
Assessment of the Impacts of School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Retention and Academic Performance in Nomadic schools of Jigawa State

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Abstract

The study examined the impacts of school feeding programme on pupils' enrolment, rate of school completion or retention and academic performance in nomadic schools of Jigawa state. It was conducted using descriptive survey design using a structured questionnaire and pupils' academic records from schools. The pupils from class three, class masters and head teachers participated in the study. The participants were drawn using random sampling process from the nomadic primary schools across the three senatorial district of Jigawa state. The study revealed an improvement in pupils' enrolment, attendance, school completion rate and academic performance following the introduction of the school feeding programme. It was recommended for government and other agencies to look for the possibility of sustaining the feeding programme in schools. Parents and pupils should also be enlightened about the benefits of nomadic education as well.

Key words: School feeding, Retention, Academic performance, Nomadic schools

Introduction

Once children are hungry, their chances that they would attend school are limited (Senesie et al., 2022). Hunger can have both physical and psychological effects that make learning difficult among children (Bekidusa & Kisimbii, 2020). It was revealed that children are likely to quit school because of the priority to deal with their immediate survival needs before they get ready for schooling (Senesie et al., 2022). Therefore, low school enrollment, low class attendance and high student drop-outs are problems in child education among poor households especially in areas of high food insecurity and because of these reasons, the level of education attainment could also be low in many developing countries (Senesie et al., 2022).

School Feeding Programme (SFP) is a strategy for temporary control of hunger among pupils in schools. The strategy is shown to have great contributions in the improvement of pupil's enrolment and retention. School feeding is also considered to have a positive effect on learning (Mwendwa & Gori, 2019). School feeding programmes have been introduced in many developed and developing countries of the world to address the issue of poverty, stimulate school enrolment, and enhance pupils' performance (Taylor & Ogbogu, 2016). The positive impact associated with school feeding programme has made most of the African nations to introduce it in most of their primary schools (Awojobi, 2019). The goal of the programme in the Nigerian context is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school children and enhance the achievement of Universal Basic Education. It is one of the 4-key interventions of the federal government of Nigeria under the National Social Investment Program which seeks to boost school enrollment, child nutrition and local economic activities across thousands of communities in the country (Tribune, 2021). The program at its core is designed to address poverty in all forms and is a collaboration between the federal government and states where the federal government is responsible for the release of funds, guidelines, policies and monitoring, while the state carries out the day-to-day implementation including procurement of food items, selection of cooks and vendors who prepare, cook and serve the meals for the pupils. Though addressing cross-cutting issues of hunger, malnutrition and poverty, it was revealed that over 9 million pupils on the program being fed by over 100,000 cooks across the nation (Tribune, 2021).

Jigawa state had 545 nomadic schools across the 27 local government areas of the state. More than 70% of the 381 nomadic schools in the state have buildings with furniture as well as teaching materials to educate the children of the nomads. A lot had been achieved regarding educating the children (Alabira, 2021). In Jigawa State, School Feeding Programme was launched to feed primary one to three pupils with a total number of 641,295 pupils across the 27 local government areas of the state. In specific terms, in Jigawa State, school feeding programme is taking place in 2,180 primary schools, involving 490,874 pupils and 5,267 cooks (Tribune, 2021). It was on this basis that this study seeks to investigate the influence of school feeding programme on the rate of pupils' enrollment, attendance, retention or school completion and academic performance in nomadic primary schools of Jigawa state.

Nigeria is rated among the countries which have the lowest school enrolment rates in the world (Bekidusa & Kisimbii, 2020). This may likely be linked to the rate of hunger that permeates the country. Hunger can have both physical and psychological effects on children that make learning difficult (Bekidusa & Kisimbii, 2020). Pupils who are hungry during school hours cannot learn effectively (Awojobi, 2019). School Feeding Programme (SFP), subjected to a pupil's school attendance, is a common way of enhancing school participation

and also promoting learning. It was reported that school meals have the possibility of reducing short term hunger and aid pupils' concentration to learn (Awojobi, 2019). However, school feeding programme was also considered by most studies as a factor that enhanced pupils' academic performance (Awojobi, 2019).

Attention is among the factors that enhance learning. Whereas, hungry children cannot pay attention in class (Mary, 2018). It has shown that primary needs or certain minimum requirements such as food are essential to enhance school enrolment, attendance and performance of learners (Mary, 2018). In the past, Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) observed that implementation of school feeding programme is associated with increase in enrolment, particularly for girls. In many countries, such as Brazil, Philippines, Cambodia, Mali, El Salvador, Indonesia, Ghana, Bangladesh, Ecuador and others where school feeding programmes are implemented, evidences reveals that the programmes have increased enrolment and attendance rates over the years.

It was reported that an improvement of the overall school enrolment rate and an increased attendance was observed from 73% to 95% following school feeding programme among participating schools. Also, it was noted that students undergone their study via school feeding programmes have the potential for improving their performance, because it enabled them attend school regularly and studied more effectively (Taylor & Ogbogu , 2016). In Bangladesh, for example, the study carried out by the International Food Policy Research Institute on the effects of school feeding programme found that the programme raised school enrolment rates by 14.2%, reduced the probability of dropping out of school by 7.5% and increased school attendance by 1.3 days a month (Taylor & Ogbogu , 2016).

Recently past, Senesie et al. (2022) reported that school feeding encouraged majority of parents to enroll their children to school at an early age. Also noted that the increase in school enrolment was attributed to the introduction of school feeding programme at various primary schools. Their discovery revealed that parents motivated to enroll their children without being forced by the school management. Similarly, their study demonstrated an increase in the performance of the pupils after the commencement of the school feeding program. Their study further revealed that head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents noted an increased in pupils' enrolment and attendance after the introduction of school feeding programme. The provision of food acted as a strong incentive for children to attend school on a regular basis (Senesie et al., 2022).

The availability of school meals is considered to have a positive effect on cognitive development and learning as a number of studies have maintained (Mwendwa & Gori, 2019). School feeding programs are associated with retention of pupils across the world; hence there is existence of the program in many education systems across the world (Mwendwa & Gori, 2019)For example, Erukudi and Edabu (2020) in their study revealed that food adequacy has statistically significant effect of school enrolment in Early Child Education (ECE). The study further demonstrated that food adequacy significantly and positively relate with children enrolment in ECE centres in Turkana Central Sub County, Turkana County, Kenya. Based on these findings, the study concludes that increasing food adequacy will lead to increase in children enrolment in ECE centres in Turkana Central Sub County, Turkana County, Kenya.

School feeding programme is essential in any country whether it was developed or developing. The primary assumption of SFP is that education and learning depend on good nutrition. School health and nutrition also determined factors that kept children out of school

and reduced their ability to learn effectively. SFP was mainly implemented with the purpose of achieving the following results; Increase enrolment and attendance, alleviate short term-hunger, improve nutritional status and improve micronutrient status and increase learner's performance (Mary, 2018). This simple strategy of school feeding cans double primary school enrolment in one year as earlier revealed by Falade et al. (2012).

There are number of studies that have established a link between school feeding and school attendance. Another study that was conducted by Cornejo in Chile to find out the attendance level of pupils' in relation to school feeding, that targeted dis-advantaged pupils in primary education found to be more cost effective than others in reducing absenteeism and dropouts. According to the study conducted in Northern Ghana by the USAID, school feeding programme had a great impact on educational development. Among the practical effects include; pupil retention, perfect school attendance, proven academic achievement, and girl child retention (Mary, 2018).

There was an increase in school enrolment and attendance in most selected basic schools after the commencement of the school feeding programme. Other contributory factors like: free primary education, parental encouragement, external support, availability of water and sanitation. On the contrary for the few schools that recorded a decrease in school enrolment and attendance, factors at play were attributed to the poverty, long distance, nomadic life, sicknesses, household chores, negative attitude towards education and initiation ceremonies. School Feeding had impacted positively on the three variables; the increase in enrolment, encouraged pupils to attend and stay in school, prevent drop-outs and stabilize the attendance, brought back to school the children who had left due to hunger, improved the attention span and ultimately the learning capacity of pupils by relieving short-term hunger (Mary, 2018).

Akwe (2018) stated that low enrolment and relatively high rate of dropout is another factor capable of affecting nomadic education in Nasarawa and Plateau States Nigeria. Children were never encouraged to attend nomadic primary schools rather they are engaged in the tasks of rearing animals at the expense of schooling.

School feeding programme has been adopted in many countries throughout the world to fight short-term hunger by ensuring at least one daily nutritious meal to support access to education. The high level of food insecurity, significant incidence of malnutrition and economic meltdown all combine to make school feeding relevant. In the poorest pockets of the world, this simple strategy can double primary school enrolment in one year, as is happening in Nigeria. For a child suffering from hunger, going to school is not important; having enough food to eat is. Among the poor, there is often not enough food at home, and most schools in the developing countries do not have a canteen or cafeteria. On empty stomach, children become easily distracted and have problems concentrating on the school lessons (Falade et al., 2012).

Methodology

Jigawa state consists of three senatorial districts namely: Jigawa South-West, Jigawa North-East and Jigawa North-West. Jigawa South-West consists of seven LGAs (Birnin Kudu, Buji, Dutse, Gwaram, Kiyawa, Jahun, Miga). Jigawa North-East consists of eight LGAs (Auyo, Birniwa, Guri, Hadejia, Kaugama, K/Hausa, K/Kasamma, M/Madori) Jigawa North-West consist of twelve LGAs (Babura, Gagarawa, Garki, Gwiwa, Kazaure, Maigatari, Roni, Ringim, Sule Tankarkar, Taura, Yankwashi, Gumel).

Four (4) nomadic schools were selected from each of the three (3) senatorial districts of Jigawa state using purposive and random sampling technique. In all, twelve (12) nomadic schools across the state involved in this study. The study was conducted using survey design with the use of structured questionnaire and pupils' academic records from schools. The pupils from class three, class masters and head teachers participated in the study. An attendance records from schools was used to determine the attendance rate and other documentation (or records of tests and terminal examinations) was utilized to determine the performance level of pupils. Two (2) different structured questionnaires were administered to discover the influence of feeding programme in schools, one for pupils and the other for class masters and head teachers respectively.

Results

Table 1: Demographics Characteristics of Participants

Pupils of Pri. 3 class	N	%
Male	62	51.2%
Female	59	48.8%
Average age of pupil	9 yrs	
Head Teacher	6	50%
Class master	6	50%

Majority of the participants were male pupils representing 51.2%, followed by the female pupils consisting of fifty-nine representing 49.8%. Pupils of primary class three with average age of nine years.

Table 2: Gasatanni Nomadic Pupils' Responses on the Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	0	10	0	10
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	10	0	10	0
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	10	0	10	0
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	10	0	10	0

The table indicated that in Gasatanni Nomadic School, one hundred per cent (100%) of the pupils claimed to have attended school regularly because of the food supplied to them in school. Also, twenty of the pupils regardless of gender (100%) revealed that school feeding programme assist them in reducing absenteeism. While (100%) of the pupils across gender claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. Similarly, twenty pupils representing 100% revealed to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding would be given every day.

Table 3: Garin Dutse Nomadic Pupils’ Responses on Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	10	0	10	0
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	10	0	7	3
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	10	0	7	3
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	10	0	9	1

The table has shown that in Garin Dutse Nomadic School 100 % of the pupils for both males and females attended school regularly because of the food that is given to them. Ten of the males (50%) of the pupils revealed that school feeding programme helps them in decreasing absenteeism. Seven of the females (35%) reported to have decreased in school absenteeism because of school feeding programme. Also, 17 (85%) of the pupils claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. Similarly, 19 pupils (95%) revealed to have continued attending school until they completed class six, provided the school feeding programme would be continued every day.

Table 4: Maiso Nomadic Pupils’ Responses on the Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	10	0	11	0
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	10	0	11	0
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	10	0	11	0
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	6	4	7	4

From this table it can be seen that in Maiso Nomadic School twenty-one (21) of the pupils representing (100%) attended school regularly because of the provision of food supplied to them in the school. Twenty-one (21) representing 100% of the pupils revealed that school feeding programme assist them in reducing absenteeism. Similarly, all of the pupils (100%) claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. Similarly, 19 (90.4%) reported to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding is given every day.

Table 5: Ilorawa Nomadic Pupils’ responses on the Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	12	2	7	0
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	13	1	7	0
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	10	4	4	3
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	10	4	6	1

In this table it can be observed that in Ilorawa 90.4% of the pupils attended school regularly because of the food supplied to them. While, 17 (80.9%) of the pupils revealed that school feeding programme assist them in reducing absenteeism. Also, 66.7 % of the pupils claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. Similarly, 16 (76.1%) revealed to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding programme would be continued.

Table 6: Siminti Nomadic Pupils' Responses on the Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	10	0	9	0
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	10	0	8	1
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	10	0	9	0
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	7	3	6	3

The table has shown that in Siiminti 19 of the pupils representing 100% of the pupils attended school regularly because of the food provision in school. Eighteen (94.7%) of the pupils reported that school feeding programme assist them in decreasing school absenteeism. Also, 19 (100%) of the pupils claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. Similarly, 19 (100%) revealed to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding programme is continued.

Table 7: Kafitu Nomadic Pupils' Responses on the Impact of School Feeding on School Attendance

Variable	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I attend school because food is given regularly.	4	0	15	1
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	4	0	15	1
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	4	0	13	3
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	4	0	13	1

From this it can be noted that in Kafitu Nomadic, 19 of the pupils representing 95% claimed to have regularly attended school, because of the food that is given to them. Similarly, 95% of the pupils revealed that school feeding programme assist them in decreasing school absenteeism. Also, 17 (85%) of the pupils claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. While, 19 (95%) reported to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding would be continued every day.

Table 8: Impact of School Feeding Programme across the Nomadic Schools

Variables	Male		Female		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
I attend school because food is given regularly.	53	9	52	7	121
The food given in school reduces my absenteeism	57	1	58	5	121
The food given in school increases my concentration in class.	54	4	57	6	121
I will continue coming to school until I finish class six (6) because food is given every day in school.	41	17	51	12	121

This table has shown that 105 of the pupils representing 86.7 % claimed to have regularly attended school, because of the food that is given to them. Similarly, 115 (95.04%) of the pupils revealed that school feeding programme assist them in decreasing school absenteeism. Whereas, 111 (91.7%) of the pupils claimed that school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. While, 92 (76.03%) reported to have continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding would be continued every day. There is no much disparity in the pupils' responses across gender, except in the completion of class six where female pupils had slight disparity compared to their male counterparts. With females having 42.1% which is slightly above that of males 33.8%.

Table 9: Number of Pupils' School Attendance per Week across the Nomadic schools

Variables	Frequency		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Five days per week	45	43	88	72.7
Four days per week	13	11	24	19.8
Three days per week	4	5	09	7.4
Two days per week	0	0	0	9
One day per week	0	0	0	0

The table indicated that majority of pupils (88) with 72.7 per cent (%) attended school five times a week as a result of the introduction of school feeding programme. Followed by the 24 pupils representing 19.8% that attended four times in a week. It can also be seen that, though there was a disparity between males and females pupils, but insignificant. This means that gender has insignificant influence in terms of attendance frequency per week. This signified the relevance of the school feeding programme in relation to pupils' attendance. This implied that school feeding programme increases the frequency of pupils' school attendance per week.

Table 11: Head teachers and Class masters' responses on the impact of school feeding programme on enrolment, retention, attendance, and academic performance across Nomadic schools in Jigawa State

Variable	Head teachers								Class maters							
	SA	%	A	%	SDA	%	DA	%	SA	%	A	%	SDA	%	DA	%
Increase in the rate of pupils' enrolment	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	6	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attendance of pupils becomes stabilised	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0	0	0	6	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
The rate or pupils' absenteeism in the nomadic schools	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	6	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
The rate of pupils' dropout	5	41.6	1	8.3	0	0	0	0	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0
The pupils' academic performance improves	4	33.3	2	16.6	0	0	0	0	5	41.6	1	8.3	0	0	0	0
The rate of pupils' retention at school increases	3	25	3	25	0	0	0	0	5	41.6	1	8.3	0	0	0	0
The rate of pupils' school completion	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	5	41.6	1	8.3	0	0	0	0
The pupils' attention	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0	0	0	6	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase concentration of pupils	3	25	3	25	0	0	0	0	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0
Increase concentration of pupils	4	33.3	2	16.6	0	0	0	0	3	25	3	25	0	0	0	0

From the table it can be seen that 33.3% of head teachers and 50% of class masters strongly agreed that the introduction of the school feeding programme increases the rate of pupils' enrolment in the nomadic primary schools of Jigawa State. Majority of the head teachers (41.7%) and 50% of class masters opined strongly agreed that the rate of pupils' attendance in the nomadic primary schools of Jigawa state increases with the school feeding programme. Larger part of the head teachers (33.3%) strongly agreed, with 16.7% who agreed and 50% of class masters strongly agreed that attendance of pupils in the nomadic schools becomes stabilised as result of the introduction of the school feeding programme. Also, 41.6% of the head teachers and 33.3% of the class masters viewed that the School feeding programme reduces the rate of pupils' absenteeism in the nomadic primary schools, while 8.3% and 16.7% of head teachers and class masters agreed respectively. The rate of pupils' dropout in the nomadic primary schools drastically reduced as it was strongly agreed by 33.3 % of the head teachers and 41.6% of the class masters. While 16.6 and 8.3 % of head teachers and class masters agreed that feeding programme decreases rate of pupils' dropout

Regarding the pupils' performance, 25% of the head teachers and 41.6% of the class masters strongly agreed that the pupils' academic performance improved in the nomadic primary schools of Jigawa state following the introduction of the school feeding programme. Similarly, 25% of head teachers and 8.3% of the class masters agreed. In relation to the rate of pupils' retention at school, the programme does lead to an increase in the nomadic primary schools with 33.3% of head teachers and 41.6 of class masters who strongly agreed. While 16.7% and 8.3% also agreed with this assertion. The rate of pupils' school completion increases as a result of school feeding programme in the nomadic as strongly agreed by 41.7% of head teachers and 50% of class masters, with additional supports of 8.3 of the head teachers who agreed.

The school feeding programme increases pupils' attention span in the class and enhances more class participation, as it was strongly agreed by 25% of the head teachers and 25% that also agreed, with 33.3% of the class masters who strongly agreed. The school feeding programme increases concentration of pupils in class which, in turn, improves academic performance as it was strongly agreed by 33.3% and 25% of head teachers and class masters respectively. These implied that the school feeding programme influences or increase the rate of school enrollment, attendance, school completion, improves class participation, decreases absenteeism, and school dropout.

Discussions

Findings from this study have shown that the majority of the pupils in the nomadic schools of Jigawa state claimed to have attended school regularly because of the school feeding programme introduced. This finding is in agreement with that of Alabede, Sawyerr, Ogunraku and Yusuf (2020) who revealed 242 pupils that were not regular in school before the feeding program started, majority of them (88.8%) became regular in school as a result of the introduced feeding program which positively enhances the attendance of irregular pupils. Similarly, the study of Elijah and Frederick (2014) revealed an increase in 65.4% of the pupils' attendance in school throughout the week. Likewise, Adekunle and Christiana (2016) in their study indicated 58.6% of the participants strongly agreed that the school feeding programme has encouraged regular pupils' attendance in schools. It was also, documented an increase on pupils' enrollment following the introduction of the school feeding programme in Ghana (Elijah & Frederick, 2014). Once children are hungry, their chances that they would attend school are limited (Senesie et al., 2022).

Senesie et al. (2022) reported that school feeding encouraged majority of parents to enroll their children to school at an early age. Also noted that the increase in school enrolment was attributed to the introduction of school feeding programme at various primary schools. It was reported that an improvement of the overall school enrolment rate and an increased attendance was observed from 73% to 95% following school feeding programme among participating schools (Taylor & Ogbogu, 2016). Edabu (2020) in their study revealed that food adequacy has statistically significant effect on school enrolment.

The findings of this study revealed that almost all of the pupils reported that school feeding programme assist them in reducing absenteeism. This finding is in unison with that of a particular study, conducted by Adekunle and Christiana (2016), who discovered 78.4% of the respondents that strongly agreed the school feeding programme encourages pupils' punctuality in schools. On other hand, Senesie et al. (2022) stated that once children are hungry, their chances that they would attend school are limited. This supported the need for the programme in schools.

In this study larger proportion of the pupils revealed that the school feeding programme increases their concentration in class. This finding is in unison with that of Bekidusa and Kisimbii (2020) who reported that hunger have both physical and psychological effects that make learning difficult among children.

Findings of this study also indicated that the majority of the pupils revealed to have had continued attending school until they completed class six provided the school feeding would be given every day. This finding is supported with that of Esther (2017), who revealed that school feeding program influences the retention of pupils in public primary schools in Kenya, where it was discovered that 50.7% of the respondents agreed that school feeding programme reduced school dropout rates and enhance the retention of pupils. Equally, School feeding programme reduced the probability of dropping out of school pupils as revealed by Taylor and Ogbogu (2016). All these are in support for the finding of this study.

Similarly, the findings of this study have shown that the majority of teachers revealed that the school feeding programme increased the rate of pupils' attendance, class participation in some task, decreases absenteeism, dropout and also improves school completion rate. These findings are consistent with earlier report by Frederick (2014), who demonstrated that 89% of the teachers agreed that the pupils are motivated to come to school as a result of the free food they are served in some schools in South Africa. Their study further revealed that head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents noted an increased in pupils' enrolment and attendance after the introduction of school feeding programme. The provision of food acted as a strong incentive for children to attend school on a regular basis (Senesie et al., 2022). All these supported the influence of school feeding programme.

Furthermore, Senesie et al. (2022) reported that low school enrollment, low class attendance and high student drop-outs are problems in child education among poor households especially in areas of high food insecurity and because of these reasons, the level of education attainment could also be low in many developing countries. This also buttresses the need for the programme in developing country like Nigeria, where Jigawa State is located.

Conclusion

The school feeding programme increased the rate of school enrollment, attendance, improves class participation, academic performance, decrease absenteeism, school dropout and school completion rate.

Recommendations

In consideration of the finding of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

It was recommended for government and other agencies to look for the possibility of sustaining the feeding programme in schools. Parents and pupils should also be enlightened about the benefits of nomadic education as well.

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