

Methods of Da'wah in Strengthening Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools

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Keywords

Methods of Da'wah, Religious Moderation, Islamic Schools, USG

Abstract

This article aims to identify da'wah strategies in fostering religious moderation among students at MAN 2 Parepare through the strengthening of cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation skills. The approach used is action research, with data collection methods including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), interviews, and observation. Data analysis was conducted using the Urgency, Seriousness, Growth (USG) approach. The research findings indicate that the Bil Hikmah (preaching with wisdom) and Tadarruj (gradual) methods received the highest scores at 4.88 points, highlighting an urgent need to strengthen these methods among teachers. In terms of student development, outbound activities proved to be an effective strategy. The 'Blindfolded Maze' outbound activity is prioritised to build students' cooperation skills, whilst the 'Cross-Cultural Cooking Day' serves as the primary means to strengthen students' assimilation. Furthermore, the 'Cultural Exchange Simulation' is recommended to enhance students' acculturation skills, which contributes to the formation of a moderate religious character. These findings contribute to providing practical guidance for enhancing religious moderation through innovative da'wah approaches and outbound activities relevant to students' needs. The implications of this research are the need to adopt and strengthen da'wah strategies based on real-world needs to foster a generation that is religiously moderate and capable of living amidst cultural diversity.

Kata Kunci

Metode Dakwah, Moderasi Beragama, Sekolah Islam, USG

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi dakwah yang dalam membangun moderasi beragama siswa di MAN 2 Parepare melalui penguatan kemampuan kerja sama, asimilasi, dan akulturasi. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah action research, dengan metode pengumpulan data melalui Focus Group Discussion (FGD), wawancara, dan observasi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan Urgency, Seriousness, Growth (USG). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode dakwah Bil Hikmah (dakwah dengan kebijaksanaan) dan metode Tadarruj (bertahap) mendapatkan

posisi tertinggi dengan skor 4,88 poin, menunjukkan kebutuhan mendesak akan penguatan metode ini di kalangan guru. Dalam aspek pengembangan siswa, outbound menjadi strategi yang efektif. Outbound Blindfolded Maze (labirin dengan mata tertutup) diprioritaskan untuk membangun kemampuan kerja sama siswa, sedangkan Cross-Cultural Cooking Day menjadi sarana utama untuk memperkuat asimilasi siswa. Selain itu, Cultural Exchange Simulation direkomendasikan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan akulturasi siswa, yang berkontribusi pada pembentukan karakter moderasi beragama. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi dalam memberikan panduan praktis untuk meningkatkan moderasi beragama melalui pendekatan dakwah yang inovatif dan kegiatan outbound yang relevan dengan kebutuhan siswa. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah perlunya adopsi dan penguatan strategi dakwah yang berbasis pada kebutuhan nyata di lapangan untuk menciptakan generasi yang moderat secara beragama dan mampu hidup dalam keragaman budaya.

Introduction

Religious moderation is a central issue within the context of Indonesia's multi-religious and multicultural society (Mashuri et al., 2024; Rohman, 2021; Saifuddin, 2019). The phenomenon of rising intolerance and radicalism, particularly within educational settings (Alim & Munib, 2021; Muhamad et al., 2021; Umar Al Faruq & Dwi Noviani, 2021), has caused deep concern. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia indicates that the level of exposure to radicalism among students remains quite significant (Dewindah, 2019).

Meanwhile, a study by the Setara Institute at (2023) regarding the attitudes of upper secondary school students towards tolerance in five major cities in Indonesia found that 70.2% of teenagers or upper secondary school students fell into the category of tolerant teenagers, 24.2% were passively intolerant teenagers, 5% were actively intolerant teenagers and 0.6% were teenagers at risk of exposure. Meanwhile, a study by Darmawati and Thalib(2016) on the responses of students at State Madrasah Aliyah in Makassar regarding radical ideology revealed that, although to a small extent, respondents demonstrated radical attitudes when addressing religious issues.

Given the trends in exposure to attitudes of tolerance outlined above, there remains a potential for students to be exposed to intolerant attitudes, thereby emphasising the importance of religious moderation education in schools, particularly Islamic schools, as part of character development for the younger generation. Islamic schools play a strategic role in reinforcing the values of tolerance, solidarity, and social justice. However, the implementation of religious moderation through da'wah methods in Islamic schools still faces various challenges. Previous research trends, such as (Aslati et al., 2022) indicate

that religious moderation has been integrated through policies, training, and Community Service (KKN) themes, but there is no specific approach at the school level.

Another trend in the literature, research on digital da'wah (Rumata et al., 2021) highlights the challenges of using technology to convey messages of moderation, particularly among the younger generation. On the other hand, demonstrates the success of digital technology-based da'wah education in enhancing moderation literacy; another study (Yuliasih, 2023) examines da'wah management through a systematic literature review for religious moderation, yet it lacks the use of an experience-based learning approach.

Despite various related studies, there remains a gap in the literature regarding relevant and effective experience-based da'wah models in Islamic schools. Strategic and practical da'wah approaches, such as the Bil Hikmah and Tadarruj methods, in internalising the values of religious moderation through learning activities are still rarely discussed in research. Furthermore, there has been little research integrating practical learning activities, such as outdoor team-building exercises, to foster cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation among students within the context of religious moderation.

This study aims to identify strategic and practical models and methods of da'wah to strengthen religious moderation in Islamic schools. This approach integrates classical da'wah methods with experience-based learning activities relevant to students' needs. This study not only makes a theoretical contribution by filling a gap in the literature but also offers practical solutions for teachers and leaders of Islamic schools in fostering a moderate and tolerant younger generation. Thus, this study represents a significant step in supporting religious moderation character education in Indonesia, whilst addressing the increasingly complex challenges of globalisation.

Method

This study employs an *action research* approach that is collaborative, participatory, and oriented towards solving real-world problems in the field (Lawson et al., 2015; Stringer & Aragón, 2020). The choice of this approach is based on its relevance to developing contextual da'wah strategies for strengthening religious moderation, as *action research* enables a recurring cycle of reflection–action–evaluation between researchers, teachers, and students (Bleicher, 2014; Mejía et al., 2007). The units of analysis for the research were Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and students at State Senior High School (MAN) 2 Parepare, given that teachers act as *agents of change* in the process of transferring religious values, whilst students are the subjects of the internalisation of values of moderation.

Data were collected through three main complementary techniques. Firstly, *Focus Group Discussions* (FGDs) were conducted involving PAI teachers, extracurricular supervisors, and student representatives to explore perceptions, experiences, and innovative ideas regarding effective da'wah methods within the school environment.

Secondly, in-depth *interviews* using a *semi-structured* format were conducted with teachers and students selected through purposive sampling to gain a deeper understanding of da'wah practices and the challenges faced. Third, participatory observation was carried out during the implementation of da'wah activities and outbound programmes such as *the Blindfolded Maze*, *Cross-Cultural Cooking Day*, and *Cultural Exchange Simulation*, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to directly observe the dynamics of interaction, communication patterns, and the learning process regarding the value of religious moderation.

1 Table. Scoring Criteria

Scoring System	Criteria
5	Very Good
4	Good
3	Average
2	Fairly Good
1	Poor

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis, 2024

Data analysis was conducted using the *Urgency, Seriousness, Growth* (USG) approach, a widely used priority assessment method in strategic planning. The *urgency* criterion was used to assess the level of urgency for implementing a particular da'wah method, *seriousness* to measure the magnitude of the impact if the issue is not addressed immediately, and *growth* to evaluate the potential for positive development that can be achieved through the implementation of that method. Each criterion was scored using a 1–5 Likert scale, after which a total score was calculated to determine the most relevant strategic priorities. Data validity was strengthened through methodological triangulation (FGDs, interviews, observations) and source triangulation (teachers and students), as well as *member checking* to ensure the interpretation of findings aligned with the participants' perspectives.

Results and Discussion

In this study, da'wah served as the strategy for fostering religious moderation among students at MAN 2 Parepare. Students' capacity for religious moderation was measured across three categories: cooperation, assimilation and acculturation. Several da'wah methods were selected during the internal FGD of the research team regarding the methods to be applied at MAN 2 Parepare, including:

Table2 . Da'wah Methods

No	Da'wah Method	Description/Characteristics/Examples
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1	Bil Hikmah Method (Dakwah through Wisdom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description: Using a wise approach that is appropriate to the circumstances and situation of the audience.▪ Characteristics: Gentle, understanding, and respectful of others' views.▪ Example: Delivering da'wah to people whilst taking cultural sensitivities into account.
2	The Mau'izhah Hasanah Method (Dakwah through Good Advice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description: Offering good advice with the aim of encouraging virtue and steering clear of vice.▪ Characteristics: Personal, compassionate, and non-coercive.▪ Example: Offering advice to young people on the dangers of drugs based on religious teachings.
3	The Mujadalah Method (Constructive Discussion or Debate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description: Using logical arguments and strong evidence in discussions or debates to defend religious truth.▪ Characteristics: Emphasising logic and evidence, and conducted politely and without emotion.▪ Example: A debate between a preacher and other participants regarding the concept of divinity.
4	The Tadarruj Method (Gradual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description: Delivering da'wah in stages, starting from basic teachings to more complex ones.▪ Characteristics: Systematic, unhurried, and adapted to the audience's level of understanding.▪ Example: Teaching the fundamentals of Islamic faith.
5	The Targhib wa Tarhib Method (Motivation and Warning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description: A method that employs an approach involving motivation (targhib) regarding the rewards for the obedient and warnings (tarhib) regarding the punishment for those who disobey.▪ Characteristics: Balancing hope and fear when conveying religious teachings.▪ Example: A lecture on the virtues of religious moderation.

6	The Halqah Method (Small Group Study Circles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Description: Da'wah conducted in small groups, usually in a more intimate and personal setting. ▪ Characteristics: Interactive, more in-depth, and allowing for direct question-and-answer sessions. ▪ Example: Study sessions in homes or mosques with a limited number of participants.
7	Amaliyah Method (Hands-on Practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Description: Teaching religious teachings through direct practice, encouraging the audience to participate in worship or acts of kindness. ▪ Characteristics: Practical, immediately applicable, and providing concrete examples. ▪ Example: Encouraging people to pray together immediately or carry out charitable activities.
8	The Sirah Method (History and Narratives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Description: Using historical narratives, particularly from the lives of the prophets and prominent figures in Islam, as a means of da'wah. ▪ Characteristics: Inspirational, setting an example, and easy to understand. ▪ Example: A lecture on the story of the struggles of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions in spreading Islam.

Analysis of the use of da'wah methods conducted with 8 FGD participants using the criteria "Has been applied" and "Has not yet been applied". The result is that 98% of the da'wah methods from Table 4 above have generally been implemented, either directly or indirectly.

Table3 . Analysis of the Use of Da'wah Methods: FGD Results

No	Da'wah Method	Percentage (%)
1	Bil Hikmah Method (Dawah through Wisdom)	100%
2	Mau'izhah Hasanah Method (Dakwah through Good Advice)	100%
3	The Mujadalah Method (Constructive Discussion or Debate)	88%
4	The Tadarruj Method (Gradual)	100%
5	Targhib wa Tarhib Method (Motivation and Warning)	100%

6	The Halqah Method (Small Group Study Circles)	100%
7	Practical Method (Hands-on Practice)	100%
8	Sirah Method (History and Narratives)	100%
Total		98

The table above shows that the method with the lowest implementation rate is the Mujadalah method (Constructive Discussion or Debate), at 88%. Details of the analysis of the implementation of da'wah methods at MAN 2 Parepare can be seen above. The issue identified from the FGD results is that, in terms of quality, teachers do not yet fully understand the substance of the eight da'wah methods; consequently, FGD participants expressed the need for capacity building for teachers at MAN 2 through training and awareness-raising. The training in question can be effectively delivered both directly and indirectly. Below is a transcript from the FGD by one of the participants, who stated that:

“In terms of terminology, we do not yet understand these da'wah methods, but after reading the descriptions in this instrument, we have already implemented them. I think we teachers need to receive training, both in person and remotely.”

The direct and indirect training referred to by the FGD participant are, firstly, direct training in the form of conventional (face-to-face) training. According to the FGD participant, face-to-face training is more effective because it allows for direct, *real-time* and dynamic interaction. This means that face-to-face meetings require direct body language and facial expressions, and the trainer can use a variety of approaches tailored to each participant. Distractions can occur when training participants are not focused on the material, as the trainer can directly control the atmosphere among participants; for example, if participants are talking amongst themselves, which may disturb others, or if participants are busy using their mobile phones, and so on. Another key point regarding face-to-face training, according to the FGD participants, is the ability to immediately practise using da'wah methods as directed by the trainer, as both the trainer and participants are physically present in the room.

Analysis of the need for da'wah methods following the FGD, using the instrument provided by the research team, showed that on average, FGD participants rated the need as “very high” or an average of 4.66. In particular, the Bil Hikmah (Dakwah with Wisdom) and Tadarruj (Gradual) methods scored 4.88 points, ranking first. This serves as a key note for researchers in planning the training interventions to be implemented based on the findings of this study. Below is the ranking table of needs regarding FGD participants' interest in dakwah methods in this study:

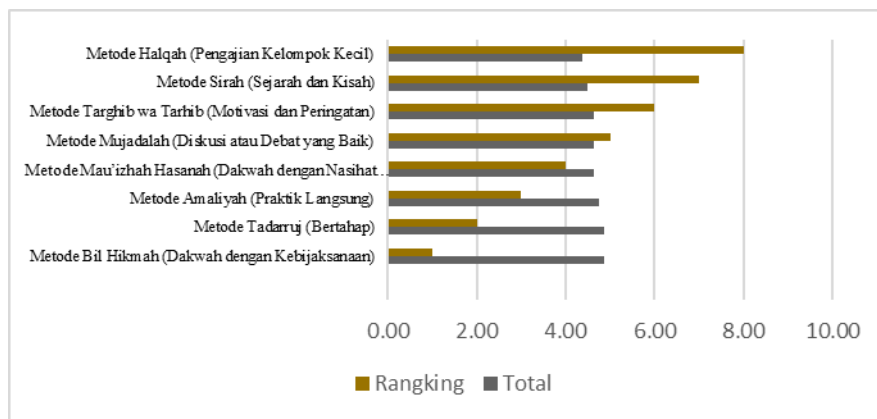
Table 4. Table of Ranking of Needs Regarding FGD Participants' Interests

No	Dawah Method	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Bil Hikmah Method (Dawah through Wisdom)	4.88	1
2	The Mau'izhah Hasanah Method (Dakwah through Good Advice)	4.88	1
3	The Mujadalah Method (Constructive Discussion or Debate)	4.75	2
4	The Tadarruj Method (Gradual)	4.63	2

5	The Targhib wa Tarhib Method (Motivation and Warning)	4.63	3
6	The Halqah Method (Small Group Study Circles)	4.63	3
7	Practical Method (Hands-on Practice)	4.50	4
8	Sirah Method (History and Narratives)	4.38	5
Total		4.66	

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis, 2024

1 Chart. Needs Analysis Chart



Source: Researcher's Data Analysis, 2024

According to FGD participants, firstly: the advantages of the Bil Hikmah (Dakwah with Wisdom) method can be viewed from two perspectives—both the teacher's and the students'. The advantage of the Bil Hikmah (Dakwah with Wisdom) method for teachers is that they can serve as role models for students; consequently, teachers are always required to act wisely during classroom learning processes, behaving with wisdom both in teaching and when assessing students. The consequence of a teacher behaving wisely is that they earn the respect of their students, which can enhance harmony at MAN 2. The headteacher of MAN 2 agreed with this point, as expressed during the FGD forum.

The advantage of the Bil Hikmah (Dakwah with Wisdom) method for students is that they can logically and carefully absorb the learning material because it is presented in a wise manner, particularly regarding religious values. Students can enhance their emotional skills wisely through ' ' by emulating their teachers' behaviour or the examples of wise conduct from the prophets and religious scholars presented in classroom lessons. Secondly: the advantage of the Tadarruj (Gradual) Method, according to FGD participants, is that it requires step-by-step learning so that teachers can build students' abilities in a continuous and organised manner, starting from the easy stages and progressing to the more complex ones. This means that teachers must prepare specialised materials that are integrated with the curriculum and the Lesson Plan (RPP). This method cultivates teachers' patience in guiding students in accordance with the planned da'wah materials in the classroom.

The discussion of these research findings reveals patterns emerging regarding the effectiveness of da'wah methods in fostering religious moderation at MAN 2 Parepare. One of the key findings is the high priority placed on the Bil Hikmah (da'wah with wisdom) and Tadarruj (gradual approach) methods, indicating an urgent need to

strengthen the implementation of these methods among teachers. This indicates that da'wah conducted through a wise and gradual approach is capable of creating a more inclusive atmosphere that respects the diversity of understanding among students. Teachers who prioritise wisdom in delivering religious material can influence students' perspectives on religious moderation, which indirectly contributes to the development of tolerant and open-minded attitudes.

The significance of these findings further illustrates that the promotion of religious moderation does not rely solely on instructional or conventional da'wah methods. Outdoor activities such as the Blindfolded Maze, Cross-Cultural Cooking Day, and Cultural Exchange Simulation play a vital role in developing students' skills in cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation. This innovation provides evidence that direct experiences involving social and cultural activities can practically reinforce the values of religious moderation. This leads to the understanding that the teaching of religious moderation cannot be separated from the students' socio-cultural context, and that an experience-based approach is a relevant method in religious education in the contemporary era.

However, there are several anomalies in the findings of this study that warrant attention. One of these is that although most da'wah methods have been implemented, there is a lack of optimisation in the application of the Mujadalah method (constructive discussion or debate), which only achieved a score of 88%. This finding illustrates the challenges in implementing methods that are more grounded in rational dialogue and well-reasoned arguments. This may be due to some teachers' lack of readiness to manage in-depth discussions or students' inability to express their views in a constructive and polite manner. This indicates that whilst there is a good understanding of the importance of discussion in da'wah, its implementation requires more intensive training and the strengthening of critical communication skills.

In analysing the findings of this research, the concept employed is the theory of religious moderation (, which emphasises the importance of strengthening the values of tolerance and inclusivity within the context of religious diversity. This concept links religious moderation with character education that prioritises wisdom, patience, and openness in addressing differences. Based on the research findings, the Bil Hikmah (preaching with wisdom) and Tadarruj (gradual approach) methods have proven to be key in fostering religious moderation among students. These results align with theories of religious moderation that emphasise the importance of an unhurried approach, tailored to the context and understanding of the audience. Through these methods, students can embrace the values of religious moderation more wisely and gradually, in line with their level of understanding and readiness. Consequently, these findings confirm and reinforce the theory, as they demonstrate that da'wah conducted with wisdom and in stages can strengthen students' understanding of religious moderation.

Furthermore, outdoor activities such as the Blindfolded Maze, Cross-Cultural Cooking Day, and Cultural Exchange Simulation identified in this study contribute to strengthening students' skills in cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation. This can be seen as a direct application of experiential learning theory, which emphasises the importance of learning that involves students' active engagement in real-life situations. This concept argues that learning involving direct experience is more effective in shaping students' attitudes and values because they can internalise knowledge within a more relevant social context. These findings expand on experience-based learning theory by

demonstrating that these activities are not only beneficial for enhancing social skills but also for fostering a more inclusive character of religious moderation among students.

However, although the Mujadalah method (constructive discussion or debate) scored slightly lower than other methods, these findings challenge the theory of da'wah communication, which emphasises the importance of rational dialogue and argumentation based on strong logic and evidence. In practice, whilst there is recognition of the importance of discussion and debate in da'wah, its implementation remains limited by the ability of teachers and students to communicate constructively and critically. This indicates that although the concept of da'wah communication views debate as an effective method, in practice, its application requires better communication skills from both teachers and students.

The findings of this study align with research by ' , which revealed that da'wah based on religious moderation can be strengthened through an experience-based approach involving social interaction and activities relevant to students' daily lives. Just as this study found that outdoor activities, such as the Blindfolded Maze, Cross-Cultural Cooking Day, and Cultural Exchange Simulation, are capable of strengthening students' cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation skills, the research by Aslati et al. also emphasises the importance of experience-based activities in reinforcing the values of tolerance and religious moderation. This study is also consistent with the findings of ' , which examined digital da'wah as a means of enhancing understanding of religious moderation among young people. Although this study focuses more on the use of digital technology, both share a common focus on developing a da'wah approach responsive to the needs of the younger generation.

More broadly, these findings are also in line with trends in religious education that increasingly emphasise the importance of approaches based on students' active engagement in experiential learning. As highlighted by Yuliasih(2023) , experiential da'wah education is now increasingly recognised as a more effective approach to fostering attitudes of religious moderation. This global trend underscores the importance of integrating learning that prioritises active participation and self-reflection, which was also observed in this study through outdoor activities and cultural simulations.

The practical implications of this study's findings are highly relevant to da'wah practice in Islamic schools, particularly in fostering a moderate and tolerant generation. The application of the Bil Hikmah and Tadarruj da'wah methods, which prioritise wisdom and a gradual approach, can serve as a guide for teachers to convey religious values in a more inclusive manner, aligned with the development of students' understanding. Furthermore, the integration of experience-based activities, such as outdoor activities and cultural simulations, can be utilised as an effective method to strengthen pupils' social skills within a context of diversity. These findings offer a more practical approach to Islamic education, one that not only teaches theory but also encourages pupils to experience and internalise the values of religious moderation in their daily lives.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on religious moderation by integrating traditional da'wah methods and experience-based learning as strategies for shaping students' moderate and tolerant character. This study also broadens our understanding of the importance of an approach based on direct experience in religious education, which is more relevant to the students' socio-cultural context. Thus, these findings make a significant contribution to the development of more adaptive and contextual theories of da'wah and Islamic education. The limitations of this study lie in

its scope, which is restricted to a single madrasah, and the relatively short duration of the research, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of the location and duration of the study in order to assess the sustainability of the effects of this da'wah strategy within a broader and more diverse context.

Conclusion

This study aims to identify effective da'wah methods for strengthening religious moderation at MAN 2 Parepare, with a focus on enhancing students' skills in cooperation, assimilation and acculturation. Key findings indicate that the Bil Hikmah (da'wah with wisdom) and Tadarruj (gradual approach) methods received the highest scores, signalling an urgent need to strengthen the implementation of these two methods among teachers. Furthermore, outdoor activities such as the Blindfolded Maze, Cross-Cultural Cooking Day, and Cultural Exchange Simulation proved effective in strengthening students' cooperation, assimilation, and acculturation skills, which also contribute to the development of a character of religious moderation. This study makes a significant contribution by offering evidence-based practical guidance for Islamic schools in designing da'wah strategies that not only prioritise religious values but are also responsive to students' socio-cultural needs. These findings support the development of an adaptive, inclusive model of Islamic education oriented towards fostering a moderate generation capable of living harmoniously amidst diversity. However, this study has limitations, namely that its scope is restricted to a single madrasah, meaning the results may not fully represent the diversity of Islamic school contexts in Indonesia. The short duration of the study also limits the evaluation of the long-term impact of the implemented da'wah strategies. Therefore, future research should expand the geographical scope by involving various regions with different socio-cultural characteristics and include more participants from various levels of education. A longitudinal research design is also recommended to assess the sustainability of the effects of da'wah strategies on students' religious moderation, whilst a quantitative approach can be used to strengthen the validity of the findings and provide a more generalisable picture of the effectiveness of da'wah methods in various Islamic school contexts.

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