the subjects; participation was voluntary, and data confidentiality was guaranteed.

Instruments

The fourth variable was measured using a measurement instrument modified by the researcher, so there was no language translation process because it was in Indonesian, namely a work readiness scale of 6 indicators, namely responsibility (Y1), flexibility (Y2), skills (Y3), communication (Y4), self-view (Y5), health and safety (Y6) with 18 items (Muspawati & Lestari, 2020) "I feel confident in the abilities I have to work"; proactive personality using a proactive personality measurement instrument that uses 2 indicators consisting of 16 items, namely, awareness (X1), Extraversion (X2), "Nothing is

more enjoyable for me than seeing my ideas come true" (Kusuma & Yulianti, 2019); psychological capital, namely the PCQ-24 created by Luthans et al., (2006) then adapted by Setyawan (2019) with 3 indicators and 24 items, namely self-efficacy (M1), optimism (M2), hope (M3), academic resilience (M4) "Currently, I feel I am achieving the goals I have set for myself". The response is structured with four options: 1. "Strongly disagree" 2. "Disagree" 3. "Neutral" 4. "Agree" 5. "Strongly agree".

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique is partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), a multivariate approach for examining complex relationships among latent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The stages in SEM analysis are the evaluation of the measurement model and the passing of the assumption tests, namely

normality, with the provision that the critical ratio (Çar et al., 2025) value is used. If the CR value exceeds ± 2.58 , the data distribution is not normal, and the outlier test passes.

Findings and Results

Evaluation of measurement models. The criteria for testing a fit SEM model are evaluated by comparing Hair et al (2017), who stated that the evaluation of the reflective measurement model consists of a loading factor ≥ 0.70 , Composite reliability ≥ 0.70 , average variance extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50), and an evaluation of discriminant validity using HTMT, Fornell, and Lacker criteria ≥ 0.400 . The results are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Loading Factor, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted Measurement Model Before Modification

No.	Konstruk (Latent)	Indikator (Observed)	Loading faktor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach alpha
1	Psychological Capital	M1	0.915	0.542	0.853	0.828
		M2	0.852			
		M3	0.906			
		M4	0.637			
2	Proactive personality	X1	0.873	0.724	0.728	0.721
		X2	0.829			
3	Work readiness	Y1	0.783	0.698	0.882	0.850
		Y2	0.727			
		Y3	0.766			
		Y4	0.850			
		Y5	0.740			
		Y6	0.503			

Validity testing, as shown in Table 1, indicates that the factor loading values for the indicators meet the minimum requirement of 0.5. When the factor loading values range from 0.53 to 0.91, it is concluded that the M4 and Y6 indicators are not valid for measuring or

explaining the construct variables. Furthermore, the results of the reliability test, based on the table above, show that the AVE values range from 0.54 to 0.72, the CR values range from 0.72 to 0.88, and the Cronbach alpha values range from 0.721 to 0.850.

Table 2

Loading Factor, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted Measurement Model After Modification

No.	Konstruk (Latent)	Indikator (Observed)	Loading faktor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach alpha
1	Psychological Capital	M1	0.915	0.606	0.843	0.837
		M2	0.880			
		M3	0.924			
		M4	0.924			
2	Proactive personality	X1	0.974	0.724	0.729	0.721
		X2	0.827			
3	Work readiness	Y1	0.783	0.822	0.892	0.891
		Y2	0.729			

Y3	0.776
Y4	0.857
Y5	0.742

Validity testing in Table 2 shows that the indicator's factor loading meets the minimum requirement of 0.5. When the factor loading value ranges from 0.72 to 0.97. Furthermore, the results of the reliability test, as shown in the table above, indicate that the AVE ranges from 0.60

to 0.82, the CR ranges from 0.84 to 0.89, and Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.721 to 0.891. All AVE and CR values obtained have met the criteria. The conclusion is that the factor variables (constructs) in the measurement model are reliable.

Table 3

Discriminant Validity HTMT

	Work readiness (Y)	Proactive Personality (X)	Psychological capital (M)
Work readiness (Y)			
Proactive Personality (X)	0.768		
Psychological capital (M)	0.858	0.717	

According to Table 3, the HTMT values for each pair were less than 0.90, indicating that the discriminant validity requirement was met. To strengthen the results

of the discriminant validity analysis, the researcher conducted a Fornell-Lacker discriminant analysis. The results are as follows:

Table 4

Discriminant fornell lacker

	Work readiness (Y)	Proactive Personality (X)	Psychological capital (M)
Work readiness (Y)	0.779		
Proactive Personality (X)	0.853	0.851	
Psychological capital (M)	0.752	0.834	0.907

Discriminant validity evaluation needs to be conducted using the Fornell-Lacker criteria (Table 4). Discriminant validity is a form of evaluation to ensure that variables are theoretically distinct and empirically supported or statistically tested. Based on the results, discriminant validity has been met because the researcher used the Fornell-Lacker criterion, which

requires that each pair of constructs exceed 0.400. Next, the structural model was evaluated.

Evaluation of the structural model. The structural model evaluation is conducted by checking for multicollinearity among variables using the Inner VIF measure. An Inner VIF value below 5 indicates no multicollinearity between variables (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5

Multicollinierity

Variabel	VIF
Proactive Personality → Work readiness	3.287
Proactive personality → Psychological capital	1.000
Psychological capital → Work readiness	3.287

The analysis results in Table 5 show that the inner VIF is <5, indicating low multicollinearity among variables. This result confirms the robustness of parameter estimates in SEM PLS, particularly in the mediator

analysis (unbiased). The SRMR of 0.088 indicates an acceptable fit. The SRMR result of 0.088 indicates that the model has an Acceptable Fit. Meanwhile, the NFI =

0.912, its value is above 0.90, indicating that this research model has a fit level of 91.2%.

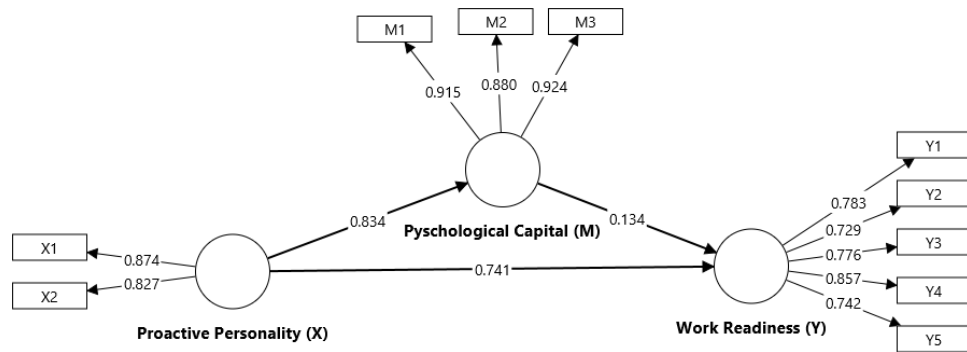


Figure 1

Model Analysis

Table 6

Direct hypothesis

Hypothesis	β	p-value	95% CI		F ²
			CI Lower	CI Upper	
H1. Proactive personality → Work readiness	0.741	0.000	0.544	0.922	0.627
H2. Proactive personality → Psychological capital	0.834	0.000	0.770	0.886	2.287
H3. Psychological capital → Work readiness	0.134	0.186	-0.058	0.341	0.021

Based on the analysis in Table 6, it was found that (H1) is accepted, namely, proactive personality can directly influence the work readiness, as evidenced by a p-value < 0.05 ($p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.741$). The contribution of proactive personality can predict work readiness is classified as high ($f^2 = 0.627$). Meanwhile, (H2) is accepted: proactive personality can influence psychological capital, as evidenced by a p-value < 0.05 ($p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.31$). Proactive personality contributes to

the prediction of psychological capital with a large effect size ($f^2 = 2.287$). In addition, (H3) was rejected: psychological capital did not influence work readiness, as evidenced by a p-value > 0.05 ($p = 0.186$; $\beta = 0.134$). Furthermore, Hair et al. (2017) explained that the contribution of an influence in a model can be assessed using F2 values of 0.02 (low), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (high).

Table 7

Indirect hypothesis

Mediation Pathway	β	p-value	95% CI		
			t value	CI Lower	CI Upper
H4. Proactive personality → Psychological capital → Work readiness	0.112	0.190	1.309	-0.049	0.287

Based on Table 7, proactive personality did not influence psychological capital work readiness, as evidenced by $p = 0.190$ ($p > 0.05$). This means that

psychological capital was unable to act as a mediating variable.

Discussion and Conclusion

Research findings indicate that a proactive personality directly influences students' work readiness at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University X, Samarinda. Strong path coefficients and f-squares indicate that students' tendency to take initiative and act ahead of the situation can be a key predictor of their readiness to enter the professional world, specifically the teaching profession. For students and prospective teachers, a proactive personality can manifest as seeking opportunities for self-development outside the curriculum to strengthen their professional capacity (Wen et al., 2022).

These results align with cognitive social interactionism, which posits that individuals with a proactive personality tend to manipulate their environment to achieve success in their work and to pursue their desired careers (Ike et al., 2025). Students' proactivity allows them to adapt more quickly to school dynamics during fieldwork. Proactive individuals don't simply wait for opportunities; they create conditions that support self-efficacy and technical readiness to face the challenges of the transition from education to the world of work (Çar et al., 2025).

This significant influence is also supported by research linking proactivity to career success through increased competency (Jia & Yue, 2025). In Samarinda, the proactive characteristics of FKIP students are reflected in their active participation in student organizations and in training to become professional teachers, which cumulatively shape the profile of graduates ready to work. Therefore, a proactive personality serves as an internal catalyst, ensuring that students develop a mature future orientation and qualifications aligned with industry standards in education (Haji, 2025; Yang et al., 2024).

Data analysis demonstrates a strong direct influence of proactive personality on psychological capital. This indicates that proactive personality is a highly dominant determinant in shaping the psychological capital structure of students in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at University X. This suggests that personality traits that actively interact with the environment intrinsically build a foundation of positive psychological resources, including self-efficacy,

optimism, hope, and resilience (Alya et al., 2024; Hardiansyah et al., 2025; Rahayu, Wulandari, et al., 2025).

Psychological capital is understood as an individual's state of positive psychological development that can be developed through specific behavioral patterns (Hardiansyah et al., 2025; Ingusci et al., 2026; Liu, 2025). Individuals who actively control their actions tend to have more stable levels of hope and optimism (Ullah et al., 2024). Proactive students in Samarinda tended to view academic challenges as opportunities, thereby consistently strengthening their psychological capital throughout their studies at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education.

Previous research also supports this finding, indicating that proactive behavior encourages the accumulation of personal resources (Tjimuku et al., 2025; Ullah et al., 2024). Among students at University X, a proactive personality triggers a positive cycle in which personal initiative strengthens self-confidence. Thus, the stability of FKIP students' psychological capital depends heavily on the extent to which they adopt proactive characteristics in responding to their educational and social environments.

Based on the results of the third hypothesis test, psychological capital did not significantly influence students' work readiness. This insignificance suggests that other mediating or moderating factors may be more dominant in determining students' work readiness in teaching (Alya et al., 2024; Luthans et al., 2006; Zhang, 2026). Psychological capital is important for job performance; readiness to enter the workforce is often more influenced by mastery of technical skills and practical experience than by an internal psychological state alone (Caballero et al., 2011; Ingusci et al., 2026). For students in Samarinda, a resilient or optimistic mindset does not necessarily correlate with technical readiness to teach, unless it is accompanied by adequate practice hours.

Furthermore, this finding contrasts with much of the general literature, which typically supports the influence of psychological capital on work outcomes (Clarke, 2018; Ingusci et al., 2026; Liu & Zhang, 2025; Zhang, 2026). However, in teaching, the impact of psychological capital may be more pronounced on future job satisfaction than on initial pre-employment readiness (Jia & Yue, 2025; Jiang & Yuan, 2025; Liu, 2025). This implies that for students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and

Education at University X, work readiness is more directly shaped by proactive personality factors than by psychological capital mechanisms.

The test results indicate that psychological capital is unable to act as a mediator in the relationship between proactive personality and work readiness for students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at University X. Statistically, this mediation failure stems from the insignificant path from psychological capital to work readiness, resulting in a break in the chain of influence from proactive personality on the intervening variable. This finding confirms that for students in Samarinda, possessing positive psychological resources such as optimism and resilience does not automatically translate into practical readiness to enter the teaching profession (Frydenberg, 2018; Rahayu, Rifayanti, et al., 2025) and self-determination (Rahayu, Rifayanti, et al., 2025).

One critical reason psychological capital did not predict work readiness in this sample is the unique characteristics of the teaching profession, which place greater emphasis on pedagogical competence and subject-matter mastery. Student teachers may feel prepared for the job because they have completed Field Experience Practice (PPL) and micro-teaching courses, which provide direct technical readiness. Task-specific self-efficacy is a stronger predictor of readiness than general psychological capital. In this case, a proactive personality encourages students to master these technical skills directly without relying on abstract internal psychological states (Çar et al., 2025; Ntarmah & Yaro, 2025).

This insignificance can also be explained by Career Construction theory, which states that career adaptability is more influenced by concrete actions than by psychological disposition alone (Savickas, 2005). Students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at University X likely face the realities of the job market in Samarinda, which places greater value on certification and formal qualifications. Therefore, even though a student possesses strong hope and resilience, these factors are considered "supporting" attributes rather than primary "determinants" of work readiness, compared with personal initiative (proactivity) in building professional networks and teaching portfolios.

This theoretical failure to mediate supports the notion that proactive personality has a very strong,

independent (direct) predictive effect on work readiness, transcending internal psychological mechanisms. This aligns with the view that proactive individuals tend to engage directly in environmental improvements and self-development without intermediaries.

The results of this study indicate that proactive personality has a strong and direct influence on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) at University X. Students who can take initiative, seek opportunities, and act proactively tend to be better prepared to enter the teaching profession. Proactive personality also significantly influences psychological capital, such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. However, psychological capital does not significantly influence work readiness and therefore cannot act as a mediator between proactive personality and work readiness. This confirms that student work readiness is more determined by practical experience and technical skills than by internal psychological conditions.

The implications of this study underscore the importance of developing student proactivity through organizational involvement, training, self-development activities, and increased teaching experience. Educational institutions need to strengthen curricula that foster proactive behavior, including project-based learning, intensive microteaching, and mentoring programs. Schools, as users of FKIP graduates, can incorporate proactivity as a recruitment indicator. Limitations of this study include the use of a single faculty/university sample. The relatively small sample size (N=100) for PLS-SEM with a mediation model. Future research is expected to explore not only one faculty/one university but more. It can take at least three islands in Indonesia to obtain larger sample sizes, in addition to other variables such as career adaptability, specific teaching efficacy, practical experience, and organizational support as potential mediating variables in the work readiness model of prospective teacher students.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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