

Dispute Resolution Effectiveness and Settlement Rates in the Katarungang Pambarangay System in General Santos City

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Abstract

The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system serves as a legally mandated, community-based framework in the Philippines designed to resolve local conflicts through mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. This study aimed to evaluate the system's dispute resolution effectiveness—specifically across the dimensions of implementation, performance, and compliance—and analyze objective settlement rates in the six highest-volume barangays of General Santos City from 2020 to 2024. Utilizing a Descriptive and Correlational research design, the study gathered primary data from 84 currently serving Lupon Tagapamayapa members selected through proportionate sampling. Data collection employed a dual-component approach: a modified survey questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale to measure perceived effectiveness and a systematic document review of annual case records provided by the respective Lupon clerks. Statistical analysis involved weighted means for descriptive data and Spearman's Rank Correlation for inferential testing. The findings indicated that the KP system in selected barangays of General Santos City operates at a "Very High/Excellent" level of effectiveness across all measured dimensions: Compliance achieved the highest overall mean (3.9), followed by Implementation (3.8) and Performance (3.7). Moreover, settlement rates were robust, ranging from 76.10% in Barangay Calumpang to a perfect 100% in Barangay San Isidro. Inferential analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all effectiveness indicators and successful settlement outcomes. Compliance with legal procedures was identified as the strongest driver of successful settlements ($r=0.385, p=0.000$), suggesting that strict adherence to mandated legal protocols is more influential than individual mediator qualifications alone. The study concludes that the KP system in General Santos City successfully fulfills its mandate to decongest formal court dockets by resolving most disputes at the grassroots level. Recommendations focus on strengthening systematic recording systems and institutionalizing regular specialized training for Lupon members to sustain their high level of procedural integrity and legal mastery.

Keywords: Katarungang Pambarangay, Dispute Resolution, Settlement Rates, General Santos City, Lupon Tagapamayapa, Procedural Compliance

1. Introduction

Community-based justice systems have emerged globally as vital alternatives to formal court proceedings, particularly in regions where judicial institutions are overburdened, under-resourced, or inaccessible to the public. These localized mechanisms serve a dual purpose: they decongest formal court dockets and reinforce social cohesion by resolving disputes in ways that preserve relationships and reflect cultural values (Morales, 2025; Suarez & Talisayon, 2026). In the Philippines, this concept is operationalized through the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP), a legally mandated process rooted in community engagement and restorative justice (Morales, 2025; Suarez & Talisayon, 2026). This research is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and provides a vital framework for analyzing informal justice systems like the Katarungang Pambarangay (Barangay Justice System) (Arugay & Baquisal, 2024). The legal foundation of the KP system was initially institutionalized through Presidential Decree No. 1508 in 1978 and later reinforced under Republic Act No. 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991 (Benter, 2020; Verdad, 2024). This is further supported by the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Act of 2004, which advocates for party autonomy and empowers barangays to maintain peace (Barcellano, 2025; Mente et al., 2025). The primary objectives of the KP system include promoting community harmony, providing a speedy and inexpensive administration of justice, and reducing the volume of cases brought before formal courts (Garcia, 2019; Metillo, 2022).

As General Santos City experiences rapid population growth and urbanization, the complexity and volume of community disputes have increased significantly. While the KP system is a vital alternative to formal litigation, a gap exists in

evaluating its performance within high-volume urban hubs where population density and community diversity create a complex dispute landscape. This study addresses this oversight by evaluating the level of effectiveness in terms of Implementation, Performance, and Compliance, and analyzing how these indicators correlate with actual Settlement Rates in the city's most active barangays.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in dispute resolution and settlement rates across the top 6 high-volume population barangays in General Santos City from 2020-2024. Specifically, the research evaluates the level of effectiveness across three distinct dimensions: implementation, performance, and compliance. Furthermore, it analyzes the settlement rate, defined as the percentage of disputes successfully resolved at the barangay level without escalating to higher courts. Ultimately, the study seeks to identify if a significant relationship exists between these effectiveness indicators and the overall settlement outcomes.

By assessing the effectiveness of the KP system (implementation, performance, and compliance), the settlement rate, and the relationship between effectiveness and settlement outcomes, this study directly contributes to understanding how well the KP system functions in high-volume barangays.

The conceptual framework for evaluating the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system's effectiveness in high-volume barangays of General Santos City is structured around four main components that interact with contextual factors and external influences to determine overall system effectiveness. The conceptual framework of this study examines the relationship between the effectiveness of dispute resolution in the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system and the settlement rate of disputes in the top six high-volume barangays of General Santos City from 2020 to 2024. The independent variable in this study is the effectiveness of dispute resolution, which is assessed based on three key factors: implementation, performance, and compliance. These factors collectively determine how well the KP system functions in addressing community disputes.

The dependent variable in this study is the settlement rate, which is defined as the percentage of disputes successfully resolved at the barangay level without escalating to higher courts. A higher settlement rate suggests that the KP system is effectively mediating conflicts, reducing the caseload burden on the formal judicial system.

This conceptual framework is significant as it provides a structured approach to assessing the factors contributing to successful dispute resolution at the barangay level. It enables the study to determine whether barangays with higher effectiveness in dispute resolution have correspondingly higher settlement rates. Furthermore, it helps identify which specific aspects of effectiveness—implementation, performance, or compliance—have the most substantial impact on dispute resolution success. By analyzing these factors, the study aims to provide policy recommendations to improve the KP system, ensuring more efficient and sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms at the community level.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Descriptive and Correlational research design to examine the effectiveness of dispute resolution in relation to settlement rates within the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system. The design investigated the relationship between barangay-level effectiveness indicators—operationalized in terms of implementation, performance, and compliance—and overall settlement rates in the top six high-volume barangays of General Santos City, covering KP cases recorded from 2020 to 2024.

Two complementary quantitative components were utilized: a survey component to describe and measure the level of effectiveness of dispute resolution in terms of implementation, performance, and compliance, and a case-record analysis component to review settlement rates of KP cases. Through this descriptive–correlational approach, the study described existing conditions and examined the statistical associations between effectiveness indicators and settlement rates without manipulating any variables, thereby providing empirical insights into the performance and effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in real-world barangay settings.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in General Santos City, focusing on the six barangays with the highest population volumes: Calumpang, Labangal, Fatima, San Isidro, Apopong, and Lagao. These barangays represent some of the most densely populated communities in the city, with a combined population of approximately 414,361 residents (based on 2020 Census). The high population density of the selected barangays, substantial KP case volumes, and diverse socio-demographic profiles make them suitable sites for examining the implementation, performance, compliance, and settlement outcomes of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in an urban context. By focusing on these high-volume

barangays, the study provides a relevant setting for evaluating how community-based dispute resolution mechanisms function in densely populated environments and how they contribute to maintaining peace and order at the barangay level in General Santos City.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents for the interview component of this study were 84 currently serving Lupon Tagapamayapa members from the six selected barangays of General Santos City, namely Calumpang, Labangal, Fatima, San Isidro, Apopong, and Lagao. The total population of Lupon members in these areas is $N=120$.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size is estimated by using the formula for the Sample Size in Estimating the mean by Pre-sampling. To maintain statistical balance and ensure that the sample accurately reflects the composition of the Lupon across all locales, the study utilized Proportionate sampling. This ensures that each subgroup is directly representative of its size relative to the entire population. To ensure equal representation and symmetry across the six strata (where each barangay has an equal population of 20), the allocation was adjusted to 14 respondents per barangay. This resulted in a final utilized sample size of 84 respondents, exceeding the minimum requirement suggested by the statistician to ensure robust data collection.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilizes a dual-component instrumentation approach consisting of a primary survey questionnaire for perception-based data and document review for objective case analysis. The primary instrument is a survey questionnaire adopted and modified from Noveloso et al. (2024), titled "Harmonizing community justice: evaluating the effectiveness of Katarungang Pambarangay in Bacnotan, La Union." The tool is specifically designed to measure the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system through 19 distinct indicators categorized into three key variables: Implementation, Performance, and Compliance, utilizing a 4-Point Likert Scale. Before full-scale implementation, the instrument underwent a validation process from the panel list to ensure content validity. Furthermore, a pre-sampling phase was conducted involving 30 participants (5 per barangay). This pilot stage served to refine the wording of the indicators, ensure internal consistency, and verify the accuracy of the data-gathering approach for the selected barangays of General Santos City. To supplement the survey data, the researcher utilized document review to analyze objective case management statistics from 2020 to 2024. This involved the systematic review of annual KP case distribution logs and conciliation performance metrics provided by the respective Lupon Clerks.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a systematic, multi-phase procedure to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and ethical integrity of the data collected regarding the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system from 2020 to 2024. First, the researcher secured formal approvals from the authorities. This included submitting letters of permission to the City Mayor of General Santos City and the Barangay Captains of the selected barangays. Second, a pre-sampling phase was conducted involving 30 participants (5 respondents from each of the six barangays). Third is the Sampling Selection and Distribution. The selection of respondents from the Lupon Tagapamayapa was conducted using proportionate sampling to ensure that each of the six target locales was equally represented. To maintain statistical symmetry and ensure comprehensive evaluation, the sample was distributed equally, resulting in 14 respondents from each of the six barangays. The researcher personally administered the survey questionnaires to all 84 respondents through scheduled barangay visits. Fourth, While the surveys were being administered, the researcher conducted a systematic document review of KP case records from 2020 to 2024. This involved examining annual case distribution logs and conciliation performance metrics provided by the Lupon Clerks. Lastly, the researcher verified the completeness and accuracy of the data acquired. Any inconsistent or missing responses were clarified through follow-up coordination with the respective respondents.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

To provide a rigorous evaluation of the gathered data, the researcher employed both descriptive and inferential statistical treatments. The analysis was conducted in sequential stages to ensure the validity of the relationships identified between variables. For descriptive statistics, the weighted mean was the primary measure used to assess the level of dispute resolution effectiveness across the three dimensions: implementation, performance, and compliance. Moreover, a test for normality was performed to determine the distribution of the data before conducting correlational analysis. Specifically, the Shapiro-Wilk Test was utilized for each effectiveness variable (Implementation, Performance, and Compliance). This step was critical in deciding whether to apply parametric or nonparametric statistical tests for the subsequent correlation with settlement rates. As the normality test revealed that the data were not normally distributed ($p<0.05$), the study employed a nonparametric measure for association. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho) was utilized to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the KP system's level of effectiveness and the actual settlement rates recorded in the six high-volume population barangays. Lastly, a Correlation Matrix was constructed to provide a comprehensive view of the interactions between all variables. This matrix utilized the correlation coefficients

and p-values to determine statistical significance at a 0.05 alpha level. This allowed the researcher to identify which specific indicators of effectiveness had the most significant impact on the successful resolution of disputes at the barangay level.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher strictly adhered to established ethical and moral standards to ensure the protection of the participants and the integrity of the study protocol throughout the research process. Before the administration of the survey, the researcher provided participants with an information sheet and a formal consent form explaining the study's objectives. Participants were informed that their involvement was based purely on their willingness to share opinions and that they were free to leave or stop answering the questionnaire at any time for any reason without penalty. Furthermore, no monetary incentives or material compensations were offered in exchange for participation, ensuring that the data provided was free from transactional bias. To ensure anonymity, no identifying information appears in the final research report. Furthermore, the researcher observed proper administrative ethics by securing formal letters of permission and endorsements from the City Mayor of General Santos and the respective Barangay Captains of the six barangays before accessing any case management records or engaging with respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Implementation

For the Level of Effectiveness in terms of Implementation, the study revealed an overall implementation mean of 3.8, interpreted as "Very High/Excellent". Lupon members demonstrated a strong understanding of KP objectives and received the preparation necessary for effective implementation ($M=3.9$) (Noveloso et al., 2024; Berou et al., 2026). Strong results were also seen in community impact, with members actively supporting peace and order and coordinating with proper agencies ($M=3.9$). However, the systematic recording and filing of documents registered the lowest relative mean ($M=3.7$), identifying documentation as the area with the greatest room for improvement. This interpretation is supported by Gonzales (2022), who emphasized the importance of maintaining case records, including minutes of hearings and meetings, as part of the Barangay Justice System's mandated responsibilities.

Table 5: *Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Implementation*

Indicators	Mean	Remarks
The Lupon Tagapamayapa members treat their clients fair and just.	3.8	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa strictly follows the required timeline for mediation/conciliation.	3.8	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa understands the objectives of Katarungang Pambarangay.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa have proper training in implementing Katarungang Pambarangay.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa supports the implementation of peace and order in the community.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa conducts a monthly meeting exclusively on Katarungang Pambarangay matters.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa keeps a systematic recording and filing of Katarungang Pambarangay documents.	3.7	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa coordinates with the proper agencies.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa helps in declogging cases in Trial Courts.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
Overall	3.8	Very High/Excellent

Legend: *Very High/Excellent - 3.26-4.00 High/Very Satisfactory-2.51-3.25 Low/Fair - 1.76-2.50 Very Low/Poor - 1.00-1.75*

Taken together, these findings indicate that the effective implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay System is characterized by robust administrative leadership, meticulous preparation, and a meaningful institutional contribution to community peace and order (Barcellano, 2025; Gonzales, 2022; Noveloso et al., 2024; Suarez & Talisayon, 2026).

3.2 Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Performance

The Level of Effectiveness in terms of Performance achieved an overall mean of 3.7 ("Very High/Excellent"). The highest-rated indicators (M=3.8) were the conduct of information education campaigns and the ability to ensure a high number of settled cases.

Table 6: *Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Performance*

Indicators	Mean	Remarks
The Lupong Tagapamayapa and/or Pagkat Tagapagkasundo possess the required qualification.	3.6	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa/Pagkat Tagapagkasundo conduct an information education campaign to raise public works.	3.8	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa/Pagkat Tagapagkasundo ensures the high number of Settled cases.	3.8	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa/Pagkat Tagapagkasundo ensures the quality of Settlement disputes.	3.7	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa/Pangkat Tagapagkasundo ensures compliance with the terms of settlement.	3.6	Very High/Excellent
Overall	3.7	Very High/Excellent

Legend: *Very High/Excellent - 3.26-4.00 High/Very Satisfactory-2.51-3.25 Low/Fair - 1.76-2.50 Very Low/Poor - 1.00-1.75*

This suggests that when residents are well-informed, they are more likely to utilize the KP system, fulfilling its mandate to decongest formal court dockets (Lupao & Alejandro, 2022; Gonzales, 2022). The Lupon's ability to ensure the quality of settlements (M=3.7) indicates that agreements are perceived as fair and culturally sensitive rather than just procedural closures (Barcellano, 2025). Two indicators received relatively lower (M=3.6) were qualifications required and compliance with the terms and conditions of amicable settlements. In this context, compliance with settlement terms is recognized as a critical post-settlement dimension of performance; however, Noveloso et al. (2024) observed that this aspect often shows greater variation and lower implementation scores compared to other indicators, as long-term adherence depends significantly on the willingness and continued cooperation of the parties involved.

3.3 Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Compliance

For the Level of Effectiveness in terms of Compliance, the study revealed the highest overall mean of 3.9 ("Very High/Excellent"). Near-perfect results (M=3.9) were found in procedural adherence and treating records as secured. This reflects exceptional proficiency in following prescribed legal procedures, which is vital for maintaining the legitimacy and public trust of the system (Gonzales, 2022; Verdad, 2024). Moreover, Barcellano (2025) stated that safeguarding confidentiality is an essential pillar of grassroots justice.

Table 7: *Level of Effectiveness in Dispute Resolution in terms of Compliance*

Indicators	Mean	Remarks
The Lupon Tagapamayapa and/or Pangkat Tagapagkasundo observe the Katarungang Pambarangay process.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa and/or Pangkat Tagapagkasundo follow the process of dispute resolution.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa and/or Pangkat Tagapagkasundo treat all records secured.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa and/or Pangkat Tagapagkasundo observe proper compliance in terms of settlements.	3.7	Very High/Excellent
The Lupon Tagapamayapa and/or Pangkat Tagapagkasundo follows the procedures of dispute resolution.	3.9	Very High/Excellent
Overall	3.9	Very High/Excellent

Legend: *Very High/Excellent - 3.26-4.00 High/Very Satisfactory - 2.51-3.25 Low/Fair - 1.76-2.50 Very Low/Poor - 1.00-1.75*

Compliance with the settlement terms received the lowest result (M=37). Compliance within the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system is multifaceted, encompassing adherence to legal procedures, settlement terms, and the mandated duties of local officials. Noveloso et al. (2024) specifically noted that compliance rates are viewed as the "ultimate test" of alternative dispute resolution effectiveness, as they represent the proportion of parties who fully adhere to agreed-upon terms. In this context, the present result suggests that the Lupon Tagapamayapa remains highly effective in complying with formal procedural requirements, but that greater variation emerges when compliance depends on the actual observance of settlement obligations by the parties themselves.

3.4 Settlement Rates of Dispute Resolution

Table 8: *Settlement Rates of Dispute Resolution*

Barangay		YEAR					TOTAL
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Calumpang	Total Cases Handled	336	410	443	436	371	1996
	Total Case Settled	217	281	373	360	288	1519
	Settlement Rate (%)	64.58%	68.54%	84.20%	82.57%	77.63%	76.10%
Labangal	Total Cases Handled	272	268	286	309	316	1451
	Total Case Settled	240	210	241	271	271	1233
	Settlement Rate (%)	88.24%	78.36%	84.27%	87.70%	85.76%	84.98%
Fatima	Total Cases Handled	196	264	364	440	455	1719
	Total Case Settled	192	210	310	403	311	1426
	Settlement Rate (%)	97.96%	79.55%	85.16%	91.59%	68.35%	82.96%
San Isidro	Total Cases Handled	N/A	N/A	311	263	154	728
	Total Case Settled	N/A	N/A	311	263	154	728
	Settlement Rate (%)	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%
Apopong	Total Cases Handled	222	165	46	100	327	860
	Total Case Settled	214	161	39	100	283	797
	Settlement Rate (%)	96.40%	97.58%	84.78%	100%	86.54%	92.67%
Lagao	Total Cases Handled	314	595	624	557	428	2518
	Total Case Settled	296	477	597	445	398	2213
	Settlement Rate (%)	94.30%	80.20%	95.70%	79.90%	93.00%	87.90%

The objective analysis of case records confirmed the system's efficiency. Barangay San Isidro registered the highest cumulative rate at 100% (2022-2024). Barangay Apopong followed with 92.67%, achieving a perfect rate in 2023. Barangay Lagao maintained an 87.90% rate despite handling the largest caseload of 2,518 disputes. Barangay Calumpang showed the most significant improvement, rising from 64.58% in 2020 to a peak of 84.20% in 2022, ending with a cumulative rate of 76.10%. These results demonstrate that heavy urban caseloads do not necessarily prevent high settlement efficiency. Consequently, these rates are a key indicator of the system's effectiveness in reducing the burden on formal courts by resolving disputes at the grassroots level (Berou et al., 2026; Garcia, 2019).

3.5 Correlations between Effectiveness and Settlement Rates

Table 10: *Correlations between Effectiveness and Settlement Rates*

Variable	Settlement Rates		
	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Remarks
IMP	0.361	0.001	Significant
PER	0.257	0.019	Significant
COMP	0.385	0.000	Significant

Lastly, Correlational Analysis Spearman's rho analysis confirmed that all three dimensions of effectiveness are significantly and positively associated with settlement rates. Compliance showed the strongest correlation ($r=0.385, p=0.000$), followed by Implementation ($r=0.361$) and Performance ($r=0.257$). Within this framework, effectiveness in dispute resolution is not exclusively measured by the achievement of successful settlements; it also necessitates a robust commitment to procedural fairness, thorough fact-finding, and faithful adherence to administrative standards (Barcellano, 2025; Noveloso et al., 2024).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that the KP system in high-volume barangays of General Santos City is a highly effective mechanism for providing accessible and restorative justice. The Lupon Tagapamayapa demonstrate procedural integrity and legal mastery. Most importantly, the system is successfully fulfilling its mandate to decongest Trial Courts by resolving most community disputes at the grassroots level.

For recommendations, Barangay Secretaries and Lupon members should focus on enhancing recording and filing systems to improve documentation integrity. The LGU and DILG should maintain regular specialized training to sustain the "Excellent" level of compliance. Moreover, High-volume areas like Calumpang and Lagao should intensify public education campaigns to further improve settlement outcomes. Lastly, systematic review of policies should be implemented further to assess if honoraria and incentives for Lupon members remain aligned with their heavy urban workload to ensure sustained motivation.

This research focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system within the top 6 high-volume barangays of General Santos City, namely: Calumpang, Labangal, Fatima, San Isidro, Apopong, and Lagao, from 2020 to 2024. The study specifically examines cases that fall within the jurisdiction of the KP system, as defined by the Local Government, excluding those automatically referred to regular courts. It investigates settlement rates, the dispute resolution process, and the relationship between the effectiveness of the system and settlement outcomes. Additionally, the research assesses the implementation, performance, and compliance of barangay officials and Lupon members in facilitating the resolution of cases.

Compliance with ethical standards

The conduct of this research strictly adhered to established institutional ethical standards and moral principles. After the release of the Ethical Approval, the researcher acquired formal administrative permissions and endorsements from the City Mayor of General Santos City and the respective Barangay Captains of the six selected barangays. Voluntary participation was a core pillar of the study, as all 84 Lupon Tagapamayapa respondents were provided with detailed information sheets and signed formal informed consent forms prior to the administration of survey instruments. These participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty and were assured that no monetary incentives or material compensations were provided, ensuring the data remained free from transactional bias. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the researcher strictly followed the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), maintaining participant anonymity by reporting data only in aggregate form and securing all gathered records through a non-disclosure agreement. Ethical integrity was further preserved by the researcher's neutral stance during the personal administration of questionnaires, and there are no conflicts of interest to declare regarding the study's findings. Finally, authorship responsibility is clearly defined, with all contributors and sources of inspiration—including family, colleagues, and divine guidance—duly recognized in the acknowledgement and dedication sections, while copyright ownership is respected by providing comprehensive citations for all referenced literature and legal frameworks.

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