

## Investigating the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy with the mediating role of social problem-solving skills

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Marital intimacy is one of the most important variables related to married life that should be considered as a basic human need and an important process in the development of windy friendships. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy with the mediating role of social problem-solving skills in married married women.

**Method:** The research was applied in terms of purpose and in terms of descriptive correlation method was structural equations. The statistical population of the study included all women working in education in Javanrood city, 450 people, using multi-stage cluster sampling, 250 people were selected as a sample. Sexual satisfaction questionnaire, social problem-solving skills questionnaire and marital intimacy questionnaire were used to collect data. SPSS and LISREL software were used for data analysis.

**Results:** The findings showed that sexual satisfaction and social problem-solving skills had a direct effect on marital intimacy, also sexual satisfaction had a direct effect on social problem-solving skills and sexual satisfaction had an indirect effect on marital intimacy mediated by social problem-solving skills. And the hypothetical model of the research also had a good fit.

**Conclusion:** It can be said that sexual satisfaction and social problem-solving skills are important variables related to marital intimacy.

**Keywords:** Marital Intimacy, Sexual Satisfaction, Social Problem, Solving Skills

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## **Introduction:**

Marital intimacy as one of the most important variables related to marital life of couples, provides a fundamental basis for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with life, because it strengthens the commitment of couples and positively is associated with marital happiness and compatibility (1). Research shows that marital intimacy is an interpersonal factor that has a positive effect on marital satisfaction of couples (2). Marital intimacy is defined as feelings based on love and affection, having a partner in life, satisfying emotional and psychological needs, and increasing happiness and contentment in married life (3). Intimacy can be defined as a combination of love and affection, revelation and expression, compatibility, integration, sexuality, conflict resolution and similarity (4). Bloom and Thomas define marital intimacy as the ability to communicate with others and express emotions (5). Tanhaton and Warren believe that intimacy is a very important pattern of behavior that is conceptualized based on acceptance, satisfaction and love (6). In fact, marital intimacy is the main motivation for forming a marital relationship and includes a degree of closeness and care that each couple feels and expresses towards each other (7). Intimacy is recognized as a basic human need and an important process in the development of friendly relations. It is also an interactive, dynamic and combined process including emotional, psychological, intellectual, sexual, spiritual, social, recreational and aesthetic dimensions (3). And couples who experience higher levels of marital intimacy experience more marital sexual satisfaction because intimacy is a primary psychological need that is an important criterion for couples living together in long-term emotional relationships (8). Studies and clinical experiences have shown that intimate relationships are one of the basic human needs and its unsatisfaction increases conflicts and decreases intimacy in marital relationships and causes emotional and psychological problems. Intimacy between married couples is one of the important factors in creating a lasting marriage (9). In fact, marital intimacy is a determining factor for having very strong marital and family relationships and enhances marital quality (10). Therefore, the study of the factors affecting this important phenomenon will be very important.

Research shows that social problem-solving skills play a role in increasing marital intimacy (11). Social problem solving refers to the individual's cognitive-behavioral and innovative process by which the individual wants to determine, discover or invent effective and adaptive coping strategies for everyday problems (12). In fact, social problem solving is a kind of effective interaction with dynamic environmental tasks and a person can adjust to his environment only if he can successfully analyze and integrate information from the environment in a certain period of time (13) And is a behavioral cognitive construct that includes problem orientation (assessments, feelings, and public beliefs about a person's ability to cope with a stressful situation) and problem-solving styles (using a set of cognitive-behavioral activities during the solution process. The problem is aimed at finding an effective solution (14). Social problem-solving skills refer to a process in which individuals try to discover and apply effective coping techniques to deal with the stressful issues they face in their daily lives (15). Various studies show that enriching the social environment in terms of social problem-solving skills can lead to the formation of social

adjustment (16). In fact, people with strong social problem-solving skills actively find solutions to problems and adapt to them (17). It also helps to identify problems and find solutions according to the cognitive, emotional and behavioral process to deal with stressful situations that they face in daily life (18). Because social problem solving is a cognitive-behavioral process by which people try to find effective and adaptive solutions to their daily problems (19).

Besharat and Rafizadeh have also pointed out the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy (20). Sexual satisfaction is one of the most important factors affecting the health and quality of life of couples and is one of the most important indicators of life satisfaction. Studies in this field show that the existence of desirable sexual intercourse in a way that can satisfy both parties, has a very important and fundamental role in the stability of the family center (21). Feelings of failure, frustration, and insecurity due to lack of sexual satisfaction can endanger the psychological health of spouses (22). Literally, sexual satisfaction refers to a person's pleasant sexual feelings, which is not only physical pleasure and includes all the emotions remaining after the positive and negative aspects of the relationship (23). In general, conceptual models of sexual satisfaction emphasize two domains of individual issues (sexual pleasure and sexual presence and awareness) and interpersonal issues (sexual exchange and emotional connection and closeness) (24). Sexual satisfaction is defined as the degree to which couples become aware of the fulfillment of their and their spouse's sexual expectations and needs (25). Sexual satisfaction refers to a person's pleasant feeling about his sexual relations. Which is divided into two forms of satisfaction with sexual activities and emotional satisfaction (26). Many believe that sexual intercourse is a determining factor in marital satisfaction. If sexual behaviors and criteria are different in men and women, it can cause many problems, but if the couple's sexual desires satisfy the needs of both parties, there is a feeling of happiness in family life relationships. On the other hand, inappropriate sexual relations and sexual dissatisfaction are effective in creating marital conflicts and family breakdown, and people who are highly satisfied with their sexual relations with their spouses feel marital satisfaction compared to those who are not satisfied with their sexual relations. Experience more (27).

Research has been done on the above variables. Mohammadi, Heydarnia and Abbasi in their study entitled Predicting Marital Commitment Based on Marital Intimacy and Forgiveness concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between marital intimacy and marital commitment (28). Ariapooran and Rezaian in a study entitled Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Intimacy concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy (29). Khodadi Singh, Rezaei and Abdollahi in their research entitled Predicting marital intimacy based on religious burdens and problem-solving skills have pointed to the role of problem-solving skills in marital intimacy (7). Ramezani, Keramat, Mottaqi, Mohabbatpour, Khosravi in their research entitled the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy have pointed to the role of sexual satisfaction in marital intimacy (30). In his study entitled The Impact of Marital Intimacy, Sexual Relationships, and Marital Satisfaction with Sexual Satisfaction, Kim concluded that there is a relationship between marital intimacy and

sexual satisfaction (31). In his research entitled *The Effect of Problem-Solving Skills on Marital Intimacy*, Sadeghifard points to the relationship between problem solving skills and marital intimacy (32). In his research entitled *The Relationship between Social Problem Solving and Quality of Life with Marital Adjustment*, Fisher referred to the relationship between social problem-solving skills and marital adjustment (33). Pakravan, Haghayegh, Neshat Doost, Rumi in their research entitled *the effectiveness of problem-solving training method on marital satisfaction and psychological profile of couples in Borujen city* concluded that problem solving training has an effect on marital satisfaction of couples (34). Masihabadi, Saeedi Rad, Mousavi and Vaghari in their research have referred to the relationship between problem solving skills and sexual satisfaction (35). Also, Rezaei, Ghorbanpour and Karami in their research entitled *problem solving skills training on marital satisfaction* have pointed to the relationship between marital satisfaction and problem-solving skills (36). Behnaz, Salehi, Zarei and Molaei in their research entitled *the effectiveness of problem-solving approach on sexual satisfaction* have pointed to the relationship between problem solving skills and sexual satisfaction (37). In their study, Berger and Jacobson, in their study entitled *The Relationship between Sexual Role Characteristics and Sexual Satisfaction with Problem Solving Skills*, referred to the relationship between problem-solving skills and sexual satisfaction (38).

Given that marital intimacy is one of the most important variables affecting the marital life of couples, identifying the factors affecting it will be of particular importance. On the other hand, marital intimacy is a vital part of a successful marriage, based on which couples to create They strive for a common future and stay together in times of crisis and conflict. Research shows that women who experience higher levels of marital intimacy will receive more psychological support and care, will feel better in their social environment, and will experience significantly less boredom. Therefore, attention to this variable and the factors affecting it will be very important. A review of past research shows that problem-solving skills are both related to sexual satisfaction (36) and can predict marital intimacy (7). Therefore, it can be said that social problem-solving skills can play a mediating variable in the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy. Therefore, this study was designed and conducted to investigate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy with the mediating role of social problem-solving skills.

### **Method:**

The research method is descriptive-correlational and will be structural equation (SEM). The statistical population of the study included all women working in education in Javanrood city, 450 people. According to Morgan's table, the optimal sample for this study was 210 people. 280 people were selected as a sample and 250 healthy questionnaires were collected and analyzed. For data analysis, SPSS software version 22 and descriptive statistical methods (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistical methods (Pearson correlation coefficient, Kolmogorov Smirnov, Kaimo and Bartlett) and LISREL software were used to evaluate the model fit.

Research tools consist of:

**Marital Intimacy Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was designed by Bagarazi to measure marital intimacy in 41 questions and 8 dimensions of emotional, psychological, intellectual, sexual, physical, spiritual, aesthetic, recreational and social. The questionnaire was scored based on a seven-point Likert scale and its content validity was approved by experts and its reliability was reported to be 0.89. The reliability of this questionnaire in this study was obtained by calculating Cronbach's alpha of 0.78.

**Social Problem-Solving Skills Questionnaire:** The short form of the revised Social Problem-Solving Questionnaire is a Likert self-report tool with 25 questions that aims to measure your social problem-solving skills in five dimensions. Positive approach to the problem, negative orientation to the problem, logical problem solving, impulsive / reckless style and avoidance style. The scoring of the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale is from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed and its reliability was reported to be 0.78. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was obtained by calculating Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

**Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire:** The Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire was designed by Larson. This questionnaire has 25 questions and 4 components of sexual desire, sexual attitude, quality of sexual life and sexual compatibility and its scoring is based on the Likert scale of five options from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed and its reliability was reported to be 0.80. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was obtained by calculating Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

### Results:

In this study, 250 female teachers working in education in Javanrood city participated. The average work experience of the participants in the study was 10 years and their average age was 33 years. The mean and standard deviation of sexual satisfaction were 68.25 and 10.13, the mean of social problem-solving skills was 85.52 and 9.61 and the mean of marital intimacy were 149.25 and 15.36. Pearson correlation coefficient test for correlation between variables showed that between sexual satisfaction with marital intimacy ( $r = 0.47, p \geq 0.01$ ), between social problem-solving skills and marital intimacy ( $r = 0.42, 01 0.01 p$ ) and there is a positive and significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and social problem-solving skills ( $r = 0.51, p \geq 0.01$ ). The normality of the data was assessed by skewness and tensile evaluation. The skewness and elongation of the variables were between the range (+2 and 2-), which indicated that the data were normal.

Table 1. Amount Of Kmo and Bartlett Test Statistics

	<b>KMO</b>		<b>0.84</b>
<b>Sexual satisfaction questionnaire</b>	Bartlett's test	$\chi^2$	<b>187.12</b>
		df	<b>30</b>
		Sig	<b>0/000</b>
Social problem-solving skills questionnaire	KMO		<b>0/91</b>
	Bartlett's test	$\chi^2$	<b>182.16</b>
		df	<b>23</b>
		Sig	<b>0/000</b>
Marital intimacy questionnaire	KMO		<b>0/79</b>
	Bartlett's test	$\chi^2$	<b>286/35</b>
		df	<b>0/42</b>
		Sig	<b>0/000</b>

To evaluate the validity and adequacy of the data, the KMO index has been used. The values of this index for the data of this study are 0.84 for the sexual satisfaction questionnaire, 0.91 for the social problem-solving skills questionnaire, respectively. Marital intimacy is equal to 0.79. This index is in the range of zero to one, and the closer the value of this index is to one, the more suitable the sample size data is for factor analysis. Bartlett test was also used to examine how the correlation matrix. Bartlett test for all three questionnaires as shown in Table 3 is less than 0.05 and the assumption that the correlation matrix is one (unit) is rejected.

To test the research hypotheses, the output diagrams of LISREL software are presented in the form of standard coefficients and significant coefficients t, and then we will confirm and reject the research hypotheses.

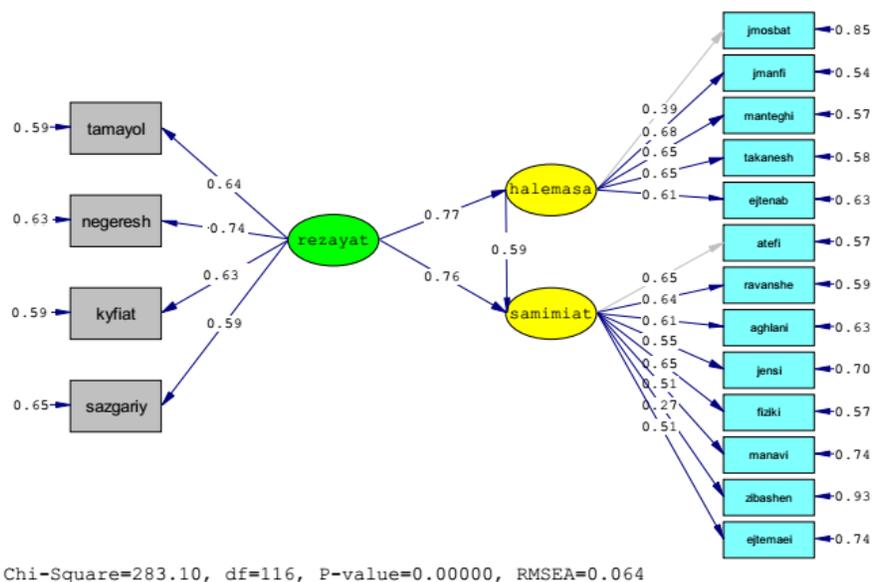


Figure 1. Standard estimation coefficients of research structural model

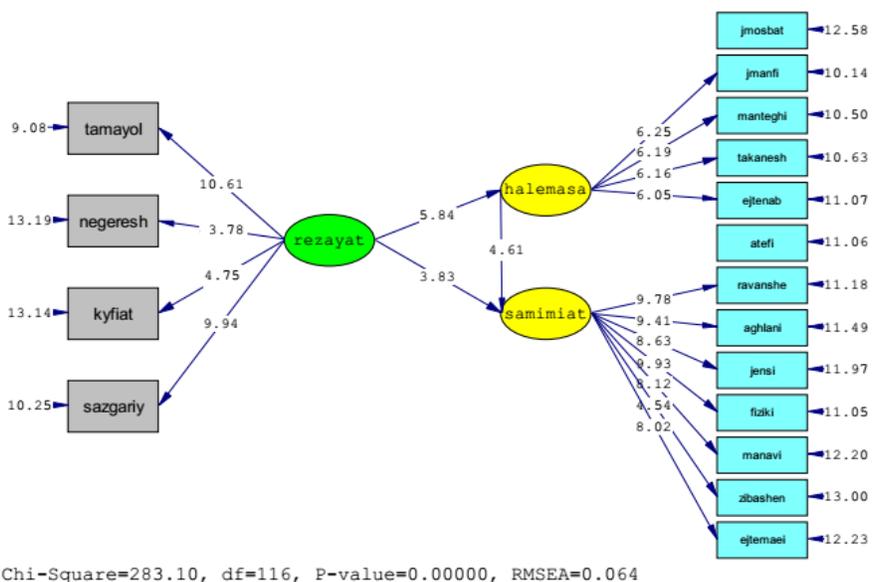


Figure 2: Significant numbers of the structural model of the research

Table 2. Table of standard coefficients and significance level for model paths

<b>detect</b>				
<b>from</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>direct impact</b>	<b>indirect impact</b>	<b>t</b>
<b>sexual satisfaction</b>	marital intimacy	0/76	0/45	3/83
<b>Social problem-solving skill</b>	marital intimacy	0/59	-	4/61
<b>sexual satisfaction</b>	Social problem-solving skills	0/77	-	5/84

The results of data analysis showed that the direct effect of sexual satisfaction on marital intimacy with beta (0.76) and ( $t = 3.83$ ), the direct effect of social problem-solving skills on marital intimacy with beta (0.59) and ( $t = 4.61$ ) and the direct effect of sexual satisfaction on social problem-solving skills with beta (0.77) and ( $t = 5.84$ ) is significant. To investigate the indirect effect of sexual satisfaction on marital intimacy with the mediating role of social problem-solving skills, the indirect effect coefficient (the product of the direct effect of sexual satisfaction on social problem-solving skills and the direct effect of social problem-solving skills on marital intimacy) must be calculated. The indirect effect of sexual satisfaction on marital intimacy is 0.45, which indicates that the mediating role of social problem-solving skills in the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy is significant.

Table 3. Fitting of the research model based on fitness indicators

<b>Model fit</b>	<b>values</b>	<b>ideal value</b>	
X <sup>2</sup>	283.10	> 0.50	<b>desirable</b>
df	116	-	-
X <sup>2</sup> /df	2.44	< 3	<b>desirable</b>
RMSEA	0.06	< 0.08	<b>desirable</b>
GFI	0.96	> 0.90	<b>desirable</b>
AGFI	0.93	> 0.90	<b>desirable</b>
CFI	0.94	> 0.90	<b>desirable</b>
IFI	0.93	> 0.90	<b>desirable</b>
NFI	0.92	> 0.90	<b>desirable</b>

The fit of the structural model of the research showed that the root mean square error (RMSEA) index equal to (0.06), the adaptive fit index (CFI) equal to 0.94, the goodness fit index (GFI) equal to 0.96, the index Adjusted fit goodness (AGFI) equal to 0.93, normalized fit index (NFI) equal to 0.92 and chi-square index on degree of freedom (X<sup>2</sup>/ df) equal to 2.44, indicating proper fit and optimally has a model.

### **Discussion and conclusion:**

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy with the mediating role of social problem-solving skills among married women working in education in Javanrood.

The results of data analysis to test the first hypothesis showed that sexual satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on marital intimacy. This result is consistent with the results of Ariapooran and Rezaian (29), Kim (31) and the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital intimacy. Research shows that sexual satisfaction plays a vital role in creating and maintaining a happy marriage, and the quality of couples' relationships is consistently and significantly related to their sexual satisfaction. In fact, sexual intercourse and marital satisfaction are an essential part of intimate relationships between men and women, and its high levels are associated with greater quality and stability of sexual intercourse. Optimal sexual relations and sexual satisfaction can lead to marital satisfaction of both parties and play an important role in the success and stability of the family center. Various studies show that sexual satisfaction has a positive relationship with the quality components of marital relationship such as love, commitment, stability and inversely related to the likelihood of divorce. Optimal satisfaction of sexual desires plays an important role in the development of human personality and personal and social health and achieving peace and comfort, and neglecting it in humans has irreparable consequences. In a healthy marriage, having the desired sex in a way that can ensure the marital satisfaction of both parties, plays an important role in the success and stability of the family unit and the marital intimacy of the couple. Herbert and Lawrence believe that sexual satisfaction is associated with supportive relationships such as empathy, physical attractiveness and love, and not only brings warmth and passion to the couple, but also protects them from many disorders and diseases. Ali Akbari Dehkordi (21) believes that desirable sexual intercourse can satisfy both parties and has a very important and fundamental role in the stability of the family center. On the other hand, sexual satisfaction in the early stages of married life creates a framework for couples in which they can experience love, intimacy, pleasure and affection in the best possible way. Research by Yoda, Lerner, and Rosenboom (39) showed that sexual satisfaction increases marital intimacy and increases their life satisfaction, so intimacy is related to sexual and marital satisfaction. Spouses who are more sexually satisfied in marriage are generally more satisfied with marriage. In fact, sexual satisfaction is more associated with more intimacy in relationships and is expressed in the form of continuous communication with the spouse in various activities (40).

The results of data analysis to test the second hypothesis showed that social problem-solving skills have a positive and significant effect on marital intimacy. This result is consistent with the results of Khodadi Singh, Rezaei and Abdollahi (7) researches on the relationship between social problem-solving skills and marital intimacy. Intimacy is a basic psychological need and is essential in maintaining a couple's relationship. In fact, it is an important and complex aspect of a marital relationship in which important factors play a role. Couples' intimacy includes feelings based on

love and affection, having a partner and companion in life, satisfying emotional and psychological needs, and increasing happiness and contentment in a couple's life. Intimacy is about closeness, similarity, and a loving personal relationship with another person, and requires awareness, deep understanding, acceptance, and expression of thoughts and feelings. In fact, it is an interactive, dynamic and hybrid process and includes emotional, psychological, intellectual, sexual, physical, spiritual, social, recreational and aesthetic dimensions. The degree of intimacy depends on the spouses' ability to convey clearly, correctly, and effectively their thoughts, feelings, needs, and wants. Khodayari Fard, Zarehpour and Hajjari (11) have pointed out the role of problem-solving skills in increasing marital intimacy. Problem-solving skills help couples have a realistic view of issues and view differences as a problem and a challenge. This attitude causes both spouses to have a similar view of the couple's need for balance and makes couples feel intimate with each other. In fact, these solutions, evaluating the profits and losses of each solution, deciding on the best solution, among other things, can increase intimacy. In fact, social problem-solving skills help couples to look at problems and differences in a natural way and see them as a solvable problem, and by using this problem-solving skill, they turn uncertainty into confidence in different situations. And be able to adapt to the problems and challenges they face. Couples who can resolve these issues with cooperation and support experience a greater sense of harmony and intimacy.

The results of the third hypothesis of the study showed that sexual satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on social problem-solving skills. This result is in line with the results of Pakravan, Haghghat, Neshat Doost, Rumi (34) research on the relationship between sexual satisfaction and social problem-solving skills.

The term sexual satisfaction refers to a person's pleasant feeling of sexual relations and its high levels lead to an increase in the quality of marital life and as a result increase marital stability during life. Sexual satisfaction Judgment and analysis of each person of his sexual behavior It is defined as enjoyable and is defined as one of the individual needs and interpersonal interactions that are closely related to human health and society. Sexual satisfaction is one of the most important factors in marital life satisfaction and one of the factors affecting the health and quality of life of couples and one of the most important indicators of life satisfaction. In fact, sexual satisfaction with a partner can motivate couples to continue the marital relationship in general. Because married life is not far from challenging and there are always problems in it, problem solving skills are very important in couples and need training and learning. It can be said that couples who are more satisfied with sex with their partner have more motivation to solve marital problems and problems and show more effort in this regard. Therefore, it can be said that couples who experience more sexual satisfaction will show more effort to solve everyday problems and will have more social problem-solving skills.

The results of data analysis to examine the fourth hypothesis of the study showed that sexual satisfaction through social problem-solving skills has an indirect effect on marital intimacy. This result can be explained by the effects of sexual satisfaction on social problem-solving skills and also the positive effect of social problem-solving on marital intimacy.

### **Research Limitations**

This study was conducted among women working in the Department of Education, so the generalization of its results to other statistical communities should be done with caution. Also, because the data collection tool was a questionnaire, the results may be biased.

### **Ethical considerations**

In this study, at first, the participation of the experimenters in the research was completely voluntary and complete information on how to answer the questionnaire was provided to them. The subjects' personal information was also kept confidential.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors of this article have no conflict of interest.

### **Application of research**

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that the necessary training on couples' sexual relations before marriage be provided to them so that they can have a desirable sexual relationship and gain high sexual satisfaction. The time of marriage and family formation should be provided to the couple so that the couple can experience more intimacy as a result of these trainings.

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