

**CHARACTER EDUCATION VALUES IN *THE LITTLE PRINCE*
BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY**

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Abstract

Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* is a work of children literature which conceives a lot of life values. The aim of this study is to identify the character education values conceived in *The Little Prince*. The conceptual framework of this study is the values of character education formulated by Indonesian Ministry of Education. This study used qualitative content analysis method. The results of the analysis found the values of character education in the story of *the Little Prince* such as religious, tolerant, social care and responsible. This values of character education are related to each other. In *The Little Prince* religious character is the basis of other characters. Religious character in *The Little Prince* primarily concerns with the spiritual aspect. The spiritual aspect concerns with establishing and maintaining spiritual relationships. Spiritual relationship with God is unseparable from the relationship with others. It is in the terms of relationships with others that tolerance, caring for others/social care and responsibility have its meaning and importance.

Keywords: character, education, values, religious

Introduction

In the past few decades, it has been increasingly realized that the various problems faced by the Indonesian people are due to the problem of human character. Various phenomena and incidents in the society are indicative of the deterioration of national character. At least it shows a crisis in Indonesian human character. Corruption and power abuse are so prevailing that it needs a special governmental body to handle it. Horizontal conflicts and violence in society arose easily. So did social unrests. Conflicts in familial relation increased. Interpersonal relationships tend to be fragile. Sometimes the causes of the violence and unrest are trivial. Many people seem to be more apathetic, unwilling to know or helpless in facing the future.

Such social phenomena leads to assumption that there are decline in moral awareness and the weakening of Indonesian human character. Schools seem to lack serious attention to moral education. Brawls between students of different schools are among the symptoms. College graduates are prone to dishonest acts. There is allegation that some students are happy if lectures are canceled. Many schools or universities' libraries are empty. Students use internet for useless things. Students are allergic of books written in foreign languages and inclined to commit plagiarism. (Wahyu, 2011).

In the midst of the nation's moral bankruptcy, rampant acts of violence, brawls, the use of drugs, and other forms of criminal acts, the nation desperately needs character education. Schools have actually implemented character education through the subjects such as Religion and Moral Education. However, such fragmentary character and moral education in separated subjects seems ineffective in nurturing Indonesian people of good morals and strong character.

To solve this problem The Ministry of Education issued a new curriculum in 2013. The new curriculum integrates character and moral education into all stages and aspects of formal education. The policy of integrating character education into all curricula is based on the understanding that character education can be integrated into learning in each subject. Learning material related to norms or values in each subject needs to be developed, made explicit, and related to the context of everyday life. Therefore, learning character values should not only

consider the cognitive domain, but also and primarily aims at the internalization of moral values and its application in real daily lives of students at school and in the community (Fitri, 2012).

One of the subjects that is suitable for teaching moral and character values is literature. Literature has been used as a means of character and moral education since the days of Greco-Roman era as Horatius expressed that literature has aspects of *dulce* (sweet) and *utile* (useful) (Darma, 2004). Literature is both entertaining and educating.

Literature teaching at elementary education are supposed to utilise children literature works. For children, good human character values and moral values are easier to digest through presentation of stories than through abstract lectures. Children literature does indeed have characteristics that are suitable for character and moral education of children. Children literature has certain values that can affect a child's mental development. Children literature can tell about anything that concerns life issues, so that they can provide a better understanding of life for children. (Toha-Sarumpaet, 2010).

Among the best known children literary works there is a work that has received quite a lot of attention. It is *The Little Prince*, a work of a French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. It is said that this story has been translated into 230 languages. Oulton (2017) said that *The Little Prince* is the most translated book in other languages besides religious books. The story tells about the life and journey of a child from an asteroid. On his journey he visited six asteroids before arriving on earth. He met with various types of humans and other creatures. He learned about life from them.

This story conceived a lot of teaching about the meaning of life that not only children but it is also worth to read by adults. This story conceives life values including the values of character education. Character education values are the focus of this study. The aim of this study is to explore and identify character education values conceived in the story of *The Little Prince*.

Conceptual Framework

Character education values has recently gotten more attention. What is character can not easily be defined. However they adopt the concept that character is a set of interrelated personal values and virtues that usually guide behavior. Character is about who we are and who we are and includes, among other things, the virtues of responsibility, honesty, independence, reliability, generosity, self-discipline, and a sense of identity and purpose. (Arthur, Powell & Lin, 2012:10). Arthur (2003) explains that a person's conduct involves 'choices about right or wrong actions and thoughts. Knowles and McLean (1992: 165) suggests It has also been suggested that 'character is comprised of, but not equivalent to, dispositions, trait, habits and tendencies'.

Although it's easy to think of character as personality, Arthur, Powell & Lin (2012) assert that at the conceptual level, it is important to distinguish between character qualities that define virtues from other qualities of self and / or people that we are more likely to associate with ideas such as personality. (2012:10). Surely, as Winnie (in Koesoema, 2007) indicates, the term character has two meanings. The first meaning is related to how someone behaves. If someone behaves dishonestly, cruelly, or greedily, that person must manifest a bad character. Conversely, if someone behaves honestly, is helpful, that person manifests noble character. The second meaning is closely related to personality. Someone can be said to be a person of character if his behavior is in accordance with moral rules. It is why the two terms are often used interchangeably. Personality refers to the organization of a person's attitudes to mingle, know, think, and feel when he communicates with other people or responds to a situation. "We judge people funny, extroverted, energetic, optimistic, confident—as well as overly serious, lazy, negative, and shy" (Lickerman, 2011).

Character, on the other hand, includes traits that reveal themselves only in specific—and often uncommon—circumstances, traits like honesty, virtue, and kindliness. Character traits, in contrast to personality traits, are based on beliefs for example, that honesty and treating others well is important (Lickerman, 2011).

Research has shown that personality traits are largely determined by heredity and mostly do not change. Character traits, on the other hand, are more malleable, though not without great effort (Lickerman, 2011). Character is not something that people are born with, nor can we expect parents to be the sole providers of ‘good character’, nor can it be ‘taught’ from a textbook. There are many significant factors involved in the development of one’s character, from family, community and school, among others.

Character education seeks to develop virtue - human excellence - as the foundation of life that is purposeful, productive, and satisfying and a just, loving, and developing society. Character education takes deliberate steps to foster moral and intellectual virtue through every phase of school life - examples of adults, relationships among peers, handling discipline, conflict resolution, curriculum content, teaching processes, the process of rigid academic standards, the school environment, implementation of extracurricular activities, and involvement of parents. Everything that happens in school life is character education, because everything affects character.

Character education nurtures and promotes the intellectual, ethical, emotional and social development of individuals. This is a continuous learning process that allows young people and adults to become moral, caring, critical, and responsible individuals. Character education represents the relationship between knowledge, values and skills needed for success in life. With knowledge, we refer to two types of knowledge: a) general knowledge; that is, knowledge that covers a wide range of subjects and b) specific knowledge gained through extensive reading and training in a particular field or field of study. Value, on the other hand, is the belief and moral code of a person or society about what is good and bad that tends to influence attitudes and behavior. (Sakellaridi, 2016).

Indonesian Ministry of Education has identified eighteen character education values to be implemented in character education in schools. The values are, (1) religiosity, (2) honesty, (3) tolerance, (4) discipline, (5) hard work, (6) creativity, 7) being independent, (8) being democratic, (9) curiosity, 10) nationalism, 11) love of the homeland, (12) appreciate the achievements, 13) friendly/communicative, (14) love of peace, (15) love to read, (16) care for the environment, (17) social care (care for others), (18) responsible.

The ministry provides brief explanation of each values. Religious character involves the obedience and perseverance in understanding and implementing religious teachings (beliefs) and tolerance towards other religious practices (beliefs), and living in harmony and side by side. Honesty is attitude and behavior that reflect the unity between knowledge, words and deeds (knowing what is right, saying the right thing, and doing what is right). Tolerance is respect for differences in religion, creed, ethnicity, customs, language, race, ethnicity, opinions, and can live harmoniously in spite of the differences. Discipline is habits and actions consistent in observing regulations or rules. Hard work shows genuine effort in completing various tasks, problems, work as well as possible. Creativity involves innovation in various aspects of problem solving, always finding new ways to achieve better result. Independent character means that one not dependent solely on others in completing various tasks and problems. But this does not mean that one may not collaborate. It means that one should not leave any assignments and responsibilities to others. Democratic character reflect equal rights and obligations fairly and evenly with others. Curiosity is the desire to know and understand things in more depth.

Nationalism is an inclination to place the interests of the nation and state above personal or individual interests. Love of homeland reflects a sense of pride, loyalty, caring, and high appreciation for language, culture, economics, politics. Achievement appreciation is an open attitude towards the achievements of others and acknowledging one's own shortcomings without reducing the eagerness for higher achievement. Communicative/friendly and proactive character involves the will to communicate politely and to join so that collaborate with others. Love of peace is attitudes and behaviors that reflect an atmosphere of peace, security, calm, and comfort. The love to read is a will to provide time specifically to read various information, both books, journals, magazines, newspapers. Care for the environment involves attitudes and actions to strive maintaining and preserving environment. Social care/care for others involves empathy and concern for other people. Responsibility is the determination to accomplish one's duties and obligations toward others and society (Depdiknas, 2010).

Surely, there are many other character values besides those values explained above. In spite, this study focuses on these values as the basis in doing the analysis of the story of *The Little Prince*.

Research Methods

The method of the study is qualitative content analysis. Hsieh dan Shannon (2005:1278) defines "qualitative content analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". The main steps of content analysis research are the stages of determining focus and subfocus categories of research. In spite of the objection to the application of categorization in qualitative content analysis, Mayring (2000) argues that the categorization system has an important contribution to the comparability of findings and evaluation of reliability of an analysis. In the categorization stage, aspects of text interpretation based on research questions are grouped in carefully determined categories and constantly revised in the analysis process.

Content analysis in literature study is a way to understand the values and messages conceived in literary works such as moral messages, educational values, philosophical values, social values, religious values, and so on.

Data collection in this study follows the stages of selecting, focusing, simplifying, summarizing and changing raw data. The main instrument of data collection in this study is the researcher herself as data recorder, because she has sufficient understanding of the characteristics of the data needed for the research.

The study adopts qualitative content analysis procedure proposed by Bengtsson (2016:9) as follows.

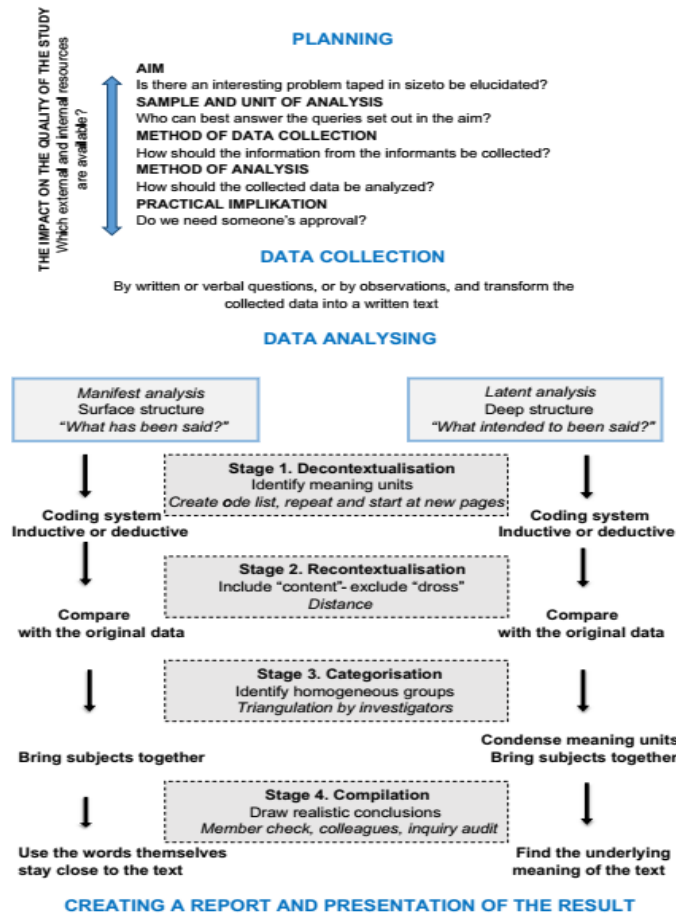


Figure 1. Qualitative content analysis procedure

Results

Some character education values in the story of *The Little Prince* are,

1) Religious Character

Religious character value in *The Little Prince* is concerning with one's heart. It is a Fox that teach the truth to the Little Prince. The Fox told the Little Prince when they were going to part.

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember. (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:88)

The most important thing is to deal with the world through one's heart, not through one's eyes. The truth is not always visible to the eyes. The visible physical world is just a shell that home the truth.

"What I see here is nothing but a shell. What is most important is invisible . . ." (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:88)

The truth has to be found with the heart because the eyes can see only the physical world. The truth lies in the spiritual realm. So in terms of looking for the truth the eyes are blind.

“But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart . . .” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:99).

Religious character means that one has to nurture his heart. One has to *“make up the heart”* (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:86). One has to keep his heart clean, for it is a clean heart that can see clearly the truth.

2) Tolerance.

Tolerance presupposes and requires openness to difference. The absence of this openness can bring negative results as shown in the scene when a Turkish astronomer presents his finding in an international forum wearing Turkish traditional clothes. His finding was neglected not because it is worthless, but because of his clothes.

The king whom the Little Prince met first shows tolerance to his subordinates.

“If I order a general to fly from one flower to another like a butterfly, or to write a tragic drama, or to turn himself into a seabird, and if the general does not carry out the order, which one of us is wrong?” asked the king. *“The general, or myself?”*

“You,” said the little prince firmly.

“Exactly...” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:44)

To be tolerant means also not to rush in judging people. The Little Prince shows this kind of attitude when he hastily judged that humans were not creative and repeated what he said. That happens because he made that judgment without understanding that the one who repeats his words is an echo. Also, a flower in the wilderness judges humans using the criteria of its own situation. After seeing the caravan walking past him, he assumed that they were being blown away because they had no roots. As a result they have trouble. It is clear that the judgment is completely wrong because he does not understand human condition and judges humans based on his own situation.

3) Social care/care for other

Social care or concern for others is first addressed to the closest people. The Little Prince cares about his rose (through the means of personification of the roses in the story of the Little Prince, the rose has the role as a ‘person’). During his journey from his planet to the earth the Little Prince kept thinking about his rose he left behind. He always worried about the safety of his rose.

“Is my flower in danger of speedy disappearance?”

“Certainly it is.”

“My flower is ephemeral,” the little prince said to himself, *“and she has only four thorns to defend herself against the world. And I have left her on my planet, all alone!”* (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:67)

He asked ‘I’ to draw him a sheep that will help him to solve the problem of baobab tree by eating the baobab buds. However, at the same time he worried that the sheep might eat the rose too.

“A sheep--if it eats little bushes, does it eat flowers, too?”

"A sheep," I answered, "eats anything it finds in its reach. "

"Even flowers that have thorns? "

"Yes, even flowers that have thorns." (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:32)

He was angry with 'I' for considering his rose insignificant and that the flower's thorns were useless.

The pilot's ('I') care for the Little Prince is depicted in the scene of looking for water. They walked in the desert day and night. That night they have a break just for a while, then they continued their journey across the desert. When the Little Prince is sleepy and unable to continue the journey, 'I' continued the journey while carrying the Little Prince on his back. The next day 'I' worried about the condition of the Little Prince who looked pale after talking to a snake from top of a wall beside the well. 'I' must catch him when the Little Prince slides down from the wall. Little Prince is suffering because he knows that to return to his planet he must go through a process that scared him because he must be bitten by a snake. The Little Prince who is also worried that 'I' may be bitten by the snake, forbids him to come to the place where he will meet the snake. On the contrary, 'I' who saw the Little Prince looked worried did not intend to leave the Little Prince. 'I' say three times, "I will not leave you".

4) Responsible character

The little Prince is a responsible person. He has a sense of responsibility for the safety of his planet and his rose.

"You know--my flower . . . I am responsible for her. And she is so weak! She is so naïve! She has four thorns, of no use at all, to protect herself against all the world . . ." (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 109-110).

In the scene when The Little Prince and 'I' was looking for water, the Little Prince reminded 'I' of his promise to draw him a muzzle because the Little Prince felt responsible for the safety of his rose. *"Remember ... a wind for my sheep ... I am responsible for that flower."* (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 100).

Discussion

Religious character consists of two aspects, namely the aspect of religious practice and spiritual aspect. Religious practice concerns the performance of rituals. Spirituality, on the other hand, concern with one's heart and soul. These aspects are related to human existence as a physical and at the same time a spiritual being.

Religious character that involve religious practice such as performing religious rituals are not found in the story of Little Prince. However, there are many parts of *The Little Prince* that deals with spiritual aspects of human life. Spiritual aspect most clearly illustrated in the scene where the Little Prince meets the Fox.

The Fox taught the Little Prince, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 88). The Little Prince tried to remember and absorb the Fox's words. "What is essential is invisible to the eye", repeated the Little Prince so as not to forget (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 88). The words of the Fox give him a new understanding of how one should see the world and life. The world becomes meaningful and looks beautiful not because of what appears in the eye, but especially because there are secrets or mysteries hidden in it. Seeing with the heart means seeing the inner side or the spiritual

aspect. And it is the most important thing. In religious life the spiritual aspect is the most important.

The fox told the Little Prince about “seeing with heart” after considering that the Little Prince had understood what he meant in their previous conversation. It can be said that the phrase “seeing with heart” summarize the conversation of the Little Prince and the Fox. The Fox speaks of “seeing with heart” in the context of building and maintaining relationships/ties with other people. The word “see” requires that eyes open. So “seeing with heart” requires an open heart. Building and maintaining relationships requires an open heart.

In his conversation with The Little Prince, the Fox taught about the importance of relationships or bonds and how to establish relationship. The Fox use the word “to tame” to mean establishing ties and bonds. The fox explains the meaning and importance of relationships as follows:

“To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . .” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:82-83)

“But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun is shining on my life. I will know the sound of the steps that will be different from the others. Other steps made me hurry back into underground. You will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the wheat fields there? I don't eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. Wheat fields has nothing to do with me. And that's sad. But the color of your hair is golden color. Think about how beautiful it was when you tamed me! Grains, which are also gold, will bring me back to thinking about you. And I would love to hear the wind in wheat. . .” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:84)

The Little Prince tamed the Fox. And when the time to part came, the Fox became sad and felt like crying. The Little Prince assumed that the tie being established between them, is harmful to the Fox. The Fox realized that The Little Prince has not fully understand yet what establishing relationship and tie meant. The Fox then told The Little Prince to go to the roses he had met in a garden. After meeting the roses, Prince Little realized that the tie between him and his rose had distinguished his rose from the roses in the garden.

The tie established between the Little Prince and his rose, between the Little Prince and the Fox is a spiritual tie. The tie connects their heart. In order for the tie to be established properly, their hearts has to be clean, as the fox said that “must dress up the heart” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 86).

The Fox taught the Little Prince that the most important is the spirit. The spirit is invisible to the eyes. It visible only to the the heart. Seeing with heart can be accomplished when a tie has been established. On the other hand, a true tie can be established only if the heart is clean and beautiful.

In the scene when the Little Prince and “I” searched for water, they walked through the desert day and night. To relieve their fatigue, they sit resting under the starry night sky and admire the beauty of the stars and the desert. The starry night sky does look beautiful. But the Little Prince saw the beauty not in a physical term, but in a mental spiritual term. He saw it not only with his eyes but with his heart. “The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen.”, (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 94), he said. The stars in the night sky looked beautiful to the Little Prince because at one of the stars the is a flower related to him. It is the rose he left on his planet. It is the rose he cared for painstakingly. Even when he felt that the rose was selfish that it made him miserable, he still took care of it. The stars in the night sky look beautiful because

they have ties with the stars. The ties were established because he had a tie with a rose that grew in one of the stars.

The beauty of the desert is similar too. "What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well." (Saint-Exupéry, 2011: 95). The desert look beautiful and meaningful because it hide a well (water) they need and are looking for. The need for water establish a tie between them and the desert.

Religious character is not limited to practice religious rituals such as attending church services and worship on Sundays for Christians or praying five times a day for Muslims. The real religious character is establishing a tie with God. Establishing a tie with God is only possible if men open their hearts, that they are able to "see" God with their hearts. The ability to "see" God with his heart requires a clean heart.

As it is clear from the scene when the Little Prince and "I" looked for water, the relationship or tie is never single, but involves other parties. The tie established between the Little Prince and the Fox involves the wheat fields which previously had no value to the fox. The tie between the Little Prince and his rose includes the stars, so the stars look beautiful. Even though previously the Little Prince was only interested in the beauty of sunset. The tie between "I" and the Little Prince with water established in the context of their need for water includes the desert so the desert looks beautiful.

Likewise, a person's relationship with his God is not single and exclusive. Relationships with God involve other parties, namely other people or even with the universe and the earth. Thus, as seen in the sign of Christianity, the cross, vertical relation with God are connected with horizontal relation with fellow humans. It can be said that in fact it is not a coincidence that in Christianity God chose the cross as a means or way of carrying out the redemption of mankind which is the manifestation of the greatest love. The cross as a sign of Christianity represents the core of Christian teaching, namely to love God and at the same time to love fellow humans.

Religious character includes loyalty and obedience in carrying out the demands and rules of religion, and good behavior and actions towards others. In the implementation of character education in schools (Balikpapan City Public High School 4) religious character includes behavioral indicators such as "... greeting before and after any activity, greeting teachers, talking and acting with respect, saying thanks and apologize, knock on the door before entering someone else's room, asking permission to use other people's goods". (Wibowo, 2017: 85).

It is clear that religious character is not separated with other character values, especially tolerance, the will to communicate and cooperate with others, caring for others and responsibility.

Being tolerant means to be opened to any differences. It includes the attitude to not rush or jump into hasty judgement of others. Moreover when the criteria used in the hasty assessment are one's own circumstances, points of view, habits or customs there will be a greater possibility of misunderstanding. It also means that being religious a man has to make efforts creating connection and tie with other people. Being religious means living together with others. Living together with others here means caring for others and being responsible for the well-being of others.

Indonesian society is known as a religious community. However, there are many incidents in the community indicating more and more people have no appreciation of relationships and of living together with others. It is not surprising if there are people while claiming to be religious perform action harmful to others. One of its causes is the separation between the aspects of religious practice from the spiritual aspects of religious characters.

In the state philosophy Pancasila religiosity underlies human social life. Religiosity requires living with other people. Living with others requires an ability to open up and open one's heart. The heart must also be kept clean. It is the secret of meaningful life. The truth that

can only be seen by the heart as the secret of meaningful life is to establish and maintain relationships and ties with others.

Conclusion

As a work of children literature, Saint-Exupéry conceived a lot of life values. Among the values conceived in the story are character education values such as religious, tolerant, care for others and responsible. The story asserts that religious character in its spiritual aspect bear central role and is the basis of other characters. As a matter of fact, the story of *The Little Prince* is a fable providing pleasant reading for children, and at the same time for adults it is a means for meaningful contemplation concerning the values of life. The story of *The Little Prince* indeed fulfill the nature of literature to be *dulce* (sweet) and *utile* (useful). The story has been translated into Indonesian, and it is worth to be used as a reading material for literature class.

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