



Work Ethics, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Leadership at RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus

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Abstract

Employee performance plays an essential role in ensuring service quality and organizational sustainability in healthcare institutions. This study aims to examine the influence of work ethic and job satisfaction on employee performance with leadership as a mediating variable at RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey method involving 200 hospital employees as respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS.

The results show that work ethic and job satisfaction have positive and significant effects on leadership. In addition, work ethic, job satisfaction, and leadership each have positive and significant influences on employee performance. Mediation analysis further indicates that leadership significantly mediates the relationship between work ethic and employee performance as well as between job satisfaction and employee performance.

The novelty of this study lies in empirically demonstrating the mediating role of leadership in strengthening the relationship between work ethic, job satisfaction, and employee performance in a hospital context in Indonesia. These findings highlight the importance of fostering a strong work ethic, enhancing job satisfaction, and strengthening leadership practices to improve employee performance in healthcare organizations.

Keywords: Work Ethic, Job Satisfaction, Leadership, and Employee Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is crucial to organizational success, including in healthcare. Service quality, productivity, and patient satisfaction depend on optimal performance (Dessler, 2024). Many hospitals struggle to maximize employee performance due to work ethic, job satisfaction, and leadership style.

Work ethic is a set of rules and values that tell workers how to do their jobs. People who have a strong work ethic are usually disciplined, responsible, and professional at work (Yusuf & Syarif, 2021). Previous studies have shown that work ethic exerts a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Pratama & Riyanto, 2022). Job satisfaction also affects performance. A person's job satisfaction depends on how well their expectations match their experiences (Sutrisno, 2020). Job satisfaction boosts motivation, commitment, and performance (Widodo & Damayanti, 2023).

Nevertheless, the effects of work ethic and job satisfaction on performance cannot be separated from the role of leadership. Effective leadership that provides direction, motivation, and support plays a crucial role in enhancing performance by creating a conducive work environment (Northouse, 2021). Supportive and communicative leadership styles can mitigate the impacts of work ethic and job satisfaction on performance via coordination, communication, and employee empowerment mechanisms (Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2020).

However, several previous studies have mainly examined the direct effects of work ethic and job satisfaction on employee performance, while the mechanisms that explain how these factors influence performance remain insufficiently explored. In particular, the mediating role of leadership as a strategic factor linking employee attitudes and performance outcomes has received limited empirical attention in the literature (Alrowwad et al., 2020; Inuwa, 2022). Most prior studies also tend to analyze work ethic, job satisfaction, and employee performance relationships separately rather than integrating them within a comprehensive structural model that explains the interaction between employee attitudes and leadership behavior (Khan et al., 2021).

Furthermore, empirical evidence within the healthcare sector remains relatively limited, especially in hospital environments where service quality, teamwork, and professional responsibility are highly emphasized (Babalola et al., 2022). Many previous studies have predominantly focused on corporate or manufacturing sectors, which may not adequately capture the complex organizational dynamics present in healthcare institutions (Alshmemri et al., 2021). In addition, studies examining these variables in regional or private hospitals in developing countries, particularly Indonesia, are still scarce. This indicates a research gap regarding how leadership functions as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the relationship between work ethic, job satisfaction, and employee performance in healthcare organizations.

As one of Kudus Regency's private hospitals, RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus encounters a complex service environment, especially in meeting public demand for professional, timely, and empathetic healthcare. Thus, this organization must examine how work ethic and job satisfaction affect employee performance through leadership. Given the limited empirical research conducted in hospital settings in Kudus, this study aims to provide academic contributions and practical recommendations for the management of RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus to improve sustainable work productivity.

Based on this background, this study examined the effects of work ethic and job satisfaction on employee performance through leadership at RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus, thereby offering insights for the development of human resource management strategies in the healthcare service sector.

THEORITICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in Human Resource Management (HRM) Theory and Organizational Behavior (OB) Theory, which explain how individual attitudes and organizational factors interact to influence employee performance. HRM theory emphasizes that organizational performance is strongly influenced by employee attitudes, work values, and leadership practices that guide employee behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Dessler, 2024). Meanwhile, Organizational Behavior theory explains how psychological factors such as job satisfaction and motivation affect employee attitudes, behavior, and performance within an organization (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Within this theoretical perspective, work ethic and job satisfaction represent individual-level psychological and behavioral factors, while leadership represents an organizational-level contextual factor that shapes employee attitudes and behaviors. These factors collectively influence employee performance outcomes.

Work Ethic

Work ethic comprises a set of values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect individual commitment, discipline, and responsibility in the workplace. Work ethic is essential because it motivates individuals to work productively and professionally. Quantitative research demonstrates that work ethic can influence employee performance both directly and indirectly through variables such as job satisfaction (Norawati dan Harahap, 2024).

According to human resource management theory, work ethic directs individuals to act responsibly, maintain discipline, and prioritize the quality of their work outcomes. Conceptually, a stronger work ethic increases the likelihood of achieving high performance. Human resource management literature emphasizes that positive work behavior influences organizational effectiveness and outcomes (Dessler, 2024).

Job Satisfaction

Based on work evaluations, job satisfaction refers to positive feelings about one's work. Most scholars consider job satisfaction a key indicator of work psychology and employee well-being. Recent studies show that job satisfaction directly affects performance and moderates the correlation between work ethic, job satisfaction, and performance (Setyaningsih and Fitriyani, 2023).

According to organizational behavior theory, job satisfaction reflects employees' emotional and evaluative responses to their jobs, working conditions, and work outcomes, which affect motivation and performance (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Leadership

Leadership involves motivating others to achieve organizational goals. Positive leadership boosts employee motivation, commitment, and performance. Research proves that leadership, work ethic, and job satisfaction affect employee performance (Arifin et al., 2024).

Theoretical frameworks in contemporary management literature point out the importance of motivating skill, guiding skill, and subordinates' contribution encouragement to realize organizational objectives (Northouse, 2021).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the individual work outcomes while carrying out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with organizational standards. Quantitative studies reveal positive correlations among work ethic, job satisfaction, leadership, and employee performance, especially in productive and dynamic organizational contexts (Anglena et al., 2026).

Human resource management and organizational behavior literature further confirms that performance results from a combination of individual factors, such as ability and motivation, and contextual factors, such as leadership and work culture (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Effects of Work Ethic on Leadership

A strong work ethic fosters positive work behaviors that enable leaders to guide and motivate subordinates more effectively. A favorable work ethic also helps leaders create beneficial working correlations with their coworkers (Arifin et al., 2024).

H1: Work ethic positively influences leadership.

Effects of Job Satisfaction on Leadership

Employees who experience high job satisfaction tend to display positive attitudes toward authority and leadership approaches, thereby enhancing leadership effectiveness. Happy employees are also more likely to follow directions, which facilitates reaching the shared goals (Arifin et al., 2024).

H2: Job satisfaction positively influences leadership.

Effects of Work Ethic on Employee Performance

Work ethic reflects individual commitment and professionalism in task execution. High levels of work ethic promote disciplined and responsible work behavior, which ultimately improves employee performance (Anglena et al., 2026).

H3: Work ethic positively influences employee performance.

Effects of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

Job satisfaction increases individual motivation to perform better, strengthens organizational loyalty, reduces stress, and improves overall work output (Setyaningsih and Fitriyani, 2023).

H4: Job satisfaction positively influences employee performance.

Effects of Leadership on Employee Performance

Effective leadership styles increase subordinate engagement in organizational tasks and promote superior performance outcomes through motivation, effective communication, and employee support (Arifin et al., 2024).

H5: Leadership positively influences employee performance.

Mediating Role of Leadership

Leadership can function as a mediating variable that strengthens the effects of work ethic and job satisfaction on employee performance. Effective leaders improve task completion and employee commitment and engagement, reinforcing the antecedent variable-performance correlation (Arifin et al., 2024).

H6: leadership mediates the effects of work ethic on employee performance.

H7: leadership mediates the effects of job satisfaction on employee performance.

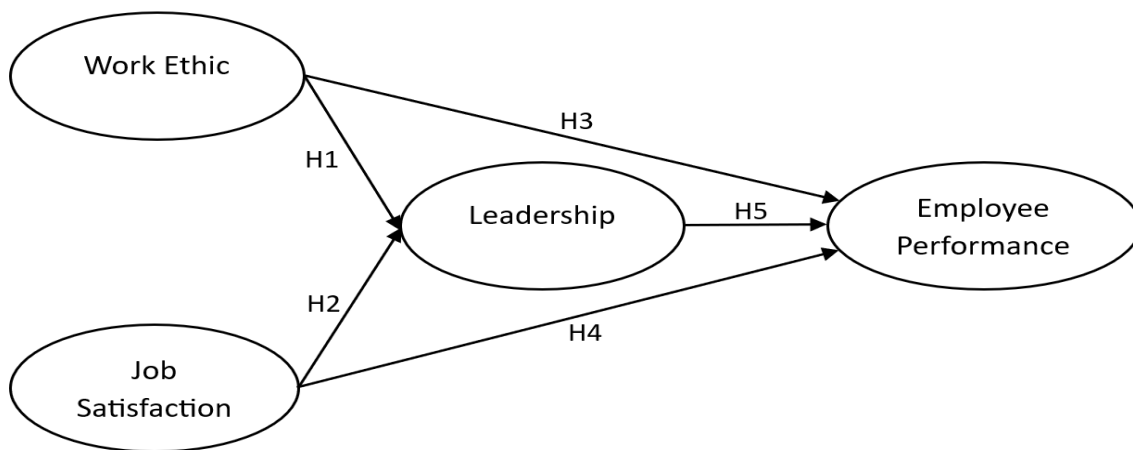


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between work ethic, job satisfaction, leadership, and employee performance. Explanatory research aims to test hypotheses and explain the relationships among variables through statistical analysis. In this study, the design was used to analyze how work ethic and job satisfaction influence employee performance through leadership at RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study consisted of employees working at RS Sarkies Aisyiyah Kudus. A probability sampling approach was applied using a simple random sampling technique to ensure that each employee had an equal opportunity to be selected as a respondent. A total of 200 employees participated in the study, which is considered adequate for structural equation modeling analysis using PLS-SEM because the sample size exceeds the minimum requirement for models with multiple latent variables and mediation paths (Hair et al., 2022).

Questionnaire Development and Measurement

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of several measurement items adapted from established scales in previous studies. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The measurement instruments were adapted as follows:

- Work Ethic: measured using items adapted from previous studies on work values and professional commitment (Yusuf & Syarif, 2021; Norawati & Harahap, 2024). Example indicators include discipline in completing tasks, responsibility toward work duties, and commitment to work quality.
- Job Satisfaction: measured using items adapted from organizational behavior research (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Setyaningsih & Fitriyani, 2023). Indicators include satisfaction with work tasks, working conditions, compensation, and relationships with colleagues.

- Leadership: measured using leadership behavior indicators derived from leadership theory literature (Northouse, 2021; Arifin et al., 2024). Indicators include leaders' ability to provide direction, motivate employees, communicate effectively, and support subordinates.
- Employee Performance: measured using performance indicators related to work quality, productivity, responsibility, and task completion in accordance with organizational standards (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Anglena et al., 2026).

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The PLS-SEM method was selected because it enables the simultaneous analysis of relationships among latent variables in both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). This method is also suitable for complex research models that include mediating variables and does not require strict data normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2022).

Reliability and Validity Criteria

To ensure the quality of the measurement model, several evaluation criteria were applied:

- Convergent validity, assessed using factor loadings (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50).
- Construct reliability, evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR >0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70).
- Discriminant validity, assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loading values to ensure that each construct is distinct from others.

These procedures ensure that the measurement instruments are both reliable and valid for testing the proposed research model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Data

The respondent data describe 200 participants.

Table 1.

Characteristics	Respondent Characteristics		
	Information	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-30 years old	70	35%
	31-40 years old	99	49,5%
	41-50 years old	23	11,5%
	>50 years old	8	4%
Sex types	Male	92	46%
	Female	108	54%
Education	Diploma III/Bachelor	188	94%
	Master	9	4,5%
	Doctoral	3	1,5%
Department	Media	127	63,5%
	Non-medic	73	36,5%

Source: Processed Primary Data

Hypothesis Testing (Bootstrapping)

Convergent validity in the measurement model was assessed by comparing indicator scores to construct scores as shown by loading factor values. An indicator is valid if its loading factor exceeds 0.70. Higher loading factor values indicate better indicator representations of the latent construct.

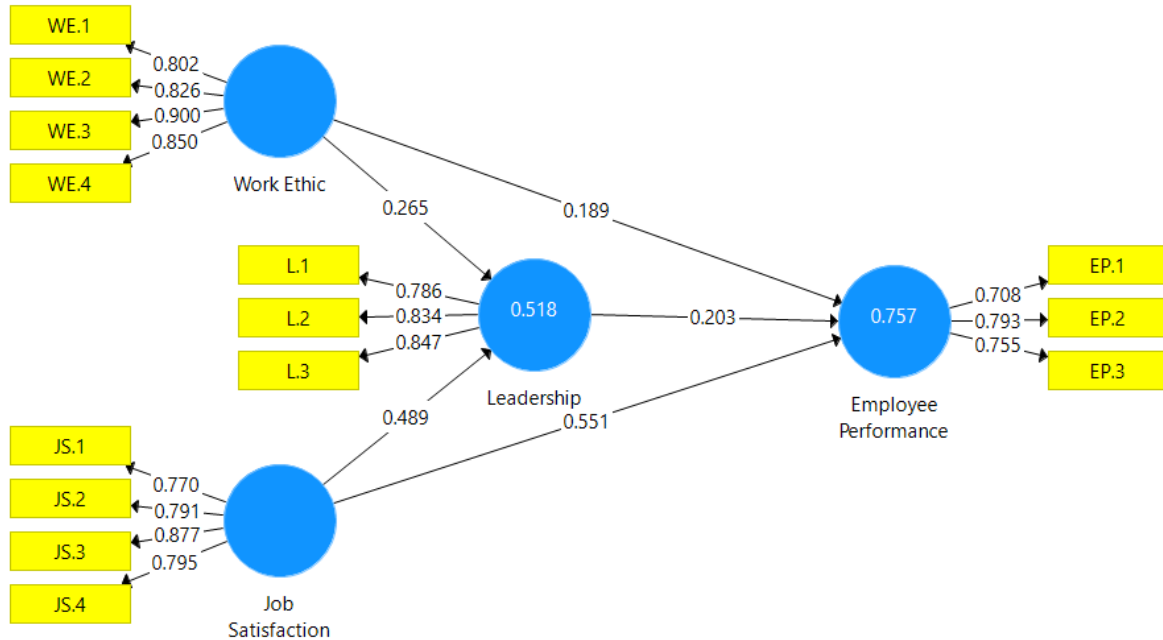


Figure 2
Analytical Framework of Theoretical Notion

Direct Hypothesis Testing

Table 2.
Direct Effect

Effect	Original Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Findings
WE -> L	0.265	0.274	0.080	3.293	0.001	H1 Supported
JS -> L	0.489	0.481	0.081	6.022	0.000	H2 Supported
WE -> EP	0.189	0.196	0.066	2.882	0.004	H3 Supported
JS -> EP	0.551	0.546	0.061	9.097	0.000	H4 Supported
L -> EP	0.203	0.203	0.057	3.591	0.000	H5 Supported

Source: SmartPLS-Processed Data

The table shows the correlation between work ethic, job satisfaction, employee performance, and leadership. All direct-effect hypotheses indicate positive and significant effects.

Hypothetical Test of Indirect Effect

Table 3.
Indirect Effects

Effect	Original Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Findings
WE -> L -> EP	0.054	0.053	0.021	2.515	0.013	H6 Supported
JS -> L -> EP	0.099	0.097	0.035	2.820	0.005	H7 Supported

Source: SmartPLS-Processed Data

The mediation results indicate that leadership mediates the effect of work ethic on employee performance and also mediates the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance.

Discussion

Effects of Work Ethic on Leadership

Work ethic has an original sample value of 0.265, a t-statistic of 3.293, and a p-value of 0.001. These findings indicate that work ethic positively and significantly influences leadership. Higher levels of employee work ethic contribute to more effective leadership within the organization. In a hospital environment, discipline, responsibility, and professional commitment among employees support leadership credibility and strengthen trust between leaders and subordinates.

Hospitals operate in a highly structured and professional environment where teamwork and adherence to ethical standards are essential. When employees demonstrate strong work ethics—such as punctuality, accountability, and commitment to service quality—leaders can more easily coordinate work activities and maintain organizational discipline. This condition enables leaders to implement policies more effectively and foster a culture of professionalism. These findings support research by Yusuf & Sari (2021) suggesting that work ethic forms the foundation for effective leadership and strengthens subordinates' trust in organizational leaders.

Effects of Job Satisfaction on Leadership

Job satisfaction shows an original sample value of 0.489, a t-statistic of 6.022, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a positive and significant effect on leadership. Employees who are satisfied with their job roles, compensation, work environment, and relationships with colleagues tend to develop positive attitudes toward organizational leadership.

In healthcare organizations, job satisfaction is particularly important because hospital employees often work under demanding conditions that involve long working hours, emotional stress, and high responsibility for patient care. When employees feel satisfied with their work environment and organizational support, they are more willing to cooperate with leaders and follow organizational directives. According to Robbins & Judge (2022), job satisfaction reflects positive work attitudes that strengthen employees' acceptance of leadership and organizational policies, thereby enhancing leadership effectiveness.

Effects of Work Ethic on Employee Performance

The analysis shows that work ethic has an original sample value of 0.189, a t-statistic of 2.882, and a p-value of 0.004, indicating a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees with strong work ethics tend to demonstrate disciplined work behavior, professional responsibility, and a commitment to achieving organizational goals.

In the context of healthcare organizations, work ethic plays a critical role in maintaining service quality and patient safety. Hospital employees are required to perform tasks accurately, follow strict medical procedures, and provide responsive services to patients. Therefore, employees who possess strong work ethics are more likely to maintain high productivity and service quality. These findings are consistent with organizational behavior theory, which states that strong work values enhance intrinsic motivation and improve individual performance (Colquitt et al., 2021).

Effects of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

The results show that job satisfaction has an original sample value of 0.551, a t-statistic of 9.097, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees who experience high levels of job satisfaction tend to demonstrate stronger loyalty, commitment, and productivity.

In hospital organizations, job satisfaction is closely related to employees' perceptions of fairness, professional recognition, and workplace support. Healthcare professionals who feel valued and supported by their organizations are more motivated to provide high-quality patient care and perform their duties effectively. Studies Sutanto & Rahmawati (2020) have also identified job satisfaction as a strong predictor of employee performance in healthcare institutions.

Effects of Leadership on Employee Performance

Leadership shows a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with an original sample value of 0.203, a t-statistic of 3.591, and a p-value of 0.000. Leaders who demonstrate effective communication, inspiration, and support are able to increase employee morale and improve hospital service effectiveness.

Leadership is particularly crucial in healthcare organizations because hospitals operate in complex and high-risk environments that require coordination among various professional groups such as doctors, nurses, and administrative staff. Effective leaders can facilitate communication, manage conflicts, and ensure that all employees work toward common organizational goals. These findings support transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes that effective leadership enhances employee performance through motivation, inspiration, and idealized influence (Bass & Riggio, 2019).

Effects of Work Ethic Mediated by Leadership on Employee Performance

The mediation analysis demonstrates that leadership significantly mediates the relationship between work ethic and employee performance, as indicated by an original

sample value of 0.054, a t-statistic of 2.515, and a p-value of 0.013. This finding confirms that leadership acts as a mechanism that translates employees' work ethic into improved performance outcomes.

In hospital settings, leadership plays an important role in transforming employees' professional values and work commitment into coordinated service delivery. Leaders who promote ethical standards, accountability, and professional discipline can reinforce employees' work ethics and align them with organizational goals. Consequently, leadership strengthens the influence of work ethic on employee performance by creating a supportive organizational climate and encouraging consistent professional behavior. Previous studies also suggest that ethical leadership strengthens the relationship between work values and employee performance by enhancing commitment and intrinsic motivation (Hassan et al., 2020).

Effects of Job Satisfaction Mediated by Leadership on Employee Performance

Leadership also significantly mediates the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance, with an original sample value of 0.099, a t-statistic of 2.820, and a p-value of 0.005. This indicates that job satisfaction affects employee performance both directly and indirectly through leadership.

In healthcare organizations, leadership plays a critical role in maintaining employee engagement and well-being. Leaders who provide emotional support, clear communication, and fair management practices can enhance employees' job satisfaction. Higher job satisfaction, in turn, encourages employees to perform their tasks more effectively and provide better patient services. According to Kim and Park (2019), supportive leadership strengthens the relationship between employee satisfaction and performance by increasing engagement and organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide several important managerial implications for hospital management, particularly in improving employee performance through strengthening work ethic, job satisfaction, and leadership effectiveness.

1. Hospital management should implement leadership development programs aimed at enhancing managerial and supervisory competencies. Training programs such as leadership workshops, coaching sessions, and mentoring systems can help leaders develop communication skills, ethical decision-making abilities, and motivational strategies. In the healthcare context, leaders who are supportive, communicative, and inspirational are essential for maintaining high service quality and employee morale.
2. The hospital should design human resource policies that strengthen work ethic among employees. This can be achieved by promoting organizational values such as discipline, responsibility, integrity, and professional commitment through regular training, internal campaigns, and performance-based recognition systems. Establishing clear performance standards and providing constructive feedback will encourage employees to maintain high levels of professionalism and accountability.
3. Improving job satisfaction should become a strategic priority for hospital management. Practical initiatives may include improving the work environment, ensuring fair compensation and benefits, offering career development opportunities, and strengthening

interpersonal relationships among staff. Creating a supportive and collaborative workplace culture will increase employee motivation, loyalty, and commitment to organizational goals.

4. Hospital management should integrate leadership practices into performance management systems. Leaders should actively monitor employee performance, provide regular evaluations, and offer guidance and support for professional development. By doing so, leadership can effectively mediate the influence of work ethic and job satisfaction on employee performance.
5. The hospital can establish continuous evaluation mechanisms, such as employee satisfaction surveys and leadership performance assessments, to monitor organizational climate and leadership effectiveness. These evaluation tools will allow management to identify potential issues early and implement targeted improvement strategies.

Overall, the results suggest that hospital management should adopt an integrated strategy that combines leadership development, strong work ethics cultivation, and job satisfaction improvement to achieve sustainable improvements in employee performance and healthcare service quality.

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