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STRATEGIC DRIVERS OF ACADEMIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine how knowledge management and organizational commitment shape employee performance in higher education, while positioning organizational innovation as a contested mechanism within Resource-Based and Knowledge-Based frameworks. It advances a novel contribution by demonstrating that the strategic value of intangible assets does not necessarily operate through innovation, thereby challenging dominant linear assumptions in organizational theory. Using data from 200 respondents in higher education institutions in West Jakarta, the findings reveal that knowledge management and organizational commitment exert strong direct effects on both innovation and employee performance, while innovation fails to mediate these relationships. This asymmetry indicates that performance is more structurally driven by knowledge integration and organizational attachment than by formal innovation processes, particularly within bureaucratic academic systems. The implication is clear: university leaders must prioritize strengthening knowledge systems and organizational commitment as primary drivers of sustainable performance.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Innovation, Employee Performance, Higher Education Management

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly confronted with a structural paradox: they are expected to operate as knowledge-intensive organizations while simultaneously navigating rigid bureaucratic systems, digital transformation pressures, and intensifying competition. In such environments, employee performance is no longer determined solely by individual competence but by the institution's capacity to manage knowledge, sustain organizational commitment, and adapt through innovation (Chaithanapat et al., 2022; Goetz & Wald, 2022; Mendoza-Silva, 2021). Prior evidence suggests that effective knowledge management enhances organizational performance by fostering learning orientation, openness, and strategic vision (Kumaravel & Vikkraman, 2018), and it also stimulates organizational innovation (Turulja & Bajgoric, 2018). Yet, despite these insights, universities continue to struggle in translating internal capabilities into consistent performance outcomes, indicating a deeper unresolved problem in how these elements interact within academic contexts.

Theoretically, this issue is commonly framed within the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Knowledge-Based View (KBV), which position knowledge and commitment as strategic assets capable of generating competitive advantage (Pereira & Bamel, 2021). However, these frameworks often assume a linear pathway in which organizational innovation functions as the primary conduit linking capabilities to performance. Empirical evidence, however, remains inconsistent. Existing studies frequently adopt fragmented modeling approaches, treating knowledge management, organizational commitment, and innovation as isolated predictors rather than components of an integrated system. Moreover, much of the capability–performance literature is rooted in private-sector settings, raising concerns about contextual validity in higher education institutions characterized by distinct governance structures and institutional logics (Patnaik et al., 2022). The mediating role of organizational innovation is also often presumed rather than rigorously tested, creating ambiguity regarding whether innovation genuinely translates capabilities into performance or merely coexists with them.

Recent empirical works further expose this theoretical gap. Suryawan (2022) identified key determinants of employee performance but largely treated them as independent effects, leaving the underlying organizational mechanism underdeveloped. Similarly, Masman (2023) demonstrated that organizational commitment explains approximately 22% of performance variance, confirming its importance while simultaneously highlighting its insufficiency as a standalone predictor. The absence of mediation in these findings raises a critical question regarding how organizational capabilities are converted into performance outcomes. Responding to this limitation, the present study does not merely introduce additional variables but reconfigures the structural logic of the model by positioning organizational innovation as a potential transmission mechanism rather than an independent determinant.

This study contributes to the literature by advancing a more integrative and mechanism-oriented framework that interrogates how knowledge management and organizational commitment translate into employee performance within higher education institutions. Whether organizational innovation operates as an intermediary or whether capabilities exert predominantly direct effects, this study challenges the prevailing assumption of universal mediation and refines theoretical understanding within RBV and KBV perspectives. In doing so, it shifts the analytical focus from identifying significant predictors to explicating the pathways through which organizational capabilities are transformed into performance outcomes in knowledge-intensive institutional settings.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Resource-Based View (RBV), as articulated by Jay Barney, posits that sustained competitive advantage emerges from internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). In higher education institutions (HEIs), these resources extend beyond tangible assets to include knowledge management systems and relational capital embedded in organizational commitment. Recent scholarship reinforces that VRIN resources remain central to performance outcomes and institutional competitiveness (Mailani et al., 2024; Komakech et al., 2025). However, RBV is often critiqued for its static orientation, as it inadequately explains how such resources are operationalized into individual or organizational outcomes. This limitation

necessitates the examination of intervening mechanisms, particularly innovation, as a potential conduit through which intangible resources are transformed into performance outcomes. Empirical evidence suggests that knowledge creation and sharing enhance innovation, which subsequently drives performance, indicating a mediated capability–performance linkage (Cristache et al., 2025) .

Extending RBV, the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) conceptualizes knowledge as the most strategically significant resource within organizations. In HEIs, where knowledge creation and dissemination are core functions, the ability to integrate and apply knowledge becomes critical for both employee effectiveness and institutional performance. While KBV literature frequently assumes that innovation naturally mediates the relationship between knowledge management and performance, such assumptions remain insufficiently tested within higher education contexts characterized by bureaucratic rigidity and regulatory constraints (Stoian, 2024). Although empirical studies support the mediating role of innovation in converting intellectual capital into tangible outcomes (Cristache et al., 2025), the consistency of this mechanism remains questionable, suggesting the need for a more critical and context-sensitive examination of capability conversion processes .

Within this theoretical foundation, knowledge management emerges as a central organizational capability that governs how knowledge is acquired, processed, and applied to enhance decision-making and service quality (Reno, 2024). It reflects not only technical processes but also managerial orientations that integrate knowledge into behavior, practices, and strategic decisions (Alsabbagh & Khalil, 2017). Effective knowledge management fosters learning, adaptability, and alignment with organizational goals, thereby enhancing employee performance (Kumaravel & Vikkraman, 2018; Turulja & Bajgoric, 2018). It also strengthens absorptive capacity and supports innovation by enabling organizations to recombine and exploit knowledge resources (Ganguly et al., 2019; Ngoc-Tan & Gregar, 2018). Empirical findings further confirm that knowledge management contributes to organizational ambidexterity and performance, even under conditions of uncertainty, highlighting its role as a foundational mechanism in capability development (Restuputri et al., 2024).

Hypothesis Development

From the perspective of the Knowledge-Based View (KBV), knowledge management constitutes a critical organizational capability that enhances access to information, supports continuous learning, and improves work efficiency. In knowledge-intensive environments such as higher education institutions, effective knowledge systems enable employees to perform tasks with greater accuracy, adaptability, and alignment with institutional goals. By facilitating knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application, knowledge management strengthens individual competencies and directly contributes to performance outcomes. Empirical evidence consistently supports that knowledge management enhances employee capabilities and work effectiveness, thereby reinforcing its direct role in performance improvement (Kumaravel & Vikkraman, 2018; Turulja & Bajgoric, 2018; Reno, 2024).

H1: Knowledge management has a positive effect on employee performance.

Beyond its direct effect, knowledge management also shapes the organization's capacity to generate and implement new ideas. Systematic knowledge processes create an environment conducive to experimentation, problem-solving, and integration of diverse insights. Through mechanisms such as knowledge creation and sharing, organizations develop innovative solutions that enhance adaptability and competitiveness. Prior studies confirm that knowledge management significantly influences organizational innovation, positioning it as a foundational antecedent in the innovation process (Ganguly et al., 2019; Ngoc-Tan & Gregar, 2018; Cristache et al., 2025).

H2: Knowledge management has a positive effect on organizational innovation.

Organizational commitment reflects the psychological attachment and identification of employees with organizational values, which drives engagement, loyalty, and proactive behavior (Priansa, 2018). Employees with strong commitment are more willing to contribute beyond formal job requirements, including participating in innovation initiatives and supporting organizational

change. Within the KBV framework, committed employees act as active agents in knowledge integration and innovation processes. Empirical findings demonstrate that organizational commitment reduces resistance to change and enhances innovation-related behaviors .
H3: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on organizational innovation.

In addition to fostering innovation, organizational commitment directly influences employee performance by increasing intrinsic motivation, persistence, and willingness to exert extra effort. Employees who are emotionally and normatively attached to the organization tend to demonstrate higher levels of responsibility and productivity. A substantial body of empirical research confirms the positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance across contexts (Kristine, 2017; Cahyani et al., 2020; Masman, 2023; Atturrizky & Ekhsan, 2024) .
H4: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on employee performance.

Organizational innovation represents the capability to implement new processes, structures, or ideas that enhance efficiency and responsiveness. Innovation improves work systems, introduces adaptive procedures, and enables organizations to respond effectively to environmental demands. In turn, these improvements enhance individual productivity and overall effectiveness. Empirical evidence suggests that innovation serves as a critical driver of performance by translating organizational capabilities into tangible outcomes .
H5: Organizational innovation has a positive effect on employee performance.

Within the RBV and KBV frameworks, innovation is frequently conceptualized as a conversion mechanism that links organizational capabilities to performance outcomes. However, in higher education institutions, structural constraints such as bureaucratic procedures, regulatory requirements, and institutional culture may weaken or bypass this mediation process. Consequently, capabilities such as knowledge management and organizational commitment may exert direct effects on performance without necessarily operating through innovation. This creates a conceptual tension that necessitates empirical validation of the mediating role of innovation. The path is ilustrated in Figure 1.
H6: Knowledge management has a positive effect on employee performance mediated by organizational innovation.
H7: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on employee performance mediated by organizational innovation.

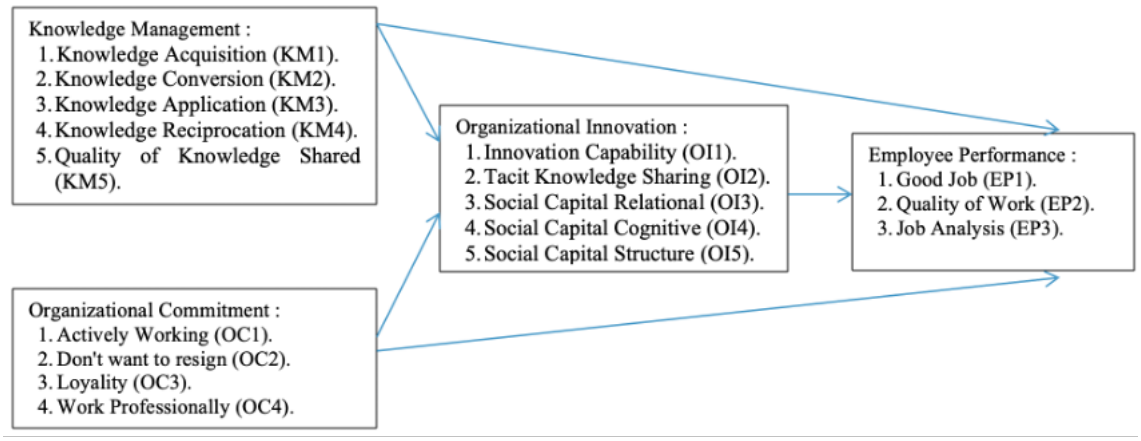


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory design to rigorously examine the structural relationships among knowledge management, organizational commitment, organizational innovation, and employee performance within higher education institutions. The unit of analysis comprises academic employees from multiple universities in West Jakarta, reflecting a knowledge-intensive institutional context. A total of 200 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, specifically targeting individuals directly involved in or familiar with institutional performance evaluation processes to ensure construct relevance and informed

responses (Sugiyono, 2018). This sampling strategy prioritizes analytical validity over statistical generalization, consistent with variance-based structural modeling.

Measurement instruments were adapted from established and validated scales to ensure content validity and theoretical alignment. The questionnaire was translated into Indonesian using a rigorous back-translation procedure to preserve semantic and conceptual equivalence. A pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to assess clarity, reliability, and instrument stability prior to full deployment. All constructs were operationalized using reflective indicators measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Knowledge management was measured through five dimensions: knowledge acquisition (KM1), conversion (KM2), application (KM3), sharing (KM4), and utilization for innovation (KM5), adapted from Turulja and Bajgoric (2018) and Ganguly et al. (2019). Organizational commitment was operationalized using affective (OC1), continuance (OC2), normative (OC3), and professional engagement (OC4) dimensions based on Priansa (2018). Organizational innovation captured process (OI1), product/service (OI2), tacit knowledge sharing (OI3), relational social capital (OI4), and cognitive/structural capital (OI5), adapted from Ganguly et al. (2019). Employee performance was measured using task performance (EP1), work quality (EP2), and timeliness/effectiveness (EP3), following Sutrisno (2020) and Masman (2023) as in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Scale

Variable	Definition	Indicator	Source
Knowledge Management (KM)	Processes of acquiring, sharing, and applying knowledge to improve organizational capabilities.	1. Knowledge Acquisition (KM1). 2. Knowledge Conversion (KM2). 3. Knowledge Application (KM3). 4. Knowledge Sharing (KM4). 5. Knowledge Utilization for Innovation (KM5).	Turulja & Bajgoric. (2018); Ganguly et.al, (2019)
Organizational Commitment (OC)	Employee identification with organizational values leading to loyalty and engagement.	1. Affective Commitment (OC1). 2. Continuance Commitment (OC2). 3. Normative Commitment (OC3). 4. Work Engagement / Professionalism (OC4).	Priansa, (2018)
Organizational Innovation (OI)	Introduction and implementation of new processes, services, or knowledge practices to enhance performance.	1. Process Innovation (OI1). 2. Product/Service Innovation (OI2). 3. Tacit Knowledge Sharing (OI3). 4. Relational Social Capital (OI4). 5. Cognitive/Structural Social Capital (OI5).	Ganguly et.al, (2019)
Employee Performance (EP)	Achievement of job responsibilities in alignment with organizational goals.	1. Task Performance (EP1). 2. Quality of Work (EP2). 3. Timeliness / Job Effectiveness (EP3).	Sutrisno (2020); Masman (2023)

Source: Authors' Compilation (2025)

To address potential common method bias arising from self-reported, cross-sectional data, both Harman's single-factor test and full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) assessments were conducted, confirming the absence of substantial bias. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), enabling simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models and providing robust assessment of direct and mediating effects.

The demographic profile indicates that respondents are predominantly male (64%) and within the 31–45 age range (41%), with the majority holding Master's degrees (63%). Academic positions are largely concentrated at the assistant professor level (62.5%), with limited representation from higher academic ranks and non-academic staff. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the perspectives of academic personnel engaged in teaching, research, and knowledge-intensive activities, which should be considered when interpreting the scope and transferability of the results.

RESULTS

Composite reliability of knowledge management of 0.804, organizational commitment of 0.792, organizational innovation of 0.858 and employee performance of 0.839. CR values of 0.70 and 0.90 are considered satisfactory, while CR values below 0.60 indicate a lack of internal consistency (Hair et.al., 2017) and for AVE knowledge management of 0.451, organizational commitment of 0.492, organizational innovation of 0.550 and employee performance of 0.636. (Hair et.al., 2017) explains that the average AVE value must be more than half of the indicator variants.

Table 2 presents the measurement quality of the constructs. All constructs exhibit adequate internal consistency, with Composite Reliability values above 0.79, indicating that the indicators reliably reflect their underlying latent variables. Average Variance Extracted values are satisfactory, ranging from 0.451 to 0.636. While Knowledge Management's AVE (0.451) is slightly below the recommended 0.50 threshold, its CR (0.804) supports acceptable reliability, suggesting that the indicators adequately capture the construct in the higher education context, though some items may warrant refinement. Overall, the measurement model demonstrates sufficient reliability and convergent validity to proceed with structural analysis.

Although the AVE values for Knowledge Management (0.451) and Organizational Commitment (0.492) are slightly below the recommended threshold of 0.50, the composite reliability values for these constructs exceed 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Some outer loadings fall below the ideal 0.70 cutoff (KM2, KM4, KM5, OC1, OC4, OI1, OI5); however, these indicators were retained based on theoretical relevance and their contribution to content validity, consistent with recommendations that loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained if they improve construct validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2. Outer Model Measurement

Constructs	CR	AVE	Items	Loading
			KM1	0.709
			KM2	0.666
Knowledge Management	0.804	0.451	KM3	0.731
			KM4	0.637
			KM5	0.609
			OC1	0.634
Organizational Commitment	0.792	0.492	OC2	0.734
			OC3	0.812
			OC4	0.605
			OI1	0.658
			OI2	0.835
Organizational Innovation	0.858	0.550	OI3	0.796
			OI4	0.788
			OI5	0.605
			EP1	0.719
Employee Performance	0.839	0.636	EP2	0.830
			EP3	0.838

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Output (2025)

The measurement model demonstrates that all constructs exhibit satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity, indicating that the indicators reliably capture their respective latent variables. The retained items collectively reflect the conceptual domains of knowledge management, organizational commitment, organizational innovation, and employee performance in a coherent manner. Although a few indicators show relatively lower loadings, they remain theoretically meaningful and contribute to the overall construct representation, particularly in capturing the multidimensional nature of organizational phenomena. This balance between statistical adequacy and theoretical completeness ensures that the measurement model is both empirically sound and conceptually robust, providing a credible foundation for further structural analysis.

Building upon the established adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model is subsequently evaluated to examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs. Table 3 presents the results of the structural model, including both direct and indirect effects, as well as the explanatory power of the endogenous variables. This analysis enables a comprehensive assessment of the extent to which knowledge management and organizational commitment influence employee performance, both directly and through organizational innovation, thereby testing the underlying theoretical assumptions of the proposed model.

Table 3. Model Findings

Path	β	*p*-value	Decision
Knowledge Management → Employee Performance	0.119	0.043*	Supported
Knowledge Management → Organizational Innovation	0.468	0.000*	Supported
Organizational Commitment → Organizational Innovation	0.223	0.000*	Supported
Organizational Commitment → Employee Performance	0.561	0.000*	Supported
Organizational Innovation → Employee Performance	0.131	0.030*	Supported
Knowledge Management → Organizational Innovation → Employee Performance	0.061	0.109	Not Supported
Organizational Commitment → Organizational Innovation → Employee Performance	0.029	0.279	Not Supported
Endogenous Variable	R^2		
Organizational Innovation	0.39		
Employee Performance	0.52		

Note: *β = standardized path coefficient. *p < 0.05 indicates statistical significance.
Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 output (2025)

The structural model results reveal a consistent pattern in which both knowledge management and organizational commitment exert meaningful direct influences on employee performance and organizational innovation. Knowledge management emerges as a foundational capability that not only enhances performance directly but also strengthens the organization's capacity to innovate. Similarly, organizational commitment demonstrates a strong and dominant role, particularly in shaping employee performance, indicating that relational and psychological attachment may function as a more immediate driver of individual outcomes than structural mechanisms. Organizational innovation, while significant, exhibits a comparatively modest effect on performance, suggesting that its role is supportive rather than central within this context. More critically, the indirect effects through organizational innovation are not supported, indicating that innovation does not function as an effective mediating mechanism.

These relationships are further illustrated in Figure 2, which presents the path model of the study. The figure visually maps the strength and direction of the relationships among constructs, highlighting the dominance of direct effects over mediated pathways. It provides a clear representation of how knowledge management and organizational commitment independently contribute to employee performance, while organizational innovation occupies a secondary, non-mediating position. This visual model reinforces the structural findings and offers an integrated perspective on the interplay between organizational capabilities and performance outcomes within knowledge-intensive institutional environments.

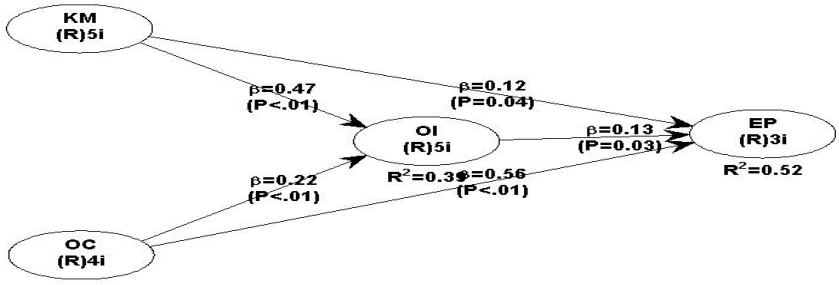


Figure 1. PLS-SEM path model

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that knowledge management exerts a positive and significant influence on employee performance, confirming its role as a critical organizational capability in knowledge-intensive environments. Effective knowledge management enhances employees' ability to access, process, and apply information, thereby improving accuracy, adaptability, and work outcomes. This result aligns with Reno (2024), who identifies knowledge management as a determining factor in organizational success. In parallel, knowledge management is also found to significantly influence organizational innovation, indicating that structured knowledge processes foster the development and integration of new ideas. This supports the argument advanced by Masman (2023) that innovation requires deliberate and well-managed internal processes, both structurally and strategically.

Organizational commitment similarly demonstrates a significant positive effect on both organizational innovation and employee performance. Employees who are psychologically attached to organizational values exhibit higher engagement, proactive behavior, and willingness to support change initiatives. This finding is consistent with Kristine (2017) and Cahyani et al. (2020), who emphasize the role of commitment in strengthening organizational outcomes, as well as Masman (2023) and Atturrizky and Ekhsan (2024), who confirm its direct contribution to employee performance. The results suggest that commitment functions not only as a motivational resource but also as a relational mechanism that enhances both innovative capacity and individual productivity. In addition, organizational innovation itself is shown to positively influence employee performance.

However, the mediation analysis reveals a critical deviation from conventional theoretical assumptions. Although knowledge management and organizational commitment significantly influence organizational innovation, the indirect effects through innovation are not supported. This indicates that innovation does not function as a meaningful transmission mechanism between organizational capabilities and employee performance within this context. Instead, knowledge management and organizational commitment exert predominantly direct effects. This finding suggests that, in higher education institutions, the translation of innovation into performance is not automatic. Institutional characteristics such as bureaucratic structures, regulatory constraints, and standardized academic procedures may limit the extent to which innovation can effectively channel capabilities into measurable outcomes.

This result carries important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, it challenges the dominant assumption within Resource-Based and Knowledge-Based frameworks that innovation universally mediates the capability–performance relationship, highlighting the presence of contextual boundary conditions. From a practical standpoint, it implies that university leaders should not rely solely on innovation-driven strategies to enhance performance.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

This study provides a refined understanding of how organizational capabilities shape employee performance within higher education institutions. The findings confirm that knowledge management and organizational commitment function as dominant drivers of performance, operating primarily through direct pathways rather than through organizational innovation. While both capabilities significantly enhance innovation, the absence of a mediating effect reveals that innovation does not serve as a necessary transmission mechanism in this context. This challenges prevailing assumptions within Resource-Based and Knowledge-Based frameworks and highlights the importance of contextual factors in shaping capability–performance relationships. In knowledge-intensive yet structurally constrained environments such as universities, performance appears to be more immediately influenced by cognitive infrastructure and relational attachment than by formalized innovation processes. Accordingly, the study advances a more nuanced and context-sensitive model of organizational performance that prioritizes direct capability utilization over assumed mediation mechanisms.

ETHICAL DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were fully informed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity as well as confidentiality of responses were strictly maintained. No identifiable personal data were collected, and all information was used solely for academic research purposes. The study did not involve any form of coercion or harm to participants.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. The research was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretations of the findings.

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