

# INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN GURARA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This paper was designed with the aim to identify the information needs of the people of Gurara local government Area, determine the availability of the existing information system to the local government, determine the adequacy and appropriateness of existing information systems available to them. Survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consists of the 200 people from eight (8) village areas of Gurara, Local Government Area from where sample of the study was carried out. The questionnaire, interview and observation were the instruments used for collecting required data. Data gathered was organised according to research questions. The findings of the study showed that majority of the people of Gurara local Government Area, used GSM facilities more as their information systems. The paper recommended there is the need for the Government to endeavour and establish public libraries in each district of the local government which would serve as formal information Centre for the ease dissemination and access to information.*

**Keywords:** *Gurara Local Government Area, information, systems, Niger State, Nigeria*

## Introduction

Information systems are basically outfits or setups, through which information is acquired, processed, stored, properly conserved and disseminated in the most appropriate package to the relevant users (Mukherjee, 2019). Information systems is an integrated set of components for collect, storing and processing data and digital products. McQuail and Windahl, (2015) referred to information as consisting of data, images, texts, documents and voice, organised in a meaningful context, which is communicated to a recipient who uses it to make decision and engender progress. In consideration of peoples' information needs, Mai, (2016). stressed that: "people need information about new developments and techniques in agriculture, medicine, social life and culture, science and technology etc. and the useful application of information is evident everywhere there is development". The development in information technology have radically changed the flow of information among the people of Gurara Local Government Area. This development has also increase the community's capacity to reach the world easy flow of information.

The trend of development in information systems provision in the area that is today known as Gurara Local Government has witnessed tremendous improvement. The pre-independence period up till the late 1960s was mostly dominated by traditional systems of information provision followed by the post-civil war era and the oil boom period when modern systems of communication emerged and spread in the entire area. The 1990s to date has witnessed even greater and more effective forms of information systems. In fact, the area presently enjoys the benefits of information and communication technology. In the past, there were no mass media for information provision in most of the villages that form the area that is today known as Gurara Local Government. However, communication processes were made possible through the use of certain traditional methods, which were extensive and effective, though these varied.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Information poverty does certainly exist in Gurara Local Government area which could be regarded as a rural setting. This may be due largely to the inadequacy in information systems which results in wrong choices and actions by the people. Hence the economic, political, educational and socio-cultural development of the area is negatively affected. The greatest concern stems from the fact that ill-motivated choices and actions, as a result of information poverty, may result in poor crop yield, filthy environment, poor personal health and safety, bad government, juvenile delinquency and a generally ethnically unsound community. Therefore, the need for a concerted action to effectively address this unfortunate situation in order to ensure the sustainable development of the entire area, must be given the utmost attention that it deserves.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the information needs of the people of Gurara local government Area.
2. determine the availability of the existing information system to the local government.
3. determine the adequacy and appropriateness of existing information systems available to them.

### **Literature Review**

Tradition may be referred to as a way of doing things or a way of life of people living in an area. Therefore, it embraces the culture of the people as well as the processes with which their expressions are communicated. It also includes the ethical, intellectual or artistic expressions and processes of the people, usually ethnically and nationally related. Hence, the tradition of the people of the study area played and still plays, though with some modification, an important role in enhancing effective communication amongst the people. Greenhalgh and Worpole, (2013) opined that in the traditional societies of the past, the methods of communication, which he grouped into visual, aural and other forms, were more or less interpersonal, distinct from the mass media method, inherently strong and significantly reliable. He however observed that the methods were restricted to the village level and therefore different from the communication processes of a national state. The traditional systems of information provision in the study area, in the past, followed the above pattern and may therefore be grouped according to the means of perception.

There is obviously the need for people to be aware of advances in science and technology in the various sectors of the economy –Administrative, Agriculture, Education, Business, Industrial,

Healthcare, cultural and of course Politics, etc. Access to relevant information through the appropriate systems and services, is a prerequisite to meaningful development, whether at urban or rural level. Diyaolu, (2019) viewed information as constituting messages of human experience and as a vital factor that unites a society to the other. He asserted that the information network is dominated by the publishing industry, the mass media, abstracting and indexing services, data banks, libraries, archives, documentation and information centres, all of which offer services that are aimed at satisfying the information needs of the society.

Information has always played an important role in human life and has become a basic human need. Every human society –urban and rural alike, had been found to be considerably dependent on various types of information for their existence, survival and growth, on a daily basis. Therefore, there should be free and equal accessibility to such information and ideas agreed upon by experts, for every member of the society Gurara Local Government area is situated in the Eastern Part of Niger State close to the “Heart of the Nation”. It lies around latitude  $7^{\circ}00^{\text{E}}$  and longitude  $9^{\circ}00^{\text{N}}$ . (Adamu, 2016). The area is bounded in the North East by Kaduna State, in the East by Tafa Local Government Area, in the South East by Suleja Local Government Area, in the South by Federal Capital Territory (FCT), in the North by Paikoro Local Government Area, and in the West by Lapai Local Government Area (Adamu, 2016).

Gawu Babangida, the Local Government headquarters is about 60 kilometres from the nation’s capital city Abuja, and approximately 70 kilometres away from the Niger State Capital, Minna. Gurara Local Government area is one of those created on September 27, 1991. The area was carved out of the former Suleja Local Government and has its headquarters at Gawu Babangida. *The* entire area is divided into two main zones, namely: The Gurara West and Gurara East, in consonance with their relative locations to the river Gurara, which flows through the local government and from which the local government derived its name (Adamu, 2016). There are total of six districts in the entire area, with each of the zones having three whilst all the districts are made up of 25 village areas. Figure 1 shows the Administrative Map of Gurara Local Government Area and Table I below contains a list of the districts and their headquarters.

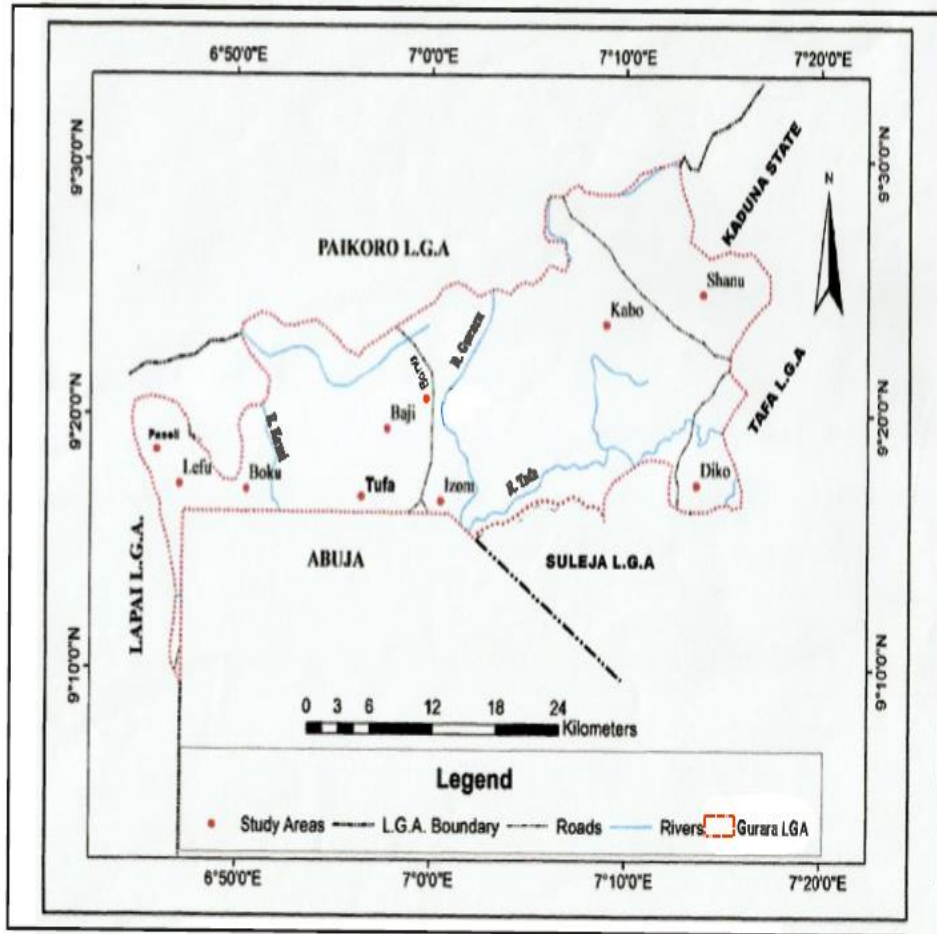


Figure 1 Gurara Local Government Area

Source: Adapted from Administrative Map of Gurara Local Government Area

Table 1: Districts and their headquarters.

<b>Gurara West</b>	
<b>Districts</b>	<b>Headquarters</b>
Gawu	Gawu - Babangida
Kemi	Lefu
Edun	Bonu
Tufa	Tufa
Lambata	Gwari Baba
<b>Gurara East</b>	
<b>Districts</b>	<b>Headquarters</b>
Gurara	Kwaka
Diko	Diko
Kabo	Kabo
Kwaka	Kwaka
Shako	Shako

Source: Compiled by the Authors (2019)

## Methodology

The research adopted survey method to find out the information needs of the people of Gurara local government, availability of information systems and Vis a Vis the appropriateness of such information with their needs. The findings of which were used to analyse the results. Survey method may be referred to as an inquiry technique which involves the use of questionnaires, interviews, direct observations, opinion polls and also documentary sources, to obtain information, opinions and attitudes of individuals or a group of people. Madu, (2018) states that “the survey technique has the capacity of probing into a variety of questions and it gives an overview of a field, offering perspectives and standards for comparison; and makes possible the investigation of several potential relationships with stated empirical framework”. This view is clearly corroborated by the assertion of Patten and Newhart (2017) as they indicated that “survey methods set facts and observations without seeking causes and analysing interrelationships among variables”. They further stressed that the method is explanatory or analytical and inferences can be drawn from samples to the whole population regarding the prevalence, distribution and interrelationship of economic, sociological and psychological variables. These unique merits of the method are responsible for its choice for this research work. A stratified random sampling technique was used for the data collection. Kim and Wang (2019), has defined stratified random sampling as the process or method of dividing a population into homogenous groups for the purpose of selecting a separate sample randomly from each group or stratum. This system was adopted because it cuts across the entire local government area, which makes up the population composed predominantly of the Gwari Genge, East of the Gurara River and Gwari Yamma, West of the Gurara River. Thus forming the existing political structure of Gurara East and Gurara West respectively. The responses received from the village areas sampled were analysed using various statistical methods, which include tables, percentages and charts, to show the trends in the responses. Other information gathered from key informants, during interviews of some target information outfits, and the outcome of direct observations and survey of information systems and services facilities in the local government, were also analysed using the descriptive format to show trends in existing conditions and prevailing practices. Out of the 200 questionnaires posted to the eight (8) village areas, 193 or 94.2% were returned from which 185 or 91.7% were found to be suitable for analysis. The analysis carried out is in two main parts. The first part comprises the background information of the respondents while the second is made up of responses in respect of information needs, systems and services.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

**Table 2: Population of the Study**

<b>Stratum</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>No. of Sampling Units Allocated</b>
Gurara East	32278	108
Gurara West	27722	92

Similarly, the allocation of sample units to each of the village areas follows the same method based on the application of the formula.

$$nh = \frac{N_h \times n}{N}$$

Where nh = Total number of sample units in village h

$N_h$  = total units in village  $h$   
 $N$  = Population of selected villages in stratum  $h$   
 $n$  = Sample size

**Table 3: Allocation of Sample Units to Villages**

<b>Gurara West</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>No. of Sampling Units Allocated</b>
Gawu	4300	38
Lefu	2055	18
Tufa	2245	20
Pasali	1750	16
<b>Gurara East</b>		
Diko	5160	42
Daku	1870	15
Kwaka	2183	18
Izom	4062	33

### **Gender Distribution**

An analysis of the personal background of respondents showed that 136 persons or 73.5% were males whilst 49 or 26.5% were females. This is given in the table iv below.

**Table 4: Gender Status of Respondents**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	136	73.5
Female	49	26.5

### **Age Distribution**

The age of respondents varied between 20 and 58 years. These ages were grouped into 4 classes as shown in Table IV. The results showed that the age class 30-39 had the highest number of respondents of 75 people which represents 40.5% of the sample, whilst the 50-59 class had the lowest number of respondents with only 14 people or 7.6% of the responses. The remaining groups of 20-29 and 40-49 had 63 people or 34.1% and 33 people or 17.8% of the respondents respectively. This trend is also illustrated in table V and figure 1 below:

**Table 5: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Class (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
20-29	63	34.1
30-39	75	40.5
40-49	33	17.8
50-59	14	7.6

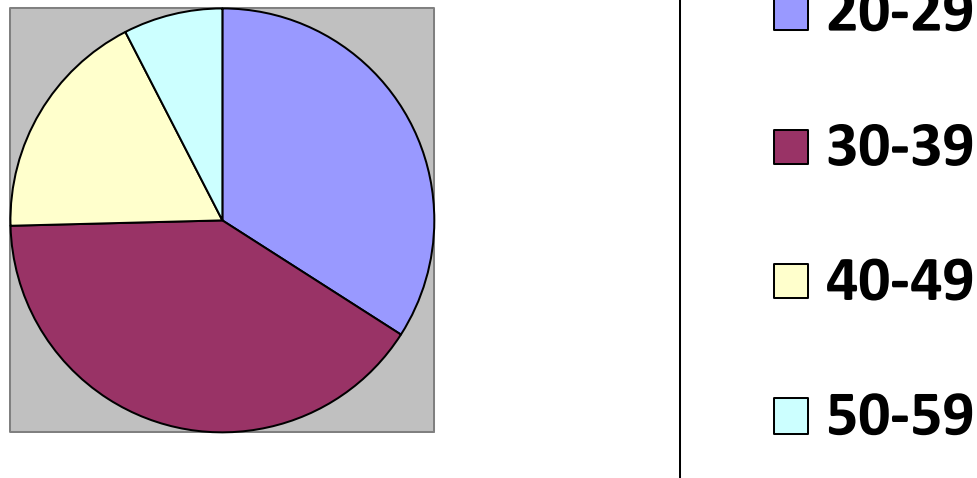


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents.

**Occupational Distribution**

A breakdown of the occupation of respondents showed that 102 persons or 55.1% of them are farmers, 24 people or 13% are traders whilst 1a respondents representing 9.7%, of all respondents are oritt servants The remaining 22.2% of the respondents or 41 persons are engaged in other Socio – economic or socio cultural activities. This breakdown is given in table below.

**Table 6: Occupation distribution.**

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Farming	102	55.1
Trading	24	13.0
Auto Mobile related works	10	5.4
Civil servant	18	9.7
Student	9	4.9
Teaching	8	4.3
Politics	6	3.2
Carpentry	5	2.7
Tailoring	3	1.6

## Information Needs

Responses in respect of information needs of people showed that 105 persons or 56.8% of the respondents require information on agricultural activities, 37 persons out of this number require the information in combination with some other socio-economic/cultural activities. Similarly, 39 respondents or 21.1% of respondents need information on politics out of which 26 persons require the information combined with other socio-economic/cultural activities. This is also the case with Education in which 19 respondents or 10.3% of the population sampled need information on the aspect and 5 persons out of this number required the information together with other activities. Other results include Commerce with 9 respondents representing 4.9%, Health and Sanitation, 8 respondents or 4.3% of the population sampled; whilst Religion and Entertainment have 1 and 4 respondents or 0.5% and 2.2% respondents respectively.

Table VIII below contains a summary of this trend.

**Table 7: Types of Information Needs**

Types of information	No. of respondents	Percentages
On agricultural activities	68	36.8
On agriculture and other socio-economic activities	37	20.0
On politics	13	7.0
On politics and other socio-economic activities	26	14.1
On commerce	9	4.9
On health and sanitation	8	4.3
On education	14	7.6
On education and other socio-economic activities	5	2.7
On religion	1	0.5
On entertainment	4	2.2

## Availability of Information Systems

Results of field observations and responses from questionnaires showed that a number of Information Media are available in the local government. However, there is no single Public Library in any part of the local government. The following Systems have been identified. Viz-

1. Radio
2. Television
3. Newspapers
4. G.S.M facilities
5. Community meetings
6. Departmental Bulletins
7. National Orientation Agency
8. Local Government Information Department
9. Traditional Town Crier



10. Agricultural Extension Services Unit
11. Computer services
12. Photocopying services
13. School libraries
14. Workshops and Seminars
15. Poster and bill boards
16. Public enlightenment campaigns and rallies.

The field observations have revealed that Television sets which in the past used to be an electronic of the urban areas, mostly because of the availability of electricity in such areas, are now found even in the remotest areas of the local government. Private electricity generating sets are used by such rural dwellers to view television programmes, particularly during important events like football matches involving Nigeria and other international teams.

Another interesting finding is the availability of Telecommunication services in most of the semi-urban areas and other areas of the local government, where mobile phone services are available, both for private and commercial purpose. Responses from interviewees and results of observations of some information outfits, showed that the local government Information Department, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and Agricultural Extension units of the Niger State Agricultural Development Project and Gurara Local Government Agricultural services section, all provide some information services to the people and are manned by qualified personnel/professionals. On the contrary, all the officers in charge of the three (3) school libraries located in Gawu, Izom and Diko respectively, are unqualified.

The basic functions of the local government information department include the following.

- i. Public Enlightenment
- ii. Information Processing and Dissemination
- iii. Media and Press Relations
- iv. Internal Communications

The department strives to project the image of government through public enlightenment aimed at teaching and updating the knowledge of the grassroots populace to realise the implications of government policies. Thus the information provided by the department is not peoples need dependent but based on government intentions. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) of the Federal Ministry of Information, located in the local government is charged with public orientation and mobilisation on government policies. This is done through the use of News bulletins, manuals and enlightenment campaigns. These activities are not always based on peoples need.

The Niger State Agricultural Development Project (NSADP) and Gurara Local Government Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, have Agricultural Extension units which are responsible for information dissemination to the people on research findings and on government policies, in order to boost food production. The determination of peoples need is facilitated by visits to various districts during which views are exchanged between the agents and the people, regarding their needs, new research ideas and government policies. The basic methods of communicating information to people by these units include interpersonal communication, farm demonstration, radio, community and political leaders, co-operative organisations, posters and

pamphlets. Based on the responses received, farm demonstrations are the most effective form of communication because these enable the people to see things practically.

A common handicap of all the outfits is that of poor funding, lack of functional equipment and materials for effective information dissemination, and also the lack of means of transportation for routine visits to all parts of the local government for the purpose of conducting community mobilisation, public enlightenment and farm demonstration of new research information etc. The performance of these outfits is generally below average. All the school libraries are poorly stocked and mostly with obsolete materials which are housed in un-conducive or inappropriate environments. An example of this kind of situation is that of one of the libraries that is presently operated in the principal's office. These conditions are obviously not good for effective performance. However, responses also showed that despite the poor condition of the facilities, the Libraries still render some reading and lending services to the few students that patronise them.

### **Medium through which Information is Received**

The study has revealed the radio to be the most popular information reception medium in Gurara local government, with about 158 respondents representing 85.4% of the sample, relying on radio for receiving information on different socio-cultural / economic activities. This finding is in line with that of Afolayan, Aiterebhe, and Mejabi, (2015) in which they found mobile phone to be the on the raise as most popular information systems used by the rural dwellers of Kwara state. However, a further analysis showed that 90 persons or 57% of the respondents that use the GSM facilities for receiving information, do so in combination with one or more other medium of information provision. The general trend in media of information reception by respondents is given in detail in table below.

**Table 8: Medium of Information Received**

<b>S/No</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
1.	GSM facilities and radio	68	36.8
2.	GSM facilities and community meetings	30	16.2
3.	GSM facilities, Radio and Television	14	7.6
4.	GSM facilities, Radio, T.V, Newspaper, Workshop and Seminar, & Information Department	10	5.4
5.	GSM facilities, Radio, Seminar, & Departmental circulars	8	4.3
6.	GSM facilities, Radio, Television, Newspaper & Radio	7	3.8
7.	GSM facilities, Radio, Television and newspaper	3	1.6
8.	GSM facilities, Radio, Television and Community meetings	6	3.2
9.	GSM facilities, Community meetings and political rallies and posters	5	2.7
10.	GSM facilities, Radio, Television, Community meetings and Agricultural Extension Service	4	2.2

11.	GSM facilities and Agricultural Extension Service	3	1.6
12.	Community meetings	8	4.3
13.	Agricultural Extension Service	13	7.0
14.	Market Women Association	6	3.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Degree of Availability of the Desired Information.**

The findings of this study has generally shown that 49 respondents or 26.5% of the sample indicated that they receive adequate information whilst the majority or 136 persons representing 73.5% of the whole respondents indicated its inadequacy. The implication here is that a very significant percentage of them still lack adequate information services. This position is given in table below.

**Table 9: Degree of availability of information Received**

<b>Availability</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Very Adequate	17	9.2
Adequate	32	17.3
Inadequate	115	62.2
Very adequate	21	11.4

### **Appropriateness of Information Received with Peoples Need**

It was also found that 73 respondents representing 39.5% of people sampled claim they receive information which is appropriate with their needs whilst a greater percentage of 60.5% of all respondents 112 persons indicated the contrary. In other words, the information received by a majority of the respondents is not appropriate with their needs. The details of this position is given in table ix and illustrated in fig 5 respectively.

**Table 10: Appropriateness of information Received.**

Appropriateness	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very Appropriate	20	10.2
Appropriate	53	28.7
Not Appropriate	112	60.5

### **Summary**

The following are the summary of major findings of this study. It was found that 136 respondents out of the 185, representing 73.5% were males, and a breakdown of all the respondents' ages shows that 138 of them or 74.6% fall between the ages of 20 to 40 years. All the respondents have information needs, which range from Agriculture, Politics, Commerce, Education, Health, Sanitation to Entertainment.

The study has also shown that a variety of information systems and services are certainly available in the local government. These include mainly the electronic and non – electronic systems, traditional oral systems and some school libraries, which render reading and lending services to students and teachers. However, there is no single public library in any part of the local government. Some other notable information providers include the Local Government Information Department, National Orientation Agency and Agricultural Extension Units of the Niger State Agricultural Development Project (NSADP) and Gurara Local Government Council respectively. This is because they are poorly funded and lack functional equipment and other logistic support. The radio also was found to be the most popular system/ medium through which information is obtained, because 158 respondents out of 185 or 85.4% showed they relied on GSM facilities for information needs.

On the degree of availability and appropriateness of information received, the responses showed that 136 persons or 73.6% indicated that the information received by them is inadequate, while on the other hand 112 respondents or 60.5% indicated that the information received is not always appropriate with their needs.

### **Conclusion.**

Based on the above findings, it may be concluded that the people of Gurara Local Government certainly have diverse information needs and a variety of information systems also available in the area, among which the GSM facilities was found to be the most popular system of information reception by the people. However, the information received is significantly inadequate and not always appropriate with their basic needs. The non-availability of a public library in any part of the Local Government is also an unhealthy development which may enhance the current level of information poverty. This trend obviously has negative impacts on Economic, Social, Cultural and Political choices and of course the ethical behaviour of the people.

### **Recommendation**

There is the need for all information providers in Gurara Local Government to carry out research into the information needs of the people so as to enable them to provide very adequate information that are relevant to the people's need. Government should endeavour to establish public libraries

in each district of the local government and efforts should also be made to make the existing school libraries more functional. Attention must also be given to the training of the staff of these libraries so as to ensure that only qualified library officers are engaged in their operation. All organisation or outfits that are involved in information services provision should be adequately funded and well equipped with the relevant materials, and be given all possible logistic support so as to enhance their effective performance. It has therefore become pertinent that a cohesive and aggressive reform of the information provision outfits and strategies be undertaken in order to enhance the overall sustainable development of the entire local government area.

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