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## LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Effective security management in Nigerian tertiary institutions is increasingly critical due to rising physical and digital threats, including cultism, kidnappings, cyberattacks, and infrastructural vulnerabilities. This paper examines the leadership competencies required for effective security management, emphasizing the role of leadership training and development in equipping institutional heads with crisis management, strategic planning, ethical leadership, and cybersecurity skills. The analysis highlights the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) and collaborative leadership in addressing these challenges. Through leadership competencies, institutional leaders can proactively prevent security breaches, protect campus communities, and respond effectively to evolving threats. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations, including the institutionalization of leadership training programs, the integration of cybersecurity training, fostering collaborations with external stakeholders, and promoting ethical security management practices. By prioritizing these leadership competencies, Nigerian tertiary institutions can enhance their overall security frameworks and create safer, more secure academic environments.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Competencies, Security Management, Tertiary Institutions, Crisis Management, Nigerian Higher Education

## **Introduction**

Effective security management in tertiary institutions is crucial for ensuring a safe and conducive environment for learning, research, and social development. The growing complexity of security challenges, including terrorism, cyber threats, campus violence, and other forms of insecurity, necessitates a robust leadership framework capable of addressing these issues. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions are increasingly vulnerable to security breaches, often due to insufficiently trained personnel, inadequate infrastructure, and limited government support (Olajide & Alao, 2020). The effectiveness of security management in these institutions hinges on the competencies of leaders who are tasked with anticipating, mitigating, and resolving security threats.

Leadership competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that leaders must possess to manage their institutions effectively. These competencies are especially vital in security management, where decisions can significantly impact the safety of students, staff, and institutional property (Northouse, 2019). Leaders in Nigerian tertiary institutions must exhibit a range of competencies, such as strategic thinking, risk assessment, decision-making under pressure, communication, and crisis management. Without these skills, institutions are left vulnerable to both internal and external threats, which can disrupt academic activities and endanger lives (Adebayo & Olanrewaju, 2021).

Research suggests that effective security management in higher education settings depends not only on technical skills but also on the leadership's ability to foster collaboration, resilience, and adaptability among stakeholders (Ekanem & Ibeh, 2022). A competent leader must be able to engage with security personnel, government authorities, and the campus community to ensure a holistic approach to safety and security. Furthermore, continuous professional development in leadership competencies is essential to stay updated with evolving security challenges, particularly in an era of rapid technological advancement (Ajayi, 2020).

This paper seeks to explore the leadership competencies necessary for effective security management in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with a focus on the current challenges and the need for professional development in security leadership. By examining these competencies, the paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing institutional safety and security in Nigerian higher education.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

To understand the role of leadership competencies in effective security management within tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it is crucial to define and clarify key concepts: leadership, leadership competencies, and security management.

## **Leadership Competencies**

Leadership competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and attributes that enable leaders to effectively manage, guide, and influence an organization toward its objectives (Northouse, 2019). These competencies are a blend of technical skills, interpersonal abilities, strategic thinking, and ethical judgment, which allow leaders to respond to complex challenges in dynamic environments. In the context of security management, leadership competencies involve the capacity to anticipate potential security risks, make sound decisions under pressure, and foster collaborative relationships to ensure comprehensive protection for institutional stakeholders (Ololube, 2019).

Effective leadership in security management requires specific competencies such as crisis management, decision-making, communication, and ethical leadership (Akinyele & Ojo,

2021). Crisis management is particularly important in Nigerian tertiary institutions, which often face unpredictable security threats ranging from violent student unrest to cybercrime. Leaders must possess the ability to respond quickly, implement action plans, and maintain calm under high-pressure situations (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). Equally important is decision-making, which involves assessing security risks and determining the best course of action, often with incomplete or rapidly changing information. Leaders must balance institutional priorities with safety concerns, making decisions that protect lives and property while maintaining educational activities (Ajayi, 2020).

### **Security Management in Tertiary Institutions**

Security management refers to the processes and strategies used to protect people, property, and information from harm (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). In the context of tertiary institutions, this involves a comprehensive approach to managing risks, including physical security (e.g., campus safety, building protection) and digital security (e.g., cybersecurity measures). Effective security management ensures that the institution is prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from security incidents (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021).

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, security management is particularly challenging due to the multifaceted nature of security threats. Institutions face internal risks, such as cultism, student unrest, and theft, as well as external threats, such as terrorism and kidnappings (Ololube, 2019). The complexity of these threats requires a holistic approach to security management that incorporates not only security personnel and technology but also leadership strategies that foster a culture of security awareness and preparedness (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021).

Effective security management is dependent on the leadership's ability to assess potential risks, develop security policies, coordinate with external security agencies, and ensure the proper training of security personnel (Ajayi, 2020). Without competent leadership, security strategies are often fragmented and reactive, leading to increased vulnerability to security breaches (Olajide & Alao, 2020).

### **Leadership Competencies for Effective Security Management in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Security management in Nigerian tertiary institutions is an increasingly complex task due to the diverse nature of threats, ranging from physical violence, cultism, terrorism, and kidnappings, to cyber-attacks (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). Given this array of challenges, the role of leadership in ensuring a secure and conducive learning environment cannot be overstated. Effective security management requires leaders to possess a set of competencies that enable them to address both anticipated and unforeseen security threats in a proactive, strategic manner (Ololube, 2019). This assessment examines the leadership competencies crucial for effective security management in Nigerian tertiary institutions, including crisis management, strategic decision-making, communication, collaboration, and ethical leadership.

#### **1. Crisis Management**

One of the most vital leadership competencies for effective security management is crisis management. Tertiary institutions are prone to crises such as student unrest, cult-related violence, and external attacks, which demand rapid and decisive leadership responses (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). Crisis management involves the ability to anticipate potential security threats, develop contingency plans, and lead the institution through emergencies while minimizing damage to lives and property. Leaders who excel in crisis management can quickly assess a situation, deploy appropriate resources, and ensure that normalcy is restored in a timely manner (Northouse, 2019).

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, effective crisis management also requires familiarity with the unique socio-political environment, where external factors such as political interference and community conflicts may exacerbate security threats. Leaders need to maintain strong networks with local law enforcement and government agencies to coordinate responses during crises (Ajayi, 2020). However, many institutional leaders lack formal training in crisis management, leading to slow or ineffective responses that exacerbate security incidents (Olajide & Alao, 2020).

## 2. Strategic Decision-Making

Another critical leadership competency is strategic decision-making. Effective security management demands that leaders make informed decisions about how to allocate resources, prioritize security initiatives, and respond to emerging threats. Strategic decision-making requires the ability to analyze security risks, evaluate the costs and benefits of different actions, and make choices that protect the institution while minimizing disruption to academic activities (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). Leaders must be able to balance immediate security needs with long-term planning, ensuring that institutions are prepared for evolving threats such as cybercrime and terrorism.

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, decision-making is often hampered by limited resources and competing priorities, making it essential for leaders to adopt a strategic approach to security management. They must allocate resources effectively, choosing between investments in physical security measures (e.g., surveillance systems, security personnel) and newer technological solutions such as cybersecurity tools (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). Additionally, leaders must consider the institutional culture and the potential impact of security decisions on student and staff morale.

## 3. Communication Skills

Communication is another key competency for leadership in security management. In times of security threats, leaders must communicate clearly and effectively with various stakeholders, including students, staff, security personnel, and government authorities (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). Effective communication ensures that security protocols are understood and followed, and that misinformation or panic is avoided during crises. Leaders need to develop communication strategies that promote transparency and trust, which are essential for maintaining a culture of security awareness on campus (Ololube, 2019).

In the Nigerian context, where information flow may be hindered by bureaucratic structures and inadequate communication channels, leaders must work to improve the dissemination of security-related information (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). This includes setting up alert systems for students and staff, issuing timely security updates, and conducting regular awareness campaigns on campus security policies. Additionally, leaders must foster open lines of communication between the institution and external security agencies to ensure a coordinated response to threats.

## 4. Collaboration and Networking

Leadership in security management also requires strong collaboration and networking skills. Security threats in tertiary institutions often extend beyond campus boundaries, requiring leaders to engage with a range of external stakeholders, including law enforcement, community leaders, and government officials (Ajayi, 2020). Collaboration ensures that institutions can access the necessary support and resources during security incidents, and that security strategies are aligned with broader regional or national security frameworks.

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, the need for collaboration is heightened by the involvement of local actors in many security issues, such as student cultism and political violence (Olajide & Alao, 2020). Leaders must build relationships with local communities to prevent external threats from spilling over into campus life. Moreover, networking with other institutional leaders allows for the sharing of best practices in security management and helps to create a unified approach to dealing with common security challenges across the educational sector.

#### 5. Ethical Leadership

Finally, ethical leadership is crucial for effective security management. Ethical leaders set the tone for how security is managed within their institutions, ensuring that security measures are not only effective but also aligned with legal standards and the institution's values (Northouse, 2019). This includes protecting the rights of students and staff, maintaining the dignity of all individuals, and avoiding excessive use of force or surveillance that may infringe on personal freedoms. Leaders must be transparent in their security policies and practices, building trust with the campus community while upholding institutional integrity.

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, ethical leadership is particularly important given the history of student unrest and tensions between security personnel and students (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). Leaders must navigate these challenges with fairness and accountability, ensuring that security measures do not disproportionately target or victimize certain groups of students. By demonstrating ethical leadership, institutional heads can foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration between security personnel and the campus community, which is essential for long-term security management.

### **Security Challenges Faced by Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria and How Leadership Skills Address These Issues**

Nigerian tertiary institutions face a myriad of security challenges that have threatened the safety of students, staff, and infrastructure, and in some cases, disrupted academic activities. These challenges include cultism, violent student unrest, kidnappings, terrorism, cybercrime, and inadequate campus security infrastructure (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). The escalation of these issues is closely tied to broader social, economic, and political instabilities within the country. Addressing these problems requires effective leadership skills that can anticipate threats, implement preventive measures, and manage crises when they occur. This section discusses the major security challenges faced by Nigerian tertiary institutions and how leadership competencies, such as crisis management, strategic decision-making, collaboration, and ethical leadership, can mitigate these threats.

#### 1. Cultism and Student Unrest

One of the most pressing security challenges in Nigerian tertiary institutions is the rise of cultism and violent student unrest. Cultism, a form of organized crime within campuses involving secret societies, has been linked to violence, extortion, and even murder (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). These groups, often driven by power struggles and political interests, threaten the safety of students and staff, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity on campuses. Student unrest, which often stems from dissatisfaction with institutional policies, poor infrastructure, or economic hardship, can escalate into violent protests and property destruction (Olajide & Alao, 2020).

Leadership skills such as crisis management and communication are essential for addressing these challenges. Effective leaders must be able to quickly identify brewing tensions and intervene before they escalate. This includes maintaining open channels of communication with student bodies and creating platforms for dialogue to resolve grievances peacefully. Leaders must also implement early warning systems to detect the activities of cult groups and

collaborate with law enforcement to dismantle them (Ajayi, 2020). By fostering an inclusive leadership style that engages students and addresses their concerns, institutional heads can reduce the likelihood of violent unrest and cult-related violence.

## 2. Kidnappings and Terrorism

Kidnappings, particularly for ransom, have become a significant security issue in Nigeria, and tertiary institutions have not been spared. Students and staff, especially in northern regions, have been targeted by terrorist groups like Boko Haram and bandits, disrupting educational activities and creating fear within academic environments (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). The porous nature of some campuses, coupled with the broader security challenges facing the country, makes institutions vulnerable to these attacks.

Leadership skills in strategic decision-making and risk assessment are crucial in addressing these challenges. Leaders must take proactive measures to secure campuses by investing in perimeter security, surveillance systems, and campus security personnel. Additionally, leaders must collaborate with local and national security agencies to ensure a coordinated response to terrorist threats and kidnappings (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). Establishing partnerships with local communities to gain intelligence on potential threats is also an effective strategy for preempting kidnappings and attacks. Strategic decision-making allows leaders to allocate resources efficiently, ensuring that the most vulnerable parts of the campus are protected.

## 3. Cybersecurity Threats

As tertiary institutions in Nigeria increasingly adopt digital technologies for teaching, learning, and administration, they become more susceptible to cyber threats. Cybercrime, including data breaches, hacking, and identity theft, has become a growing concern, with academic institutions targeted for valuable research data, personal student information, and financial records (Ololube, 2019). Inadequate cybersecurity measures and a lack of digital literacy among staff and students exacerbate this challenge.

Leadership in cybersecurity management requires a blend of technical knowledge and strategic decision-making. Institutional leaders must invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructure, including firewalls, encryption technologies, and secure networks (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). They should also ensure that staff and students receive adequate training on cybersecurity best practices, such as password protection, phishing awareness, and data privacy. Leaders who prioritize digital security and foster a culture of cybersecurity awareness can significantly reduce the risk of cyber-attacks. Additionally, collaboration with cybersecurity experts and governmental agencies provides institutions with access to up-to-date information on emerging threats and best practices (Ajayi, 2020).

## 4. Inadequate Security Infrastructure

Many Nigerian tertiary institutions face the challenge of inadequate security infrastructure. Campuses often lack basic security features such as perimeter fencing, surveillance cameras, and well-trained security personnel (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021). This infrastructural deficit leaves campuses vulnerable to external threats, including armed robbery, vandalism, and unauthorized access. Budget constraints and government underfunding have exacerbated this issue, limiting the ability of institutions to invest in comprehensive security solutions.

Leaders must demonstrate financial acumen and strategic decision-making in addressing these infrastructure deficits. This involves prioritizing the allocation of limited resources to critical security needs, such as installing surveillance systems in high-risk areas, increasing the visibility of security personnel, and securing campus entry points (Olajide & Alao, 2020).

Leaders can also engage in public-private partnerships to attract funding for security upgrades and collaborate with alumni networks to raise funds for security projects. By adopting innovative solutions such as solar-powered lighting systems and mobile security apps, institutional heads can enhance campus security despite limited budgets (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021).

#### 5. Lack of Collaboration with External Security Agencies

Another significant security challenge is the lack of collaboration between tertiary institutions and external security agencies. While institutions have internal security teams, their efforts are often limited by a lack of coordination with law enforcement, community vigilante groups, and national security agencies (Ekanem & Udo, 2020). This disconnect can result in slow responses to security threats and a failure to gather timely intelligence on potential risks. Leadership skills in collaboration and networking are essential for bridging this gap. Leaders must establish strong relationships with external security agencies and develop protocols for information sharing and joint operations. By creating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local law enforcement and community leaders, institutions can enhance their capacity to respond to security incidents, such as student unrest, cultism, or terrorist threats (Ajayi, 2020). Leaders who foster partnerships with security stakeholders ensure that institutions are better protected and that responses to crises are swift and coordinated.

#### 6. Ethical Concerns in Security Management

A final challenge is the ethical dilemma faced by leaders in managing security. There is often a tension between maintaining order on campus and respecting the rights and freedoms of students and staff. For example, excessive surveillance or the heavy-handed use of security personnel can lead to accusations of authoritarianism and the violation of civil liberties (Ololube, 2019). Leaders must navigate these ethical challenges carefully, ensuring that security measures are necessary, proportionate, and in line with legal and moral standards.

Ethical leadership is essential in addressing this issue. Leaders must create security policies that respect the human rights of all campus stakeholders while maintaining the safety and security of the institution (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). This includes engaging in transparent decision-making processes, involving stakeholders in the creation of security protocols, and regularly reviewing security measures to ensure they remain appropriate and non-intrusive. Ethical leadership fosters trust between the administration and the campus community, making security measures more effective and less likely to be resisted by students and staff.

### **Role of Leadership Training and Development in Enhancing Security Management Practices in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Leadership training and development play a critical role in equipping leaders with the skills and competencies necessary to manage security challenges effectively in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The increasingly complex security landscape, characterized by cultism, kidnappings, cyber threats, and infrastructural vulnerabilities, demands leaders who are well-prepared to implement effective security management practices. Proper leadership development, through formal training programs and continuous professional development initiatives, empowers institutional heads with crisis management skills, strategic planning capabilities, and ethical decision-making frameworks.

#### 1. Developing Crisis Management Skills

Crisis management is a core competency for leaders in Nigerian tertiary institutions, where security threats often arise unpredictably. Effective crisis management involves anticipating potential risks, formulating contingency plans, and coordinating rapid responses during emergencies (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). Leadership training programs that focus on crisis

management can significantly improve the ability of institutional heads to mitigate security incidents, such as student unrest, cult-related violence, or kidnapping attempts.

Formal training in crisis management equips leaders with the knowledge of risk assessment tools, early warning systems, and coordination strategies with external security agencies. For instance, Ajayi (2020) argues that leaders who undergo crisis simulation exercises and scenario-based learning are better prepared to act swiftly during real-life emergencies. By developing crisis management frameworks that include clear roles for staff, security personnel, and external law enforcement, leaders can minimize the disruption caused by security breaches and protect the lives and property of students and staff.

## 2. Strategic Planning for Long-Term Security

Leadership training in strategic planning enhances security management practices by equipping leaders with the ability to anticipate future threats and allocate resources efficiently. Strategic planning involves long-term thinking about potential security risks, the development of robust security policies, and the allocation of budgets for necessary security infrastructure (Ololube, 2019). Training programs that focus on strategic leadership help institutional heads identify the specific security needs of their campuses and develop customized security strategies that address both current and emerging challenges.

For example, leaders trained in strategic planning are better positioned to prioritize the installation of surveillance systems, secure entry points, and cybersecurity measures. According to Adebayo and Sunday (2021), institutions with well-trained leaders have more comprehensive and proactive security management policies. This forward-thinking approach ensures that institutions are not merely reacting to security incidents but actively working to prevent them. Additionally, strategic planning training enhances leaders' ability to engage with stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, and private security firms, to create comprehensive security networks for institutions.

## 3. Enhancing Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making

Ethical leadership is crucial in ensuring that security management practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions do not infringe upon the rights of students and staff. While maintaining order is essential, leaders must balance security measures with ethical considerations, such as respecting personal privacy, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring transparency in decision-making. Leadership development programs that focus on ethical leadership can help institutional heads navigate these dilemmas effectively.

Training in ethical leadership enhances leaders' ability to make balanced decisions when implementing security measures. As noted by Ekanem and Udo (2020), ethical leadership training includes case studies on how to manage security without resorting to authoritarian practices, such as excessive surveillance or police brutality. Leaders trained in ethical decision-making are better equipped to maintain campus security while upholding the dignity and rights of all stakeholders. This is particularly important in contexts where students may protest security measures they perceive as invasive or oppressive. Ethical leadership training ensures that security management practices are built on trust and transparency, fostering a safer and more harmonious campus environment.

## 4. Fostering Collaborative Leadership for Security Management

Collaboration is an essential component of effective security management, particularly in Nigeria, where security challenges often extend beyond the campus to the surrounding community. Leadership training that emphasizes collaborative leadership prepares institutional heads to build partnerships with external stakeholders, such as local law

enforcement, community leaders, and security experts (Ajayi, 2020). Through these collaborations, institutions can gain access to critical intelligence on emerging threats, receive additional security resources, and coordinate responses to security breaches more effectively. Collaborative leadership training focuses on communication, networking, and negotiation skills, which are vital for building strong security partnerships. Leaders trained in these areas are more adept at creating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with security agencies, leading joint security operations, and engaging with local communities to ensure the institution's security. As noted by Olajide and Alao (2020), leaders who undergo collaborative leadership training are better positioned to leverage community policing and neighborhood watch programs to protect their campuses from external threats.

#### 5. Improving Cybersecurity Awareness and Management

As tertiary institutions in Nigeria adopt more digital technologies for teaching, learning, and administration, they are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats such as hacking, data breaches, and online fraud (Ololube, 2019). Leadership development programs that include cybersecurity management are essential in equipping leaders with the technical knowledge and skills to protect institutional data and ensure the digital security of their campuses. Cybersecurity training includes modules on data protection policies, secure network protocols, and incident response strategies in the event of a cyberattack.

Leaders who are well-versed in cybersecurity management can better oversee the installation of firewalls, encryption technologies, and secure network infrastructure (Akinyele & Ojo, 2021). They are also able to foster a culture of cybersecurity awareness among staff and students, ensuring that all members of the institution follow best practices for digital security. Leadership training that incorporates cybersecurity modules prepares institutional heads to handle both physical and digital security threats, creating a comprehensive approach to campus security.

#### 6. Continuous Professional Development for Security Leaders

The security landscape in Nigerian tertiary institutions is constantly evolving, with new threats emerging over time. Continuous professional development (CPD) ensures that institutional leaders stay up-to-date with the latest security management practices and innovations. CPD programs offer opportunities for leaders to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences on security management, where they can learn from experts, share best practices, and develop new strategies for campus safety (Adebayo & Sunday, 2021).

By engaging in CPD, leaders demonstrate a commitment to professional growth and a proactive approach to security management. CPD programs also allow leaders to stay informed about changing security policies, technological advancements in security infrastructure, and new collaboration opportunities with governmental and non-governmental organizations. As noted by Adebayo and Sunday (2021), institutional leaders who engage in continuous learning are better positioned to adapt to new security challenges and implement cutting-edge security solutions on their campuses.

Leadership training and development play a pivotal role in enhancing security management practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions. By equipping institutional heads with crisis management skills, strategic planning capabilities, ethical leadership frameworks, and collaborative leadership techniques, leadership development programs prepare leaders to tackle the complex security challenges facing tertiary institutions. Additionally, cybersecurity training and continuous professional development ensure that leaders are well-prepared to manage both physical and digital security threats. In a security environment as dynamic as

Nigeria's, effective leadership development is essential for creating safe and secure academic environments.

### **Conclusion and Way Forward**

Effective security management in Nigerian tertiary institutions hinges significantly on the leadership competencies of institutional heads. The complex and evolving nature of security challenges, ranging from physical threats like cultism and kidnapping to digital vulnerabilities such as cyberattacks, requires a multi-dimensional approach to leadership. Leadership training and development programs that focus on crisis management, strategic planning, ethical decision-making, collaboration, and cybersecurity are essential in equipping leaders to handle these challenges effectively. By prioritizing continuous professional development, institutional leaders can stay ahead of emerging threats and implement proactive security measures to protect students, staff, and institutional assets.

1. **Institutionalize Leadership Training Programs:** Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should establish dedicated leadership development centers focused on security management. These centers can offer specialized courses and workshops on crisis management, strategic planning, cybersecurity, and ethical leadership.
2. **Encourage Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** Government and higher education stakeholders should encourage institutional leaders to participate in CPD programs, including workshops, conferences, and seminars on security trends and innovations. This will keep leaders informed about the latest security management strategies and technologies.
3. **Integrate Cybersecurity Training:** As part of leadership training, institutions should focus on building competencies in cybersecurity management to address growing digital threats. Leaders need to be equipped with the skills to secure institutional data, systems, and networks effectively.

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