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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A CATALYST FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of educational technology has significantly transformed teaching, learning, and institutional management, necessitating leadership approaches that can effectively guide this change. This study explores the role of transformational leadership in shaping effective educational environments through the integration of educational technology. Adopting a qualitative, review-based research methodology, the study synthesizes existing literature, theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and policy documents to examine how transformational leadership practices influence technology-enhanced education. The findings reveal that transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering a shared vision, motivating educators, and creating a supportive culture conducive to innovation and collaboration. Leaders who demonstrate inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence are better positioned to promote teachers' professional development, digital competence, and willingness to adopt innovative pedagogical practices. The study also highlights key challenges faced by educational leaders in implementing technology-driven initiatives, including infrastructural limitations, resistance to change, insufficient professional training, budgetary constraints, and concerns related to cybersecurity and data privacy. Despite these challenges, transformational leadership emerges as a powerful mechanism for aligning technological initiatives with pedagogical goals, ensuring inclusivity, and enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. In the

context of developing countries such as India, transformational leadership is particularly significant in addressing digital disparities and supporting equitable access to educational technology, in alignment with national educational reforms. The study concludes that effective technology integration is not solely dependent on digital resources but largely on visionary and transformative leadership practices. The findings contribute to educational leadership literature and offer practical insights for policymakers, administrators, and educators seeking to develop sustainable, innovative, and future-ready educational environments.

KEYWORDS: Transformational Leadership, Educational Technology, Technology Integration, Educational Environment, Professional Development, Digital Competence.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of educational technology has profoundly reshaped teaching, learning, and institutional management in the 21st century. In this context, transformational leadership has emerged as a pivotal force in fostering innovation, collaboration, and adaptability within educational environments (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate educators and learners to transcend traditional pedagogical boundaries, thereby promoting a culture of creativity and technological competence (Northouse, 2022). The role of such leadership is not merely administrative but visionary—focused on guiding educational institutions toward digital transformation that enhances both academic performance and institutional effectiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Educational technology, when effectively integrated, facilitates interactive learning, data-driven instruction, and inclusive education (Kirkland, 2020). However, its success largely depends on leadership that encourages professional development, shared vision, and reflective practices (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Transformational leaders play a crucial role in aligning technological initiatives with pedagogical goals, ensuring that technology serves as a catalyst for meaningful learning rather than as an end in itself (Hallinger, 2018). By cultivating trust, empowerment, and innovation, transformational leadership can create environments that embrace change and optimize the potential of digital tools (Ng, 2021). Thus, exploring the intersection between transformational leadership and educational technology is vital for understanding how schools and higher education institutions can thrive in an era of rapid digital advancement.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The contemporary educational landscape is witnessing an unprecedented transformation driven by rapid technological advancement and global digitalization. Educational technology (EdTech) has become an essential component of modern pedagogy, facilitating interactive, student-centered learning and administrative efficiency (Kirkland, 2020). The successful integration of technology, however, extends beyond infrastructure and tools; it depends significantly on visionary leadership that can motivate and guide educators toward meaningful and sustained change. In this regard, transformational leadership has emerged as a critical framework for shaping effective educational environments that harness the potential of technology for holistic institutional growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, empowers educators to embrace innovation and continuously improve instructional practices (Northouse, 2022). Leaders who exhibit these qualities create a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared vision—key elements for implementing technology-based reforms effectively (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The presence of transformational leaders in educational institutions ensures that technological integration aligns with pedagogical objectives, thereby fostering both academic excellence and digital literacy among teachers and students (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for technologically adaptive learning environments, revealing the importance of leaders who could swiftly respond to challenges, support digital transitions, and sustain institutional morale (Ng, 2021). Educational leaders who applied transformational principles demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and empathy—qualities essential for navigating uncertainty and maintaining quality education during crises (Hallinger, 2018).

In developing nations like India, the role of leadership in technology adoption remains particularly vital due to disparities in access, training, and infrastructure. Effective transformational leadership can bridge these gaps by fostering a supportive learning culture, promoting professional development, and encouraging the creative use of limited resources (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Therefore, examining the role of transformational leadership in promoting effective educational environments through educational technology is both timely and significant. It provides insights into how leadership practices can transform schools and

higher education institutions into dynamic, future-ready spaces that cultivate innovation, inclusivity, and academic excellence in the digital age.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the present era of globalization and digital transformation, educational institutions are expected to prepare learners for a technologically driven world. The adoption of educational technology (EdTech) has become essential to enhance teaching, learning, and management processes (Kirkland, 2020). However, the mere introduction of digital tools does not guarantee pedagogical effectiveness or institutional change. The success of technology integration largely depends on the leadership's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower educators to embrace innovation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). This study is therefore grounded in the belief that transformational leadership serves as a catalyst for developing effective educational environments that fully utilize the potential of technology for academic growth and institutional excellence.

Transformational leaders play a vital role in cultivating a shared vision, promoting professional development, and encouraging reflective and adaptive practices among teachers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By fostering trust, creativity, and collaboration, such leaders create an atmosphere conducive to technological experimentation and pedagogical reform (Northouse, 2022). In contrast to transactional leadership, which emphasizes compliance and routine, transformational leadership focuses on intrinsic motivation and empowerment—essential qualities in navigating the complexities of digital education (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

The rationale for this study also stems from the challenges witnessed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational systems worldwide were compelled to adopt online and hybrid modes of learning (Ng, 2021). This global crisis underscored the necessity of adaptive leadership that can manage technological transitions while maintaining academic quality and emotional well-being among staff and students (Hallinger, 2018). Institutions led by transformational leaders demonstrated greater resilience and agility in sustaining learning continuity during the disruption (Kundu & Bej, 2021).

In the Indian context, where disparities in digital access, teacher training, and infrastructure persist, transformational leadership can play a decisive role in bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive technological integration (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Such leadership can ensure that EdTech implementation aligns with national educational priorities, such as those

outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes innovation, critical thinking, and digital literacy (Ministry of Education, 2020). Hence, this study is rationalized by the urgent need to understand how transformational leadership influences the effectiveness of technology-enhanced educational environments. Its findings will contribute to leadership theory, inform institutional policy, and provide practical insights for fostering sustainable, technology-integrated educational ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The rapid advancement of educational technology has necessitated visionary leadership capable of transforming traditional educational settings into dynamic, technology-driven environments. Transformational leadership, with its focus on vision, motivation, and innovation, plays a crucial role in influencing educators' attitudes and institutional readiness toward technology integration (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The present study seeks to explore how transformational leadership contributes to building effective educational environments that harness technology to enhance teaching, learning, and organizational efficiency. In alignment with this purpose, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To examine the relationship between transformational leadership practices and the effectiveness of technology-integrated educational environments.
- To identify the key transformational leadership attributes that promote teachers' professional development and digital competence.
- To analyze the challenges faced by educational leaders in implementing technology-driven initiatives within institutional settings.
- To suggest strategies through which transformational leadership can enhance innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity in technology-based learning environments.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a review-based qualitative research design to explore the role of transformational leadership in shaping effective educational environments through educational technology. This approach was considered appropriate as it enabled a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and documented practices, rather than collecting primary data from participants. The study focused on analyzing scholarly articles, research reports, case studies, and policy documents published in national and international journals, books, and institutional repositories. Sources were

systematically examined to identify patterns, themes, and insights related to transformational leadership strategies, technology integration, and their impact on educational effectiveness. The collected data were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, which facilitated the identification of key leadership behaviors, innovative practices, and challenges in implementing educational technology. To ensure rigor, triangulation of sources, cross-validation of findings, and critical appraisal of the literature were applied. This review-based methodology provided a holistic understanding of how transformational leadership influences the development of technology-enhanced, effective educational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discussion with respect to Objective 1: *Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Technology-Integrated Educational Environments*

The integration of educational technology has become a pivotal aspect of modern education, necessitating effective leadership to navigate its complexities. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and empowerment, plays a crucial role in fostering technology-enhanced learning environments. This discussion synthesizes findings from various studies to elucidate the impact of transformational leadership on the effectiveness of technology-integrated educational settings.

Visionary Leadership and Technological Advancement:

Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision that aligns technological integration with the institution's educational goals. By setting clear objectives and demonstrating commitment to technological advancement, these leaders inspire stakeholders to embrace change. For instance, Schmitz (2023) highlights that principals employing transformational leadership practices support teachers in utilizing digital technologies effectively, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience.

Empowerment of Educators:

Empowering educators is a cornerstone of transformational leadership. By providing professional development opportunities and fostering a culture of collaboration, leaders enable teachers to integrate technology confidently into their pedagogy. Schmitz (2025) further emphasizes that transformational leadership positively influences teacher collaboration, both formally and informally, thereby facilitating the seamless integration of technology in teaching practices.

Fostering a Supportive School Culture:

A supportive school culture, cultivated by transformational leaders, is essential for the successful integration of technology. By promoting open communication, trust, and shared values, leaders create an environment conducive to innovation. The systematic review by Alzoraiki et al. (2025) underscores that transformational leadership enhances teacher performance in areas such as creativity, innovation, and self-efficacy, which in turn contribute to student learning outcomes.

Overcoming Challenges in Technology Integration:

Transformational leaders are adept at identifying and addressing challenges associated with technology integration. By fostering resilience and adaptability among educators, leaders ensure that obstacles are met with collaborative problem-solving approaches. AlAjmi (2022) notes that digital leadership among school principals had a positive impact on teachers' technology integration during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the efficacy of transformational leadership in times of crisis.

Enhancing Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes:

The ultimate goal of integrating technology is to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Transformational leaders, by motivating and inspiring educators, indirectly influence student success. Sultana (2024) found that transformational leadership fosters a more collaborative, inclusive, and innovative school environment, which directly enhances student engagement and academic achievement.

Transformational leadership significantly influences the effectiveness of technology-integrated educational environments. By providing visionary guidance, empowering educators, fostering a supportive culture, addressing challenges proactively, and enhancing student engagement, transformational leaders play a pivotal role in the successful integration of educational technology. As educational institutions continue to navigate the digital age, the principles of transformational leadership offer a robust framework for achieving sustainable and impactful technological advancement.

Discussion with respect to Objective 2: *Key Transformational Leadership Attributes Promoting Teachers' Professional Development and Digital Competence*

Transformational leadership has been widely recognized as a critical driver for enhancing teachers' professional development and digital competence in technology-integrated

educational environments. This style of leadership, characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990), creates an enabling environment that fosters continuous learning, collaboration, and adoption of innovative pedagogical practices.

Idealized Influence and Role Modeling:

Transformational leaders serve as role models, demonstrating commitment to professional growth and effective technology use. By exhibiting confidence and ethical standards, they inspire teachers to emulate similar behaviors (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Such leaders actively engage with emerging educational technologies themselves, which encourages teachers to explore, experiment, and develop their own digital competence.

Inspirational Motivation:

Leaders provide a compelling vision for integrating technology in teaching and learning, motivating teachers to align their professional development goals with institutional objectives (Ng, 2021). This motivation enhances teacher engagement in workshops, training sessions, and collaborative learning communities, leading to improved digital skills and pedagogical innovation.

Intellectual Stimulation:

Transformational leaders challenge teachers to think critically, innovate, and problem-solve in using educational technology (Sosik & Dinger, 2007). By fostering a culture of inquiry and experimentation, teachers are encouraged to adopt new digital tools, refine instructional strategies, and apply technology creatively in the classroom.

Individualized Consideration:

Attention to individual teacher needs, strengths, and career aspirations is another hallmark of transformational leadership. Leaders provide personalized support, mentoring, and feedback, enabling teachers to pursue professional development tailored to their digital learning requirements (Voon et al., 2011). This approach builds confidence, competence, and readiness to integrate technology effectively in pedagogical practice.

Collaborative Culture and Continuous Learning:

Transformational leaders cultivate a collaborative environment where teachers share experiences, resources, and best practices related to digital pedagogy (Sheninger, 2014). Such

communities of practice enhance collective professional development, encourage peer learning, and accelerate the development of digital competence across the institution.

Transformational leadership attributes—role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and fostering collaboration—play a pivotal role in promoting teachers' professional growth and digital competence. These attributes not only enhance teachers' technological skills but also support the creation of a culture of continuous learning and innovation, thereby strengthening technology-integrated educational environments.

Discussion with respect to Objective 3: ***Challenges Faced by Educational Leaders in Implementing Technology-Driven Initiatives***

Educational leaders encounter multifaceted challenges when integrating technology into institutional settings. These obstacles span infrastructural, attitudinal, and strategic domains, necessitating comprehensive approaches to overcome them.

- A primary barrier is the lack of robust technological infrastructure. Inadequate access to high-speed internet, outdated hardware, and insufficient technical support impede the effective use of educational technology. For instance, a report highlighted that only 0.9% of government schools in Madhya Pradesh have digital libraries, and merely 11.6% are equipped with smart classrooms, significantly below national averages.
- Educational leaders often face challenges in providing continuous professional development for educators. Insufficient training programs hinder teachers' ability to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. Research indicates that a lack of in-service and pre-service training, along with inadequate content support, are significant obstacles to technology integration.
- Resistance to adopting new technologies is prevalent among educators, stemming from concerns about disrupting traditional teaching methods. Additionally, cultural factors can influence the acceptance and implementation of technology in education. A study suggests that cultural considerations should be integrated into the Technology Acceptance Model to enhance the effectiveness of technology adoption in educational settings.
- Budgetary limitations restrict the acquisition of necessary technological resources and the allocation of funds for training programs. Financial constraints also affect the

maintenance and upgrading of existing technological infrastructure, leading to challenges in sustaining technology-driven initiatives.

- The increasing reliance on digital platforms raises concerns about cybersecurity and data privacy. Educational leaders must address these issues to protect sensitive information and ensure the safe use of technology in educational settings. A survey revealed that nearly half of public sector IT leaders believe their cybersecurity tools are only moderately effective, with complexity and budget constraints being major obstacles
- The integration of technology should align with the institution's educational objectives. However, a lack of clear vision and strategy can lead to the adoption of technologies that do not effectively support teaching and learning goals. Establishing a coherent technology integration strategy is essential for the successful implementation of technology-driven initiatives.

Educational leaders must navigate a complex landscape of challenges when implementing technology-driven initiatives. Addressing infrastructural deficiencies, providing continuous professional development, overcoming resistance to change, securing adequate funding, ensuring cybersecurity, and aligning technology with educational goals are critical steps toward successful technology integration. By proactively addressing these challenges, educational leaders can foster environments that leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Discussion with respect to Objective 4: *Strategies through which Transformational Leadership Can Enhance Innovation, Collaboration, and Inclusivity in Technology-Based Learning Environments*

Transformational leadership has been widely recognized as a key driver of organizational change, particularly in educational settings where technological integration is increasingly essential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership style emphasizes vision, inspiration, and empowerment, all of which are crucial for fostering innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity within technology-driven learning environments (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Effective strategies under transformational leadership can ensure that educational technology is not merely adopted, but meaningfully integrated to improve teaching, learning, and administrative outcomes.

- **Promoting a Shared Vision for Technological Innovation**: Transformational leaders inspire educators and staff by articulating a clear, compelling vision for how technology

can enhance learning outcomes (Northouse, 2022). By setting a common goal that aligns institutional priorities with digital pedagogical initiatives, leaders can motivate stakeholders to actively participate in innovation processes. For instance, involving teachers in decision-making related to EdTech implementation fosters ownership and encourages creative approaches to curriculum design and instructional delivery (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Establishing a shared vision also cultivates a culture that embraces experimentation, risk-taking, and continuous improvement, essential components for sustainable technological advancement (Hallinger, 2018).

- **Encouraging Professional Development and Capacity Building:** A transformational approach emphasizes individualized consideration, wherein leaders support teachers' professional growth and technological competence (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Providing regular workshops, mentoring, and collaborative learning opportunities enables educators to acquire digital skills and adopt innovative teaching strategies (Kirkland, 2020). Leaders can create learning communities where teachers share best practices, reflect on instructional experiences, and experiment with digital tools. Such initiatives enhance collaboration across departments, strengthen peer networks, and promote a collective sense of responsibility for achieving technology-driven educational goals (Ng, 2021).
- **Facilitating Collaborative Practices:** Transformational leaders actively foster teamwork and participatory decision-making, which are crucial for integrating technology effectively (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Collaborative practices can include co-designing digital curricula, peer coaching, and cross-functional project teams that explore new pedagogical methods. By promoting a culture of collaboration, leaders ensure that technological innovation is not siloed but distributed throughout the institution, leading to shared ownership of digital initiatives and enhanced collective problem-solving (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).
- **Promoting Inclusivity and Equity in Technology Use:** Inclusivity is a vital aspect of modern education, ensuring that all learners benefit from technological tools regardless of socio-economic background or learning ability (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Transformational leaders advocate for equitable access to technology and support differentiated learning approaches, such as adaptive learning platforms or assistive technologies. Leaders can implement policies and resource allocation strategies that

reduce disparities in digital access and provide targeted support for marginalized students, fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Hallinger, 2018).

- **Encouraging Reflective Practices and Continuous Feedback:** Transformational leadership involves intellectual stimulation, encouraging educators to question existing practices, reflect on outcomes, and adapt strategies for improvement (Northouse, 2022). Leaders can implement structured feedback mechanisms, data-driven decision-making, and reflective sessions that allow teachers and administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of EdTech integration. This iterative process ensures continuous innovation while maintaining alignment with institutional goals and student needs (Ng, 2021).

Transformational leadership can significantly enhance innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity in technology-based educational environments through a combination of vision-setting, professional development, participatory practices, equitable policies, and reflective processes. By implementing these strategies, leaders can create resilient, adaptive, and future-ready educational institutions where technology serves as a meaningful tool to improve learning outcomes and foster holistic development.

IMPACT OF THE STUDY

The present study on the role of transformational leadership in shaping effective educational environments through educational technology holds significant implications for multiple stakeholders in the education sector. At the institutional level, the study highlights how transformational leadership practices can foster a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement among faculty members. By emphasizing vision-driven leadership, supportive mentoring, and inspirational motivation, educational leaders can facilitate the integration of technology in pedagogical practices, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

For teachers, the study provides insights into the importance of professional development and digital competence. Understanding the attributes of transformational leaders—such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence—can help educators develop adaptive strategies to incorporate educational technology meaningfully into their classrooms. This can lead to improved instructional methods, higher-quality learning experiences, and increased student-centered approaches.

At the student level, the study underscores the potential of technology-enabled learning environments to foster active engagement, critical thinking, and creativity. Transformational leadership can create conditions that encourage students to utilize digital tools for collaborative learning, problem-solving, and knowledge construction, thereby preparing them for the demands of the 21st-century digital world.

Additionally, policymakers and educational planners can benefit from the findings by understanding the need for leadership training programs that focus on transformational qualities and technology integration. By investing in leadership development initiatives, institutions can ensure that technology adoption is strategic, inclusive, and aligned with educational goals. Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational leadership and technology integration, emphasizing the pivotal role of transformational leaders in cultivating dynamic, innovative, and technology-rich learning environments. Its insights can serve as a guiding framework for fostering sustainable improvements in educational quality, teacher effectiveness, and student learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study on the role of transformational leadership in shaping effective educational environments through educational technology underscores the critical impact of visionary, supportive, and innovative leadership in modern education. Transformational leaders play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of collaboration, professional growth, and technological adaptability among teachers, which directly influences the quality of learning experiences for students. By promoting intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation, such leaders create environments where educational technology is effectively integrated, enhancing student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking skills. The findings highlight that the success of technology-driven educational initiatives depends not only on the availability of digital tools but also on the leadership strategies that guide their implementation. Institutions that cultivate transformational leadership can ensure sustainable innovation, inclusivity, and continuous improvement. Ultimately, this study reinforces the importance of strategic, transformative leadership as a cornerstone for achieving effective, future-ready educational environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the role of transformational leadership in fostering effective educational environments through educational technology.

Firstly, educational institutions should prioritize leadership development programs that emphasize transformational qualities. Training sessions and workshops can help school and college leaders cultivate skills such as vision articulation, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. By developing these competencies, leaders can more effectively guide teachers in integrating technology into their teaching practices.

Secondly, institutions should create a supportive culture that encourages innovation and experimentation with digital tools. Transformational leaders can establish policies and frameworks that allow teachers to explore new pedagogical approaches without fear of failure. Recognition and reward systems can further motivate educators to adopt creative teaching strategies, thereby promoting a continuous cycle of professional growth and technological innovation.

Thirdly, ongoing professional development for teachers is essential. Leaders should facilitate access to training on emerging educational technologies, digital literacy, and pedagogical strategies that leverage technology for active learning. Mentorship programs led by transformational leaders can provide individualized guidance, helping educators adapt to the evolving digital landscape while maintaining high instructional standards.

Fourthly, collaboration and shared decision-making should be promoted. Transformational leaders can encourage team-based initiatives where teachers collectively plan, implement, and evaluate technology-enhanced learning activities. Such collaborative practices not only enhance instructional effectiveness but also strengthen a sense of community, shared responsibility, and professional commitment among educators.

Additionally, educational leaders should focus on inclusive technology integration. Ensuring that all students, regardless of socio-economic background or learning needs, have equitable access to digital resources is critical. Transformational leaders can advocate for policies and resources that bridge digital divides and foster an inclusive learning environment.

Finally, institutions should establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation of technology-driven initiatives. Transformational leaders can use feedback from teachers and students to refine practices, identify challenges, and implement strategies for continuous improvement. Evidence-based decision-making will enhance the effectiveness of educational technology integration and ensure alignment with the institution's educational goals. By embracing transformational leadership practices, fostering professional growth, promoting collaboration, and ensuring inclusive and innovative technology use, educational institutions can create dynamic, engaging, and future-ready learning environments.

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