

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ITS IMPACT ON GENERATION Z'S MOTIVATION TO PURSUE EMPLOYMENT – PART I

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Purpose: Determining and discussing various aspects for employment motivation among younger generation.

Design/methodology/approach: The research method used in the paper is mainly a standardized survey conducted on the basis of a questionnaire containing closed and open questions carried out among representatives of the examined generation. The research process was also accompanied by analysis of source documentation.

Findings: Research results verify research hypotheses formulated on basis of the paper's objectives, enabling general conclusions.

Research implications: Future research directions should focus on further, expanded research exploration in the area, taking into account a larger number of respondents.

Practical implications: The results of the research discussed in the paper have a number of practical implications mainly for the management staff and employers in terms of human resources management and employment policy.

Social implications: Building awareness of generational change in the process of managing employment policy.

Originality/value: The paper has cognitive value for the development of knowledge, science and quality in terms of employment policy.

Keywords: human resources management, employment policy, generational change, workforce planning, labour market trends.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

The issue of employment has always played a significant role in the lives of adults; however, over time, attitudes toward professional life have evolved, influenced by various factors. Over the years, the geopolitical and market landscape has changed, as have people's

worldviews. Additionally, there has been a technological revolution, the automation of daily life, and the increasing importance of the internet and social media. Today, the labor market consists of individuals from various age groups and generations, each of whom perceives professional life in distinctly different ways.

This paper explores the issue of work from a generational perspective with particular interest in the youngest generation of employees - Generation Z. The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. How does Generation Z perceive full-time employment?
2. Is this generation motivated and willing to pursue traditional career paths?
3. What opportunities and challenges does Generation Z present to employers?

In order to address these questions an overview of Generation Z will be provided along with an exploration of the relationship between professional engagement and motivation. The concept of maintaining a work-life balance will also be discussed.

The following hypotheses were developed for examination:

1. Full-time employment is perceived as a more stable form of work by members of Generation Z.
2. Non-traditional forms of employment are less frequently considered by Generation Z when contemplating their future.
3. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is of paramount importance to Generation Z.
4. Generation Z tends to prefer traditional, full-time employment and is less inclined to consider non-traditional employment arrangements.

In order to verify the above hypotheses a survey was conducted among a group of 74 individuals including both Generation Z and members of older generations to highlight generational differences.

The paper was organized in two parts. Part one focuses on the theoretical background of the problem while part two is devoted to the presentation of the research results.

2. The outline of the Generation Z phenomenon

There are people of all ages on the labor market so it can be said that the labor market is multi-generational. A generation is a group of people of a similar age. The contemporary sociological approach distinguishes many generations (Kroenke, 2015). The generations that are currently active in the labor market are (Czyczerska, Ławnik, Szlenk-Czyczerska, 2020):

- The BB generation, also called baby boomers, are people born between 1946 and 1964.
- Generation X are people born between 1965 and 1980.

- Generation Y, also called millennials, are people born between 1981 and 1996.
- Generation Z also known as Gen Z are people born between 1997 and 2012.

The above generations show the diversity of people involved in professional life (Defratyka, Morawski, 2019). Sociologists distinguish a variety of features characterizing each of them (McCrindle, Wolfinger, 2009).

This section will provide a detailed description of the last generation Z but it is worth briefly discussing the remaining ones.

The Baby Boomer generation is a generation focused on work, their motto is "we live to work". This is a generation with extensive experience, focusing on their life wisdom and loyalty to employers (Barszcz, 2020). People from the baby boomer generation are mostly people who, after taking up a job, work in a given place for almost their entire lives because this is a generation that feels a strong need for stability, often defends its position in the company and their primary motivator to work is the fear of losing it. Which is probably related to the fact that these are people born in a historically difficult post-war period, where people were looking for stability and strong structures after the chaos of war. This generation considers high education as an important element when taking up a professional career (Dimock, 2019).

The next generation is Generation X, as mentioned above, these are people born between 1965 and 1980. This is a generation that is characterized by an interest in innovation and work ethic at work, while demonstrating great loyalty to their employer (Mahapatra, Bhullar, Gupta, 2022). This is a generation that "works to live". They derive motivation and satisfaction from the position and prestige in the company and are aware of the need to change their professional life while being afraid of losing their position. This generation considers training as an important element of professional activity and career, they want to develop and improve in the context of their work.

The next generation is Generation Y, consisting of individuals born between 1981 and 1996. This generation was the first to recognize the importance of maintaining a work-life balance. Their motto is "live and work – balance." Generation Y is also the first to show less loyalty to employers, believing that changing jobs is an integral part of career development. They are characterized by high professional mobility, adaptability, and openness to new challenges and changes (Ware, 2013). Generation Y is motivated by the rewards they gain while working, which can also be understood as bonuses and well-paid work itself - this generation is team-oriented. Millennials are less willing to recognize authorities than Generation X or Baby Boomers. Additionally, the latest generation of Millennials experienced their childhood with access to the Internet and observed the development of social media, so they are not completely foreign to Generation Y, unlike other generations (Bessant, 2018).

The final generation in the labor market is Generation Z, which will be discussed in more detail here. As previously mentioned, Generation Z includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012, meaning that some members of this generation have not yet reached adulthood. Generation Z is a unique generation because, for the first time, they were fully immersed in

social media during their adolescence. As a result, they are closely associated with the internet, social media, and technology (Benítez-Márquez, Sánchez-Teba, Bermúdez-González, Núñez-Rydman, 2022). Generation Z easily uses the latest technical innovations and understands all the nuances of the technical world. This is a generation that has the ability to be online and offline at the same time, which can often be difficult for other generations. Generation Z is also significantly different from other generations in various aspects, which will be considered below (Lev, 2021). The first of these aspects is the difference in making friends. Because before the invention of social media, people made friends mainly in real life (offline), while Generation Z, which grew up on social media, also makes friends online. That's why people from Generation Z have various friends from almost all over the world, which makes this generation very open, tolerant and willing to understand otherness and diversity. The next aspect worth considering when it comes to Generation Z is time. Due to the fact that Generation Z lives with constant access to the Internet, they want to get everything quickly (Dwivedula, Singh, Azaran, 2019). Information, knowledge or entertainment for Generation Z should be provided immediately, as well as contact and communication (White, 2017). Time and speed are so important for Generation Z that they do not recognize the idea of free career development, therefore they are not loyal and faithful to one company and make changes quite dynamically, mainly guided by remuneration. Generation Z also retrain easily and quickly, changing industries and, consequently, career paths (White, 2017). Another key aspect that characterizes Generation Z is their strong emphasis on work-life balance. This generation places a high value on rest and time away from work. For Generation Z money is seen as a means of self-fulfillment, so prioritizing work is not their main focus. Instead, life outside of work holds particular significance for them (Dolot, 2018).

In summary as rightly emphasized in the literature cited above Generation Z is an innovative generation, largely due to the rapid rise of the internet and social media. This generation stands out from others, demonstrating a greater openness to change and viewing development as a lifelong process of learning. Additionally, they place much more emphasis on rest compared to previous generations. These factors contribute to their entirely different approach to work which will be explored in the next section.

3. Generation Z's perspective on the labour market

Generation Z will be fully entering the labor market in the coming years. Therefore a key question is how members of Generation Z will navigate such a specific environment as the labor market. As discussed earlier generations were characterized by loyalty to their employers and job stability with most individuals staying at the same company where they began their careers, often for the entirety of their working lives until retirement (Bieleń, Kubiczek, 2020). However

Generation Z raised in an era of unlimited access to the internet and social media holds different values compared to previous generations. Moreover their situation in the labor market is entirely different from that of older generations. As reality shows flexible employment such as mandate contracts, dominates among young workers. The labor market that Generation Z is entering is unstable and highly competitive (Messyasz, 2021).

Many young people today have completed studies often in more than one field. As a result the phenomenon of "the falling graduate premium" has emerged meaning that as more employees with higher education enter the labor market, they are less rewarded by potential employers as higher education becomes increasingly common. Another aspect is the high level of experience demanded by employers. Members of Generation Z often face the harsh realities of the labor market where employers require work experience, forcing many young employees to take jobs in sectors that don't require extensive experience in order to gain it. Typically these are sectors like retail or hospitality. At the same time, these sectors carry a high risk of job loss, as most young people are employed under the previously mentioned mandate contracts. (McCrindle, Fell, 2019).

The SARS-Cov2 pandemic has additionally made the situation of young people on the labor market significantly more difficult. Currently, the whole world is facing its economic consequences which are still present as of 2025. However the pandemic has also opened up new opportunities for young people (Ang, Shorey, Lopez, Chew, Lau, 2022). During the pandemic, many companies were forced to adopt a new way of working—remote work. This allowed employees in various companies to perform their duties without having to leave home. As mentioned earlier, Generation Z is a highly tech-savvy generation with an inseparable connection to the internet. For this reason, remote work holds significant value for them. However, the issue of securing permanent employment remains a pressing challenge for young people. In 2017 a study was conducted which showed that as many as 44.2% of young Poles aged 15 to 24 worked under a fixed-term contract, this is almost half, the main reason why they chose this form of employment was the inability to find a permanent job (Messyasz, 2021). This was indicated by 54.6% of respondents in the above-mentioned study. However, this study showed that the group that prefers not to be employed permanently has increased, in 2017 it was 14.2%, and in a comparable study only 9 years earlier, in 2008 it was 11.6% of respondents (Messyasz, 2021). Since 2008, the number of respondents preferring flexible forms of employment has also increased - 7.2%, while in 2017 there was an almost 2.5-fold increase, because in 2017 as many as 17.2% of people preferred this form of employment (Messyasz, 2021).

One of the flexible working methods is self-employment. According to Eurostat research, the number of young people—those under 25 years of age—registered as self-employed in Poland was 6% in 2014, which is a relatively small percentage. However, research from 2019 indicated that the perception of self-employment among young people is changing (Workforce View in Europe, 2019). As many as 26.5% of respondents among people under 25 years of age

believed that self-employment is a good way of life and in a comparable study just two years earlier this approach was presented by 19.6% of people. This result should not be surprising considering the fact that due to rising inflation and difficult housing situations, as well as the fact that representatives of Generation Z brought up with access to social media want to live at a decent standard and earn a lot of money which often excludes working full-time. In the "Millennial Survey", representatives of Generation Z identified non-standard forms of employment as a great alternative to the traditional form of employment, which is full-time work, because for many of them the prospect of a higher salary is more important than the social benefits offered by full-time work (Millennial Survey, 2024). It is worth mentioning here that the social insurance and tax burden for employees working full-time is much higher than for running a sole proprietorship. Additionally self-employment means uncapped earnings; in full-time employment, the salary depends on many factors including the lowest national wage, position, education, and industry. Self-employment does not determine the amount of earnings, although it also depends on many factors, all earnings are the owner's capital and it depends on how well a given entity prospers, it is risky from the perspective of life stability but it gives the opportunity to earn a large sum with good management (Messyasz, 2021).

However, Generation Z does not completely deny working full-time, although it might seem that the self-confident and success-oriented generation will deny traditional forms of full-time employment, but for many of them, working full-time has many advantages (Iorgulescu, 2016):

1. Stability of employment, especially when it is a full-time job and an indefinite period of time.
2. The notice period, which after three years of employment reaches three months, and the fact that the employer must provide a reason for terminating the contract, which in many cases may prevent him from deciding to dismiss the employee.
3. Social rights, which include paid holiday, maternity and parental leave. It also includes paid sick leave and an assured place at work after returning from leave or sick leave.

This approach may also result from the fact that Generation Z, as mentioned earlier, is a generation full of anxiety about the future. Young people are well aware of the difficult situation on the labor market and express concern about finding their first job after graduation (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021).

Representatives of Generation Z are also afraid that the work they will take will be just a job for them and not something that inspires and motivates them to continue acting, developing, and being able to be themselves (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021). They question the value of continuing their studies and obtaining further degrees, believing that the knowledge gained during first-cycle studies does not align with the skills needed in the labor market. Working in corporations has also become an unattractive prospect for many young respondents - they fear being "absorbed" and "stuck" in such environments. Another concern they expressed is the dismissive attitude of employers, who may view them as young, inexperienced,

and disconnected from the realities of work. This fear was shared by the majority of respondents (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021).

Summarizing, the arguments presented by the cited authors are indeed convincing and they should be agreed with. Indeed Generation Z' views on the labor market as a risky and unstable space where securing a job right after graduation may be challenging. They identify numerous risks and uncertainties associated with entering the workforce. While the 21st century offers many opportunities, it also presents several limitations in terms of work and employment. These concerns are further influenced by the dynamic economic and political situation worldwide, shaping Generation Z's expectations of potential employers and presenting challenges for employers in terms of staff management.

4. Advantages and disadvantages of Generation Z as employees

Generation Z entering the labor market is highly valuable to employers, as each generation brings a fresh perspective on professional work, offering real benefits to organizations by introducing innovations and new skills. However when discussing Generation Z many HR managers point out several noticeable drawbacks among its employees. The most commonly mentioned disadvantage during the recruitment process is their high financial expectations which are often coupled with limited experience and their young age. HR managers also note that Generation Z tends to have an idealized view of work and the labor market. Some job candidates inquire about additional employment benefits such as a multisport card or extra healthcare. While this demonstrates self-awareness and market orientation, it can pose a significant challenge for employers, particularly smaller businesses that lack the financial resources to offer such additional benefits (Pandita, Agarwal, Vapiwala, 2023).

Employers also complain about employees' quick resignation from work even after a few weeks of work. Even though companies may seem flexible and adaptable to their needs. According to them, young employees from Generation Z are often negatively disposed to working overtime and on weekends and holidays because they have their own priorities outside of work. Many managers also emphasize that young employees often leave overnight, without giving a reason (Waworuntu, Kainde, Mandagi, 2022).

This attitude may be problematic for employers because it is common for them to invest time and resources in training new employees, providing them with the knowledge needed to perform their jobs effectively. If an employee resigns after receiving training, it can be a loss for the company, as a well-trained employee may become a valuable asset for competitors in the same industry. The lack of loyalty among Generation Z employees towards their employer can pose a significant challenge for businesses. It may hinder the motivation process, which

often relies on employee loyalty to the organization, making this a notable disadvantage of Generation Z as a potential asset to companies (McCrindle, Fell, 2019).

However, the lack of proper training can also negatively impact Generation Z employees' willingness to stay with an organization. Human resources managers emphasize that members of Generation Z expect a thorough introduction to their duties and a step-by-step explanation of their daily tasks (Lev, 2021). It is crucial to define these responsibilities in detail as Generation Z employees are quick to express when a task falls outside the scope of their job description. This directness is a key characteristic that sets them apart from Generation Y, who were less likely to be as straightforward. Additionally, employers note that Generation Z employees expect prompt feedback on their work, and at times, they may not accept critical feedback well (Muster, 2020).

Entrepreneurs also emphasize that most young employees have no enthusiasm for work or motivation, which is a big problem for entrepreneurs (Muster, 2020). They notice that employees from Generation Z either have motivation from above, then they are active, go-getters and enterprising, or they do not have it, or their only motivation is the payment, they do not make much effort and their work is only done correctly. Entrepreneurs also point to the approach to work as a disadvantage; young people treat work in relation to the contract they received. If it is work until, for example, 3 p.m., they will not work extra hours. Entrepreneurs emphasize that young employees work as much as they have to and nothing more. Additionally, when they are on sick leave, they are not interested in work and whether their absence will be problematic for the company. This indicates a great sense of separation between private life and work among Generation Z employees (Muster, 2020).

These are obvious disadvantages for employers, but for representatives of Generation Z themselves, especially in terms of awareness of the time frame and content of the duties performed, they may be advantages. The above disadvantages may be a big challenge for employers in the context of human resources management however it is a profitable process in many respects because Generation Z employees are a gigantic resource and have many advantages. Young employees from Generation Z are undoubtedly well-educated and open to novelties and new solutions. Brought up in the era of social media and the Internet, they know these tools perfectly and can perfectly support this aspect of enterprise operations (Wulur, Mandagi, 2023). Because it is certain that most companies, especially in the service and sales industries, cannot function without well-executed advertising in social media and the Internet, because in today's world closely connected with the Internet, operating without social media is almost impossible. Therefore, Generation Z employees are of particular value when it comes to social media and the Internet. Additionally, these are people who have excellent knowledge of IT techniques and use advanced computer programs, because they grew up in the era of general availability of this type of equipment. When talking about their advantages, entrepreneurs also mention the ability to quickly absorb information as well as openness and curiosity about knowledge. Young people are often independent when absorbing new information and looking

for new solutions to problems that arise in everyday life in the company, they are also able to learn from their own mistakes and try again when the attempt ends in failure (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021).

Entrepreneurs observe a significant difference between young employees and those from previous generations. Young employees are not afraid to voice their opinions and driven by curiosity actively seek solutions to problems that arise in their professional activities. In contrast, older generations tend to wait for designated teams to resolve issues rather than attempting to address them themselves. Older workers often lack the curiosity and innovation that are evident in the behaviors and attitudes of younger employees. Employers also notice a strong willingness among young employees to develop and acquire new skills. They are eager to take on new challenges but dislike routine and repetitive tasks, as they are motivated by the desire for constant growth and development (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014).

This attitude of young employees can be a valuable asset to the company, as their innovative ideas can positively influence the overall creativity and adaptability of the organization. Another advantage of the younger generation is their language skills. Most members of Generation Z have a functional command of English, with a significant portion possessing advanced proficiency, and many also speak a second foreign language.

It is also important to consider that Generation Z will soon enter the labor market and will become a powerful force, making their management not only a necessity for individual organizations but also a broader imperative. In various publications, representatives of Generation Z highlight their strengths, such as resilience to stress, strong organizational skills, multitasking abilities, and openness to the world and acquiring new skills. Generation Z describes themselves as individuals who do not follow rigid, formulaic approaches. They are not afraid to take risks, despite having been taught to obey and think within structured patterns from a young age. They see themselves as determined individuals, eager to achieve their goals and stand out in the labor market (Wulur, Mandagi, 2023). As mentioned earlier Generation Z is aware of the challenging situation in the labor market. Therefore most members of Generation Z begin their professional activities while still in school or university participating in various extracurricular organizations to enhance their resumes for their first serious job. They aim to gain valuable experience from each professional opportunity, focusing on building their individuality. If needed they are also flexible and open to working abroad to expand their career prospects (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021).

To summarize, as has been correctly pointed out in the literature cited, like every generation before it, Generation Z has both advantages and disadvantages as employees. While the disadvantages may pose challenges in managing Generation Z staff the advantages offer significant benefits to entrepreneurs and organizations. However the advantages of Generation Z far outweigh the disadvantages and effective management of this generation's workforce can enhance these strengths, allowing Generation Z employees to thrive and contribute positively to the company.

5. Intergenerational differences in terms of employment and human resources management

Currently, employers, considering generational differences, face many challenges when managing generationally diverse staff. The employers notice significant differences between older generations and Generation Z (Alferjany, Alias, 2020).

Representatives of Generation Z can be difficult to manage due to their approach to work and awareness in many areas. They perfectly understand their value therefore a potential workplace must meet all their requirements. Despite the difficult situation on the labor market, Generation Z is aware of its value and openly presents its main motivators to work. Generation Z largely in terms of motivation, needs respect, opportunities for development, job security and certainty. and treated seriously by their employer, they want to be noticed and appreciated for their skills and they want to fulfill their dreams by doing their job. It can be concluded here that Generation Z, brought up in prosperity, strives for self-fulfillment and development, as well as a job in which they can gain position and recognition (Garg, Mahipalan, 2023).

The representatives of Generation Z, when choosing a workplace are guided mostly by the criterion of a good atmosphere and relationships with people, good location and quick access to work and employment stability, which was the first priority among Generation Y. This shows significant ideological differences between generations and the influence of historical factors on the perception of employment. The possibility of flexible work has also become more important for Generation Z than for older generations. The same happened in the case of the opportunity to acquire new skills, the percentage is much higher than in the case of older generations (Heyns, Kerr, 2018).

Now that we understand the differences between generations, it's important to focus on the aspect of motivation. While traditional employee motivation techniques have been highly effective for older generations, they may pose challenges when applied to Generation Z. Generation Z is highly diverse in the labor market, comprising individuals who have graduated from college with higher education, as well as those who are just entering the workforce. How should these individuals be motivated to achieve organizational goals? Selecting the right leadership style is crucial in this regard.

There are many leadership styles. Leadership itself can be defined as placing emphasis on performing certain activities that are good from the point of view of achieving goals in the organization. Leadership can also be presented as a transactional process. Between the group and the leader, where the leader and group members exchange time and commitment for monetary rewards or social support. A good leader motivates group members to achieve goals that are important to the group. A leader must define his or her leadership style, as mentioned above, there are many concepts of leadership. Popular styles are: autocratic style, democratic style or liberal style (Kraus, 2017).

The first style, the autocratic style, is distinguished by clear and transparent delegation of tasks to the team, isolation of expected results and describing them to employees. This is a style in which the leader decides what a given group does, what actions it takes and what its results are. This leader uses a system of praise and reprimand and does not participate in the process of working on a given aspect. The second style, the democratic style, is slightly different from the autocratic style, while in the autocratic style it is the leader who decides on all aspects of task execution, in the case of the democratic style, the leader agrees on the task with the team and consults with it at all stages of execution. actions. However, the last liberal style is associated with overall freedom of action in the team. In this style, the leader provides the materials needed to complete the task and does not supervise the process. There are also many other leadership styles, which are often a mix of the above-mentioned concepts. A good leader should adapt his leadership style to the unit he leads (Kraus, 2017).

However, referring to the management of Generation Z, there are two factors that determine the leadership style that the organization will choose: competence and commitment (Easton, Steyn, 2022). As mentioned above. Generation Z representatives have varying degrees of education and skills.

When their skills are low and their commitment is high, a directive style should be chosen, in which the employee should be taught and mentored by the leader. In a situation where there are both low competences and low commitment, a coaching style should be adopted, where the employee will be directed to the appropriate paths, trained and supported at every stage of activity. However, when the competences are medium to high and the employee's involvement is variable. A supportive style should be adopted, including praise, listening to the employee's comments and objections, and making it easier for him to perform a given job. However, when there is both a high degree of competence and high commitment, a delegating style can be used, which has identical features to the liberal style, i.e. delegation of responsibility for making decisions (Kraus, 2017). In the motivational aspect, in each of the above situations, an employee can be motivated to act. As mentioned above, young employees expect, above all, respect, forms of self-development and a good atmosphere. They are people who are much easier to motivate when their goals coincide with the goals of the organization. Additionally, feedback is important to them because without it, they feel lost and have the impression that they are not important for the organization and the knowledge needed to perform a given task will not be provided to them. handed over (Easton, Steyn, 2022). Therefore, feedback is a key element in managing Generation Z employees, and the most important and key elements of feedback are praise for a job well done and drawing attention to elements that can be improved in the future so as not to make mistakes while performing the task (Alferjany, Alias, 2020).

In the context of Generation Z organizations are often advised to change their staff management policies. Because Generation Z knows its value in the labor market and is not entirely loyal to one entity. Motivation should also be comprehensive. Where the organization's activities should not be focused only on material motivators but in the case of Generation Z,

emphasis must also be placed on intangible motivators. Because in the long run material motivators may turn out to be ineffective for Generation Z employees and will not determine whether a given employee will remain in the place of employment or change it to another one (Easton, Steyn, 2022).

To sum up, most authors understand and rightly point out that managing and motivating Generation Z employees can present a significant challenge for entrepreneurs. However retaining Generation Z employees within their organizations will bring substantial value in terms of innovation. The above theoretical and epistemological considerations serve as an introduction to the study, the results of which, along with conclusions will be presented at the end of the second part.

6. Summary

The above considerations of a theoretical and epistemological nature constitute an introduction to the survey which outcomes are presented in the following paper (part II) and which is the integral part of this work. They provide the conceptual framework and methodological orientation that underpin the research process. The aim is to establish a solid foundation upon which the subsequent analysis can be built. The study itself is divided into two main parts, each addressing specific aspects of the research question in a structured and coherent manner. The major findings together with conclusions are discussed at the end of the second part where the implications of the results are also considered in light of the initial theoretical premises. The theoretical background outlined in part I of the paper serves as a foundation for the design and interpretation of the survey. It formulates the research questions and hypotheses ensuring that the empirical investigation is grounded in a coherent conceptual context.

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