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## Prostitution and Motherhood: No Motherhood vs. Good and Bad Mothers

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### Abstract

Motherhood exists in all women, regardless who they are. However, the difference is in terms of the magnitude of motherhood that reflect she is a good mother and a bad mother. As prostitutes, they were always associated with unfit mothers, and would bring negative morale to the children. Thus, this study aims to review the magnitude of motherhood and parenting among prostitutes by applying Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Two major keywords were determined to be searchable through the database, which are "motherhood" and "parenting". An analysis involving 15 articles within three years period (2019-2021), through Scopus database, revealed significant pattern. While the debates on prostitutes in general is arising similarly; the motherhood among prostitute is also seem to be discussed widely by many scholars. Further, the articles selected for this study mostly utilize qualitative approach and limited in theory application. Recommendations for intensive study on this subject as it may brighten the view of people towards prostitutes' mothers.

**Keywords:** Motherhood, Parenting, Prostitution, Qualitative, Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

### Introduction

The anchors that keep a mother alive are her children. Despite, to see the children growing well in front of eyes are the goals of most of mothers. Yet, it becomes a main responsibility for the parents to shaping their children into good art. Children are a precious resource that should be adequately cared for in order to create a better generation in the future (Ryan, 2017; Abd Hamid et al., 2020). As a result, everyone should prioritise the growth and safeguarding of children, especially at the very first stage, which is at home. In this context of study, the mother becomes a main reference to their children upbringing. Along with this study, the topic of motherhood was examined. This is because, given the sense of motherhood would raise the children in vary way, thus could influence their child future.

Unlike others, mothers among prostitute may hold different responses towards their magnitude of motherhood. According to societal judgement, being a prostitute is a bad action

that contradicts the moral behavior that one is supposed to follow (Jatmikowati, 2015). Hence, it creates an idea of the mother would pass that immoral behavior towards her child. However, some experts suggest that various prostitute moms react differently to their pregnancy until the child is born, and that some may have a success story. It means, each of type of motherhood shows different ways of the mother accept the existence of their infant or child and later possessed different way of parenting.

Heartbreakingly, most of the children who are under the care of prostitute mothers or sex workers were neglected and not given good love and care. This was resulted to declining of child development and protection that directly lead to poor generation in future (Beard et al., 2010). However, some of them would conceal the existence of the newborns, tend to remove, and are unwilling to keep the children owing to the societal stigma associated with illegal pregnancies. Both occurrences influence the fate of the children. Some prostitutes in previous study mentioned that the existence of the children would cause disturbance to their income, so they take action to give away their children to 'buyer' or adopter (Diana et al., 2020). In the most tragic situations, the destiny of infants is neglected when mothers or parents kill their children upon birth or even perform early abortions, in which those could recognized as abusive (Meyer & Oberman, 2001; Miller, 2003; Vellut et al., 2012; Tanaka et al., 2017; Klier et al., 2019). There also mothers who raised their children by their own yet ending up forced the children to become a sex worker.

This means that the types of motherhood and the way of parenting by mothers of prostitutes may be different from others because they played two contrasting identities where the 'mother' is supposed to pour good morals on their children and at the same time be a prostitute. While being a prostitute, is often stigmatized by social (Amstrong, 2019). In view of Ma et al (2019), it is difficult to balance life as a mother and a sex worker. As a result, the purpose of this study was to determine the type of motherhood that prostitutes may have.

## Literature Review

Social understanding of being a 'good mother' is selfless and place the needs of their children rather than their own. As suggested by Ma et al (2019), if the mothers failed to fulfill children's needs, they could be called as 'bad or inadequate mother'. Thus, that 'good' and 'bad' mothers represented motherhood carried by women (Niner et al., 2014). Although that, the concept being a good or bad mothers is complex and vary of dramatic responsibilities as well as experiences. Globally, most sex workers are mothers (Sloss & Harper, 2004; Willis et al., 2016). Previous study also revealed that many female sex workers are also mothers with at least one child (Wong et al., 2012). As in United Kingdom, there are 78,000 people sell sex for money and 70 per cent of them are mothers (Rogan et al., 1997).

In Sub-Saharan African, two over third of sex worker have children (Beckham et al., 2015). As for them, motherhood brings respect such one of them said "to be called 'mama' is respectability and thus create a sense of compliment where it sounds as "I am a woman who is completed". Research have concluded that many women enter such job to fund their families (Hassandarvish, 2021). Previous study revealed that among Brazilian, over half (53.8%) did not have an intimate partner at the time of the interview and 35.9% had children (Madeiro, 2015). Therefore, throughout in a previous study discussion, the researcher concluded that sex work and motherhood are strongly entwined.

Nevertheless, being a mother while commit on work such a prostitute, possibly create negative social judgment and stigma where those could affect one's life (Subu et al., 2021).

Mothers who work in the sex industry frequently face violence, stigma, marginalisation, and separation from their children, families, and society at large (Basnyat, 2014). Those could influence type of motherhood they possessed. Essentially, stigma and discrimination give rise to negative judgment and treatment of victims, the worst when it causes them to seek help due to unable to face it anymore. An example reported case where a Swedish sex worker was deemed as an unsuitable parent by court and unfortunately was killed by her ex-partner who has full custody on her child (Polly et al., 2018).

*No Motherhood/Zero Motherhood/Child Free*—Some says being a mother is one of self-esteem, pride, and sense of fulfillment (Polly et al., 2018). However, in this reality scenario, there are women who do not have such feelings of becoming a mother. Those may be called as no motherhood and thrive to have a 'child-free' principle throughout their life. Child-free can be defined as those voluntarily choose for not having children (Cosslett, 2022). In this context, prostitute may avoid to having child because of the child is an out of wedlock or may disturb their 'job'. As found in the study driven by Tohid et al (2021), where one respondent said the existence of the child had caused problems to her 'business. However, the risk of getting pregnant still there due to nature of sexual intercourse activity, thus forced the prostitutes to avoid that unwanted pregnancy as possible they could. There were circumstances in which people may avoiding from having child, which are: (1) contraceptive usage (Elizabeth et al., 2011); (2) early abortion (Marks, 2021); (3) neonaticide and infanticide (Resnick, 1970); and (4) unwanted pregnancy (Santelli et al., 2003).

*Unwilling Motherhood*—In a situation when the mother in a stage of unable to eliminate the pregnancy, end up they continue to keep that baby until born. Here, it seems like the women are aware of the consequences of the sexual activity and trying to adapt. As discussed by Faini et al (2020), given the nature of multiple partnerships and inconsistent of contraceptive usage, sex workers believed that pregnancy was an inevitable side effect of their work. Some circumstances may indicate that the mother accepts the pregnancy but along the way, there may be feelings of denial and finally letting go of the baby after birth which are: (1) pregnancy (Diana et al., 2015); (2) selling babies (Willis et al., 2016); (3) adoption (Cole & Donely, 1990); and (4) baby raised by family members (You, 2014).

*Good Motherhood*—Mentioning back the statement where "the central role of woman is to be a mother". This shows that most women want to be a mother, no matter who they are. Despite that, sex workers also desire to have one (Keogh et al., 2015; Duff et al., 2015; Yam, 2017). This reflected woman wanted to gain respect by become a mother. As supported with Akujobi (2011); Scambler and Paoli (2008), given that it represents womanhood, parenthood, and marriage—qualities that earn women a respectable and accepted role in society—motherhood is seen as empowering. The scene where a mother has good motherhood can be seen in the way she raises the child. Basically, these kinds of mothers are willing to (1) raise the baby (Bechkham et al., 2015); (2) quit prostitution (Rogan et al., 1997; Elsdon et al., 2021).

## Method

Conducting a review from literature statements prior study is a vital aspect that should be done. As supported by Hart (2018), review of related literature assessment is an important part in any discipline of study. The rationale is that, throughout the literature review, researcher could notice the existing knowledge that have been conducted regarding the study, thus could be able to produce research gap and directly will come out with new aspect of study that should be focusing on. In doing so, there are few ways in conducting literature

review. Two types of literature review namely, (1) Systematic Literature Review (SLR); and (2) Meta- Analysis. Both have own process, the advantages and disadvantages. SLR is one of the ways of review that allow researcher to have a systematic map of knowledge prior conducting the study. It is differed from traditional review where SLR adopted a replicable, scientific, and transparent procedure (Mengist, 2019). Along this method, researcher could gather all relevant publications that suit the pre-defined inclusion criteria while exclude objective of study by reducing the error.

This paper applied SLR which aims for mapping the existing knowledge of study involving relation between prostitution and motherhood. As proposed by Mengist et al. (2019), four steps involved in this review which are: (1) identification; (2) screening; (3) eligibility; and (4) included. Each step defines a continuous process until the review achieves accurate study inclusion. Figure 1 indicated a summary of systematic review process that have been modified from (Moher et al., 2010; Mengist et al., 2019).

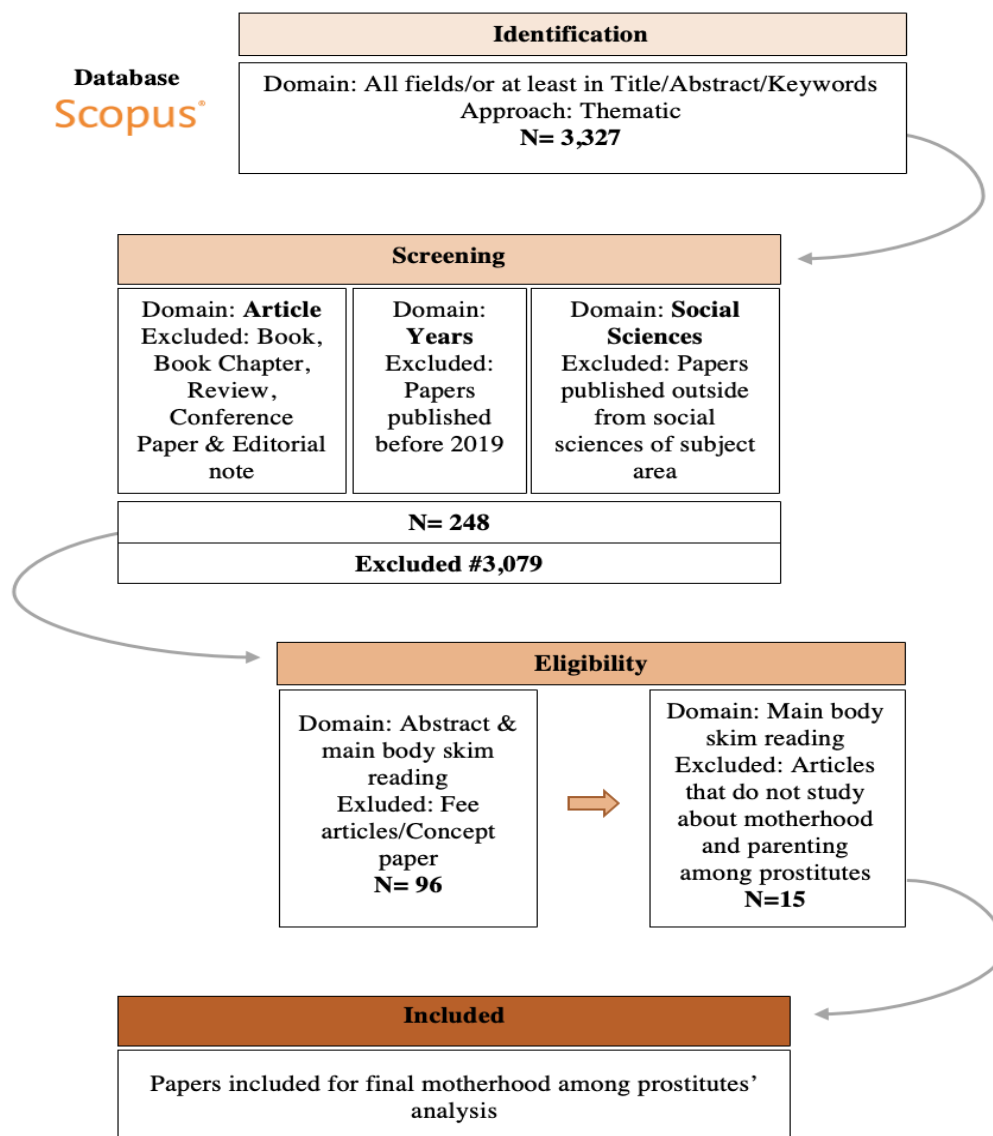


Fig. 1 The flow diagram for the database search of publications for systematic reviews Step 1: Identification



The first step taken is identifying an appropriate keyword regarding study conducted that become as word strings that produce relevant other publications related to the study. In this context, the process begins with searching and deciding on the database. Knowing that some papers were included also in databases such Google Scholar and Science Direct, thus this study is used Scopus as main database. Perevochtchikova et al (2019) indicated that Scopus is an international database of peer-reviewed publications from all over the world. Thus, it may cover most potential papers related to study globally.

The word searching is focusing on what this study proposed to explore. Hence, the main word string used is “prostitution”, followed by specific area of study which listed as “prostitution” AND “motherhood” and “prostitution” AND “parenting”. Before those two strings came out, there is a process of pilot study in searching the literature by using few words until those two is found as accurate strings related to the study objectives. As mentioned by Caroline et al (2014), a pilot literature search should be done to refine the searching keywords to focus on targeted area of study. Thus, by conducting this first step, this study identified numerous of studies conducted regarding the prostitution, however, each of scholars have different view that they wished to explore. Mengist et al (2019) suggested that the number of available publications and their acquisition date should be mentioned. This allows researcher to notice that how many study have been conducted on that particular area. Table 1 shows the searching string and terms used.

Table 1

*The searching terms used and the total number of publications from each database*

Searching string and searching terms	No. of articles	Date of acquisition
Main searching terms- “prostitution” AND 2,278 using doc title, abstract, “motherhood” and keywords “prostitution” AND 1,049 “parenting”		13 August 2022
Total	3,327	

This process involved the identification of published papers related to the searched string in which a total of 3,327 records were found through the Scopus database. However, the number changed on the final step after some inclusions and exclusions of criteria were taken into consideration. Admitting that huge number of total publications conducted regarding prostitution, this study was restricted to some inclusion and exclusion for this study to review the related area of study. The objective of setting the inclusion and exclusion criteria before conducting the actual review is due to minimizing irrelevant and inaccurate documents or papers that are contrary to the objectives of the study. This would narrow the total number of publications available. Few inclusions and exclusions have been stated in Table 2 which were used throughout the literature searching.

Table 2

*List of inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Criteria	Decision
When the predefined keywords exist as a whole or at least in title, keywords or abstract section of the paper	Inclusion
The paper published in a social science field of study	Inclusion
The paper should be written in the English language	Inclusion
When the articles address at least one type of motherhood among prostitute or sex worker	Inclusion
When the articles address at least one type of parenting among prostitute or sex worker	Inclusion
Papers that are not empirical studies	Exclusion
Papers that are not accessible	Exclusion
Papers that got published before 2019	Exclusion

Step 2: Screening

To ensure that the reviewed papers are within the scope of study, filtering is done by excluding documents that are not article types such as Books, Book Chapters, Reviews, Conference Papers, Editorials, Notes. After that, aiming to review the current trend of the motherhood among prostitutes, papers published before 2019 were excluded as it may be a huge gap of motherhood pattern among females. Exclusions are also made for papers that are not in the field of social science studies. Through the screening process based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, the total number of articles listed are 268 as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Total number of articles after screening process*

Word string	Document Type (Article)	Year (2019-2022)	Field of Study (Social Science)
"prostitution" AND "motherhood"	823	214	65
"prostitution" AND parenting"	525	129	83
Total			268

Step 3: Eligibility

To ensure the eligibility of the papers to be reviewed, few additional inclusion criteria were focused on such as there were accessible papers, the papers were empirical studies, and English language papers. Thus, the process involved abstract and main body skim reading to recognize those desired papers. The number of papers that have met the criteria is 96 articles which covers accessible and empirical papers as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Total number of papers that met the criteria for accessible and empirical papers

Word string	Accessible and Empirical Papers
"prostitution" AND "motherhood"	63
"prostitution" AND parenting"	33
Total	96

Step 4: Included

Subsequently, as displayed in Table 5, a total of 15 papers have remained as papers to be reviewed because they have met all the inclusion criteria includes additional criteria which are the articles address at least one type of motherhood and parenting among prostitute or sex worker. that have been systematically set. At this point, papers chosen are to be further analyzed based on the objectives of the study proposed. While at this stage, this paper has excluded papers that have been duplicated and not related to motherhood and parenting involving prostitutes. Furthermore, this step could assist reviewer to review the intended papers while avoiding unnecessary elements of study in which can speed up the literature review and at the end can reach the actual research gap and existing knowledge of study.

Table 5

*Total number of papers that met the criteria of addressing at least one type of motherhood and parenting among prostitute*

Criteria	Total papers
Articles address at least one type of motherhood & parenting among prostitute or sex worker	15

## Results and Discussion

Accordingly, this paper has reviewed studies on prostitution related to motherhood using a SLR, which involved 15 articles that were selected based on the criteria set. Hence, it displays significant findings in terms of a few aspects. First, in terms of the year, where this paper limits the articles from 2019 and after, it reveals that there is an increasing number of studies on motherhood and parenting among prostitutes. Meanwhile for recent year, 2022, it was found that only one article was published related to prostitute parenting, however the paper was excluded because it was not accessible. Undeniably, based on the brief analysis of number of papers published starting from the year 1975, there were growing numbers of publication, yet, the aspect studied were different across the years. In this context, papers published in 2019 only discussed prostitution and motherhood, while in 2020 and beyond, there are discussions covering motherhood together with parenting. This shows that the study of motherhood among prostitutes is broader and has seen other aspects develop such as parenting and children development.

Furthermore, the majority of the studies published during those three years were conducted in the United States, followed by South Asian countries such as India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, as well as Iran, which is located in Western Asia, and others such as South Africa. According to the World Population Review (2022), India is one of the countries where prostitution is legal. As a result, many studies in that area have been conducted, but the aspects that are focused on may differ and be diverse. Despite this, discussions about



motherhood among prostitutes in India remain taboo and fraught with stigma. It is more or less the same with the United States, where many studies found that there was a prevalence of prostitution scenarios even though the country has some legal and illegal areas. The articles reviewed revealed that the majority of the prostitutes interviewed were mothers, so the study of motherhood and parenting was closely examined.

All the papers selected were qualitative methods, where most of them had experienced live interactions with prostitutes. As is known, to measure motherhood, it is impossible to measure through structured questions such as what quantitative method has been used. Besides, the data collection method used was similar within studies, which is that researchers were practising in-depth interviews with the prostitutes. Turning to the focus of the paper, which includes inclusion criteria such as papers mentioned about motherhood or parenting among prostitutes, it was found that many studies reveal prostitutes have a good type of motherhood, and consequently, those mothers practised good parenting. The type of motherhood, such as zero or no motherhood, unwilling motherhood, and good motherhood, depended on the actions that could be seen in the way mothers react to the existence of the child. The trend of studies conducted over three years revealed that in 2021, prostitutes raised their children on their own, as opposed to in 2020, when most studies revealed that prostitutes relied heavily on family members to care for their children. This somehow shows the sense of motherhood among prostitutes becomes high and they value the existence of their child even though they may struggle with family or social stigmatization. Despite that, there were also unpleasant findings where in recent years, 2021, there were cases of early abortion, killing the baby, and prostitutes neglecting their pregnancy care that ended up affecting the child's protection and development.

The scenarios concluded that regardless of who she is, even though they may have possessed immoral activity, they still have the desire to be a good mother. Meanwhile, at the same time, there were also those who possessed zero/no motherhood or unwilling motherhood that could be influenced by particular factors for the status they currently hold. Nevertheless, it brings us back to the statement that there are conflicting roles for being a prostitute while mothering. As for that, it is undeniable that some prostitutes tend to ignore their sense of motherhood. The summary of SLR analysis of prostitution and motherhood is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of SLR analysis of Prostitution and Motherhood*

Articles	Year	Country	Discussion	
			Type of Motherhood (Zero/No motherhood/ Unwilling motherhood/Good motherhood)	Parenting
Naming my world: Finding my voice	2021	Ireland	Zero/No motherhood Infanticide	(No Discussion)
Familial Influences on Treatment and Substance Use Among Mothers Engaged in Prostitution	2021	United States	Good motherhood Raising baby	(No Discussion)
Sex Workers as Mothers: Correlates of Engagement in Sex Work to Support Children	2021	United States	Good and bad motherhood Raising baby Unwanted pregnancy	Neglected health and education services for their children
Examining the Role of a Community-Led Structural Intervention in Shaping Mothering Among Sex Workers in India	2021	India	Good motherhood Raising baby	Protected and supported for their children' education
The Feminist Ethic of Care: Mothering Among Sex Workers in Mumbai	2021	India	Zero/No motherhood Early abortion Unwanted pregnancy	Lack access to quality health care and social services Wanted and desire to re-build the relationship and learn parenting skills
Exploring treatment needs among women who prostitute	2021	United States	Good motherhood Raising baby	
A Qualitative Exploration of Mother-Child Relationships in Mothers with Histories of Substance Use and Street-Level Prostitution	2020	United States	Unwilling motherhood Adopted the baby Baby raised by family member	Felt discomfort and uncertainty in parenting
Understanding the risk and protective factors among children of	2020	United States	Good motherhood Raising baby	Desires for their children to receive

mothers engaged in street-level prostitution					intervention in areas of concern such as mental health, behavioural issues, substance use, trauma, and school behaviour Allowed other caregiver to take care of the child/children and provide education
Pragmatic women: negotiating sex work, pregnancy, and parenting in Mysore, South India	2020	India	Good motherhood Baby raised by family members		
Stigma, agency, and motherhood: Exploring the performativity of dual mother–female sex workers identities in Kathmandu, Nepal	2020	Nepal	Good motherhood Raising baby		Fulfilled her primary responsibilities to her children
Female sex worker's children: Their vulnerability in Iran	2020	Iran	Good motherhood Raising baby		Struggled in providing alternative nutrition for the child
Respectability and rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights of Sri Lankan women formerly involved in prostitution	2020	Sri Lanka	Good motherhood Raising baby		(No Discussion)
Is Sexual Abuse a Unique Predictor of Sexual Risk Behaviours, Pregnancy, and Motherhood in Adolescence?	2019	United States	Zero/No motherhood Unwanted pregnancy		(No Discussion)
“No Strings Attached?” Sex and the Teenage Mother in American Young Adult Novels	2019	North America	Zero/No motherhood Early abortion		(No Discussion)
Female Sex Workers' Experiences Selling Sex during Pregnancy and Post-Delivery in South Africa	2019	South Africa	Good motherhood Raising baby		(No Discussion)

## Conclusion

Prostitute in any country regardless legal or illegal is often associated with negative connotation. Among them includes dirty, unwanted, sex slaves, and many others. Their job are always exposed to pregnancy which most of them refused to get pregnant because they cannot continue to get customer when they are pregnant. One cannot deny, as woman prostitute, some of them may have the feeling to be a mother. In other words to have their own baby regardless who the father is. This lead to a very pertinent question to ponder: whether prostitute can be a good mother or a bad mother? Hence, this study aims to explore the issue of prostitution and motherhood by using SLR through Scopus database. The finding of SLR analysis revealed a significant trend of prostitution issues been discussed since 2019. Nevertheless, the number of prostitute recorded in each country can still be argued as representing the tip of iceberg of the overall prostitute in the world.

Good mothers female prostitute such as sending their children to school, providing appropriate shelter, are among the noble actions been done despite facing various challenges. Nonetheless, among the bad motherhood, shared by the articles includes abortion (with no any concrete justification such as health condition), selling their own babies, abandoning, and giving up their baby for adoption. Similarly, while good mothers portray good parenting, bad mothers at the end of the day lead to bad parenting such as neglecting their children's needs, later affect the upbringings of their children. In conclusion, one can say a prostitute cannot be a good mother because they may set a bad example for their children. When compared to a wealthy mother who works for a well-known company but neglects and abuses her own children, the mother is clearly unfit to be a mother; even worst that a mother works as prostitute. In this scenario, this study proposed that in discussing about motherhood, the nature of the mother either she is a poor, homeless, or even a prostitute cannot justify that they are going to be a bad mother. Therefore, future direction of research on prostitute and motherhood need to be thoroughly conducted so it will not be directed to negative connotation brought by the status of a mother who work as prostitute.

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