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PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY SCOPE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
POSTGRADUATES: THE CASE OF THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF SANTA  
CATARINA

ÂMBITOS DE ATUAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL DE EGRESSOS DOS CURSOS DE PÓS-  
GRADUAÇÃO EM EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA: O CASO DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE  
SANTA CATARINA

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**RESUMO**

O estudo objetivou analisar os cenários antecedente e atual de atuação profissional de egressos dos cursos de mestrado e de doutorado em Educação Física, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, entre 2006 e 2013. No estudo descritivo, de fonte documental, foram consultados os currículos (Plataforma *Lattes*) de um total de 276 ingressantes. Antes de ingressarem no mestrado e no doutorado, a atuação profissional dos egressos concentrava-se nos ambientes não formais, ensino superior público e educação básica. Após a conclusão, predominou o ensino superior público e o privado. Conclui-se que o ensino superior é a primeira opção dos egressos, aumentando a competitividade pela busca da melhor qualificação. A realização de atividades de pesquisa e a atuação no terceiro setor também continuam marcantes.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Física. Educação Superior. Área de Atuação Profissional.

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to analyze previous and current professional activity scenarios of Physical Education master's and doctoral graduates from the Federal University of Santa Catarina between 2006 and 2013. This descriptive study of documental source was based on curricula (*Lattes* Platform) of 276 entrants. Before admission to master's or doctoral programs, the graduates' professional activity was concentrated in non-formal contexts, public higher education and basic education. After completion, public and private higher education prevailed. It has been concluded that higher education is the graduates' first option, raising competitiveness for search of better qualification. Engagement in research activities and work in the tertiary sector remain significant.

**Keywords:** Physical Education. Higher Education. Field of Professional Activity.

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**Introduction**

The 1960s and the 1970s were marked by the emergence of policies aimed at fostering scientific and technological development, especially those linked to postgraduate education<sup>1,2</sup>. The implementation of postgraduate courses in the Brazilian national scenario is connected to Legal Opinion 077/65 of the Federal Education Council<sup>3</sup>, which allowed the formal implementation of master's and doctoral programs by means of the North-American model. In addition, the offer of postgraduate courses was expanded by the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law [*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*] (LDBEN), No 9.394/1996, with the requirement of teaching training for higher education<sup>4,5</sup>. Moreover, the driving element for the growth of postgraduate education in the national scenario is associated with a set of policies set forth as of the late 1960s<sup>6</sup>. More recently, the National Postgraduate Plan (2011-2020) has stood out, aiming this growth at a variety of purposes such as the country's scientific, economical, technological and social development.<sup>7</sup>

This peak of postgraduate education in Brazil in all fields is represented by the updated survey of information on postgraduate demographics from 1996 to 2014<sup>8</sup>. In 1996,

there were 1,187 master's courses, against 3,620 in 2014, accounting for a growth of 205% in less than 20 years. The growth of PhD programs was similar to that of master's, reaching 210.2%, with annual variance of 6.5%. In 2014, there were 630 doctoral programs, against 1954 in 2014, which does not characterize a stabilized trend only because there was no relevant growth in the last two years (2013 and 2014)<sup>8</sup>. Concerning Physical Education, only in 1971 the Federal Government had the initiative to expand knowledge production and scientific research support. The first master's course was created at the University of São Paulo [*Universidade de São Paulo*] (USP), in 1977, followed by the first doctoral course, in 1988, at the same institution<sup>9,10</sup>. Currently, there are 32 Physical Education master's and PhD courses in the National Postgraduate System.

From this growth perspective, discussions around *stricto sensu* postgraduate programs in the Physical Education field are being given highlight in academic spheres, structured by debates about the formative processes of masters and doctors<sup>12</sup>. Studies with postgraduates tend to manifest the concern of researchers by analyzing the profile and the journey taken by professionals upon completing their master's (professional and academic) and doctoral courses, as well as identifying intervention places and roles played, paths walked and identities built<sup>13-18</sup>. However, a literature review study on *stricto sensu* postgraduate programs in Brazil by Silva and Bardagi<sup>19</sup> identified only one research in the Physical Education field, whose approach focused only on postgraduate students, revealing an investigative gap with graduates, who may provide important indicators to help evaluate programs offered and investments from support agencies.

When talking about Physical Education postgraduates, it becomes imperative to investigate the current scenario of this education level, which balances quality scientific production and teaching<sup>17</sup>. This also combines with the need to make these postgraduates capable of corroborating with teaching activities while training future professionals in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, without forgetting research activities<sup>18</sup>. These professionals, upon completing their graduate studies, are then expected to be capable of working in public and private higher education, governmental organizations, research institutions, companies, in the tertiary sector or as a researcher<sup>16</sup>. It is important to stress that research is favored, which most of the times restricts teaching as secondary<sup>9,18</sup>, although Felly et al.<sup>15</sup> and Ortigza<sup>16</sup>, Poltronieri and Machado<sup>16</sup> emphasize teaching as the context that most absorbs postgraduates.

With the expectation of better understanding the formative journey and professional intervention of graduates from Physical Education *stricto sensu* courses, bearing in mind that many postgraduates end up seeking assistance for their careers, future projects, as well as for the roles of professors and researchers in postgraduate education<sup>20</sup>, this study was conducted to analyze previous and current scenarios that characterize the professional activity of postgraduates from Physical Education master's and PhD courses of the Federal University of Santa Catarina [*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*], between 2006 and 2013.

## Method

### *Study Characterization*

This is a descriptive and documental study. Descriptive studies interpret facts that deserve attention, without being manipulated, despite requiring the information collected to be analyzed in order to create an investigation profile through the gathering of accurate documental sources<sup>21</sup>. When it comes to studies that use documental sources, their methodological potential is boosted as they consider the extent of the social relevance that public documents have in their constitution. In this dimension, the utilization of documental

sources works as a literary, textual and visual instrument, which allows identifying the stories and information presented by them<sup>22</sup>.

### *Contextualizing UFSC's Physical Education Postgraduate Education Scenario*

In its *strict sense* postgraduate scenario, UFSC has consolidated Physical Education master's and doctoral courses, implemented respectively in 1996 and 2006. Although the number of lines of research has decreased over the years, the program has become stronger and enabled the conduction of new researches, corroborating with the return of its graduates, both as doctoral or post-doc students and professors at the institution.

UFSC's research groups have been assisting in the formation of masters and doctors within three areas of concentration: Health-related physical activity; Theory and pedagogical practice in Physical Education; and Human development biodynamics. Additionally, there are six lines of research: Processes and programs for physical activity promotion; Physical Education, living conditions and health; Theories on body, human movement, sports and leisure; Pedagogical and didactical theories on Physical Education teaching; Studies on physical fitness, morphology and function; and Physical exercise and performance in sports and in labor<sup>23</sup>.

### *Information Sources*

The study used as sources official documents belonging to the Physical Education Postgraduate Program [*Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Física*] (PPGEF) of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, which provides the number of entrants and graduates from 2006 to 2013. The choice for this period met two specific criteria: the implementation of PhD studies in the PPGEF at UFSC in 2006, and their completion in four years, considering entrants of 2013 with expected completion in 2017.

Initially, the list posted by PPGEF Postgraduate Alumni Tracking System was used as information source and includes: graduate's name, course type, year of entry and year of completion. In order to identify the professional activity contexts *a priori* (before admission) and *a posteriori* (after completion) of PPGEF graduates, another information source for this study was composed of curricula stored on *Lattes* Platform. Finally, Resolution No 05/CUn/2010 was employed as well, for being an important regulation milestone to the operation of *stricto sensu* postgraduate education at UFSC, in order to specify the limit period for defense of dissertations and theses, as well as possible course extension deadlines contained in the internal regiment of the program investigated<sup>24</sup>.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

Initially, UFSC's PPGEF website was consulted, under item PPGEF Postgraduate Alumni Tracking System, with the graduates' identification being confirmed by entering the years that comprehended the investigation period (2006-2013), totaling 276 entrants – 194 master's students and 82 doctoral students (Table 1). Then, these names were searched for on *Lattes* Platform to identify professional activity scenarios before admission to postgraduate education, as well as scenarios after program completion. In short, the search was conducted according to *Lattes* Platform parameters, which consist of: search curriculum (by typing the graduate's full name inside the "search" field). In this selection, the options checked referred to the titles of "Doctors", "Other researchers (Masters, Graduates, Students, and others)", as well as options referring to "Brazilian" and "Foreign" as nationalities.

In the specific search for curriculum on *Lattes* Platform, the "Professional Activity" field was observed, which brings the professional journey of all 276 curricula. Information

collection included curricula with up-to-date dissertation and thesis defense dates. Curricula in which this information was not up to date were categorized as “Not informed”.

**Table 1.** Number of entrants in doctoral and master’s courses offered by PPGEF/UFSC

Program	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
PhD	05	05	08	09	13	20	18	4
Master	23	40	26	20	19	20	16	30
Total	28	45	34	29	32	40	34	34

Source: The authors

After the curricula were found on *Lattes* Platform, data collected were tabulated and saved in folders for each investigation year, using Microsoft Excel 2010. In each folder, lists were created and composed of the graduate’s name, course, year of entry and previous professional activity, year of defense and current professional activity.

After the search for curricula was finished and the lists of the 276 graduates were made, data on professional situation were analyzed as to professional activity scenarios before admission to and after completion of postgraduate programs. In each listed year, activity type along the professional journey was verified from information contained in the “Professional activity” field. In that field, in its turn, the occupation entered referring to “professional relationship” was used to create analysis categories. Thus, the following professional activity categories were created: a) Public higher education; b) Private higher education; c) Basic education; d) Non-formal context; e) Technical, administrative/educational activities; f) Multiple employment; g) Not informed.

## Results

### *Postgraduate Education in Numbers: UFSC’s PPGEF Graduates*

The study data confirm what is presented in the consulted literature and indicate a significant increase in the number of entrants (Table 1) in relation to graduates (Table 2) in UFSC’s PPGEF. Moreover, the information contained in the investigated individuals’ *Lattes* curriculum reveal some continuity in their academic training, that is, graduates from the master’s course are latter admitted to the Physical Education doctoral course of UFSC’s own program, or seek this type of training in programs offered by other universities.

**Table 2.** Number of graduates from doctoral and master’s courses offered by PPGEF/UFSC

	Year										
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Doctor	-	-	01	06	07	11	03	15	15	18	04
Master	01	27	36	26	20	18	20	15	30	01	-
Total	01	27	37	32	27	29	23	30	45	19	04

Source: The authors

In many of the investigation years, the number of master’s graduates correspond to that of entrants in the course, revealing two possible admission peaks, one between 2008 and 2010, and another in 2015. PhD graduates present a continuum throughout the years, with a slight decrease in 2013, when there were only three graduates. Besides the number of certified advisors limiting the number of vacancies offered by this training level, the extension of defense deadlines may also be considered, as it results in longer time for completion compared to what is usually recommended for PhD programs (four years). Only two PhD students, out of 82, had not completed their doctoral studies. The reasons for that could not be

investigated in depth because their curricula were not up to date, and because their course history could not be accessed, since this document belongs exclusively to the students.

*Professional Activity: UFSC's PPGEF Masters and Doctors*

Results for activity before admission to UFSC's PPGEF master's course reveal two major scenarios: higher education, both public (n=45) and private (38), and non-formal contexts (n=48), considering the frequent insertion of undergraduate professionals in the academy or in the tertiary sector. With smaller numbers, basic education (n=37) and students that have performed technical, administrative and educational activities (n=4) are worth mentioning, composing the functional picture of UFSC's master's course entrants (n=194) as of 2000 (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Professional activity before admission to the master's course

Occupation	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Public higher education	10	08	07	08	05	07	-	-
Private higher education	06	08	07	05	08	02	02	-
Basic education	07	09	07	02	-	-	04	08
Non-formal context	04	11	10	00	02	-	07	14
Technical, administrative and educational activities	-	-	01	-	01	-	-	02
Multiple employment	01	01	-	01	01	-	-	-
Not informed	03	04	03	02	01	01	02	02
Total	31	41	35	18	18	10	15	26

Source: The authors

Contrasting with this reality, and after the total completion time for the master's course, data differ as to the graduates' professional activity (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Professional activity after master's completion

Occupation	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Public higher education	14	13	15	10	09	09	02	03
Private higher education	08	18	04	-	01	07	02	04
Basic education	03	08	05	-	-	01	02	04
Non-formal area	03	02	01	-	01	-	04	04
Technical, administrative and educational activities	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Not informed	02	01	01	-	01	01	01	-
Total	31	42	26	10	12	18	11	16

Source: The authors

Public higher education is still the main means of professional occupation after master's completion (n=75), with a remarkable insertion between 2006 and 2008. Private higher education (n=44) and teaching in basic education (n=23) remain relevant. It is worth noting that there is a significant decrease when it comes to insertion in non-formal contexts (n=15) during the investigation period. As this scenario comprehends those who have not entered the academy or basic education directly, its decrease as to admission to master's courses (n=48) reflects the high demand for public higher education of master's graduates. The insertion of graduates in basic education also decreased in comparison with the moment of admission to the master's program (n=37).

There are also those masters who are admitted to the doctoral program directly, without entering the job market before becoming PhD students, which is now easier with the granting of scholarships. Besides, there are those who enter the job market before becoming

PhD students, especially for not being granted a doctoral scholarship to fund their studies, which is evidenced by students without scholarships as the most common scenario (n=28). Professional insertion after master's completion and immediately before admission to a doctoral program is quite diverse but shares remarkable similarities with master's graduates.

**Table 5.** Professional activity before admission to doctoral program

Occupation	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Public higher education	02	01	03	03	01	01	09	01
Private higher education	02	01	03	01	01	-	-	01
Basic education	-	03	-	05	02	02	04	-
Non-formal context	01	-	02	02	05	05	02	-
Technical, administrative and educational activities	-	-	02	-	01	-	02	-
Multiple employment	02	-	-	01	01	01	-	-
Not informed	02	-	03	-	01	02	-	01
Total	10	05	13	12	12	11	17	03

**Source:** The authors

As for professional insertion before admission to doctoral programs, the trend observed for master's graduates is maintained, that is, public higher education represents the scenario with the greatest professional insertion (n=21). It is worth noting that at this stage there is a pronounced decrease in the number of doctoral entrants from private higher education (n=9) against master's graduates (n=44). The data gathered show a higher number of individuals working in higher education, but it is clear that doctoral entrants are heterogeneous and found in both education domains (public/private higher education; basic education), as well as in non-formal contexts (n=17). However, data on professional activity after doctoral education completion are similar to those of master's graduates (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Professional activity after doctoral education completion

Occupation	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Public higher education	03	03	05	04	03	02	11	01
Private higher education	01	01	02	05	03	04	02	-
Basic education	-	-	-	03	01	02	-	-
Non-formal area	-	-	-	01	02	07	-	-
Technical, administrative and educational activities	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-
Multiple employment	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-
Not informed	-	-	-	-	01	01	-	-
Total	04	04	07	15	10	16	13	01

**Source:** The authors

Data reveal that a large portion of doctoral graduates is working in public higher education (n=32) and in private higher education (n=18), achieving one of UFSC's PPGEF goals – corresponding with the national scenario for this field – of professional qualification for teaching in Higher Education. In contrast, the number of graduates admitted to post-doc programs is significant as well (n=10), including those who were even granted support scholarships seeking greater scientific qualification and the possibility of returning to the academy. This scenario is also marked by insertion in non-formal contexts (n=10), although this has been increasing in relation to the period of admission to doctoral programs. With the completion of the latter, the search for basic education has decreased as well (n=6) to less than half in relation to admission to doctoral education (n=16), configuring and reinforcing the professional insertion line of doctors in Brazil, which is almost exclusively academic.

## Discussion

The success that postgraduate education has achieved is a reason of pride for the academy and for the political class in Brasil<sup>6</sup>. Data from 2015 Masters and Doctors Investigation: A study on the Brazilian technoscientific Basis Demographics, commissioned by the Center for Management and Strategic Studies [*Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos*] (CGEE), provide an overview of the growth and advancement of postgraduate education in Brazil over the years, in addition to the number of graduates in this education context from growth rates in the period<sup>8</sup>.

The representativeness of quantification of postgraduates is supported by data about titles bestowed in Brazil. For master's degrees, from 1996 to 2014, there was a great expansion in the number of titles bestowed in the Brazilian territory, from 10,842 to 50,206 (growth of 379%). Regarding PhD, its advancement is significant as well, from 2,854 to 16,729 titles (growth of 486.2%), exceeding master's rates<sup>8</sup>. The expressive numbers of PhDs reflect the ascending line of graduates highlighted above, which allows considering an increase in demand year after year. Currently, this title is not only a requirement for career progression but also job stability, considering the type of technoscientific formation of professors concerning researches developed by them in the university<sup>25</sup>. The National Postgraduate Plan 2011-2020 [*Plano Nacional de Pops Graduação*] (PNPG) consolidates all this progress through public policies supporting research and goals for postgraduate education in Brazil. Additionally, to the growth of postgraduate education in the country, the CGEE report<sup>8</sup>, a partnership with the Ministry of Education [*Ministério da Educação*] (MEC) and other institutions, reveals some numbers regarding the employability of masters and doctors after course completion from 1996 and 2014.

The job market for Physical Education graduates is usually concentrated on two large segments: one related to job posts generated by the education system, both public and private, and another one referring to activities distributed into different types of institutions and businesses, with special highlight to sports club, recreation and leisure centers, gyms and municipal governments<sup>27</sup>. In fact, there are two extreme options for professional activity in the Physical Education field and, more specifically, for graduates from this area. First, the large contingent of job posts in the education sector in the broad health field<sup>28</sup>, and, second, the ever-increasing insertion of postgraduates in the corporate scenario, which reveals a productivity formation of interests that are oftentimes marketing-oriented<sup>29-31</sup>, and underlines a discrepancy with the objectives of *stricto sensu* postgraduate education and a possible need, in the Physical Education field, for greater attention to Professional Master's Degrees.

Such evidence reveals the importance of learning where postgraduates go after completing their courses, as well as where they used to be in the job market before admission to postgraduate programs. This attempt to learn about their reality *a priori* and *a posteriori* allows for reflections about how these graduates have been trained and about the orientations of *stricto sensu* postgraduate education, which, mainly in the academic modality, has been showing ways that are different from the professional insertion that intends to form.

### *The Before and After of Masters*

Master's courses are increasingly demanding and capturing professionals with experience in higher education<sup>32</sup>, which seems to be confirmed by the results of the present study. On one hand, the toughest selection processes have been restricting opportunities of admission to postgraduate education and allowing professionals with accumulated experience in higher education to stand out in relation to other candidates<sup>18,32</sup>. On the other hand, greater attention should be paid to entrants in this type of courses who work in non-formal contexts, overcoming other categories, in consonance with what has been observed in the program

investigated, which has been capturing, in different areas of concentration, professionals who work at gyms and in the sports field and seek scientific improvement with concomitant activities in their respective professional contexts<sup>23,33</sup>.

The higher rate of graduates that set themselves in higher education, more precisely in the private sector, corroborates with one of UFSC's PPGEF objectives. Bento<sup>29</sup> argues that one of the roles of postgraduate education is scientific preparation, as well as teaching and research support – activities that are crucial for graduates to manage to establish themselves in national public higher education scenarios. This professional practice in higher education, after master's completion, is also associated with the emphasis on the researcher professor and the consequent search for more publications<sup>9</sup>, which presents itself as a concern when research becomes the focus of postgraduate education, and didactical and pedagogical matters are given little importance, raising questions about this level of training that specializes professors already active but not toward enhancing teaching<sup>34,35</sup>.

A relevant aspect about this reality is precisely the attempt to stay in postgraduate programs of those already in them, which was reinforced in the present study by the 21 doctoral students with scholarships, an important financial aid for those seeking greater qualification and scientific production. This evidence is in line with national data as to individuals who have been admitted to doctoral courses right after completing their master's, revealing, for the health area, a percentage of 33.1% of master's graduates<sup>8</sup>. It is worth noting, however, that this occupation is not necessarily a professional activity because, according to the Social Information Annual Report [*Relação Anual de Informações Sociais*] (RAIS), having a scholarship does not equal having a formal job<sup>36</sup>.

The remarkable change in the basic education scenario is another point to be considered. Decreasing insertion in this context among master's graduates may be related to the phenomenon known as intellectual emptying of intervention<sup>37</sup>, which is caused by withdrawal for qualification, since, “usually, those intellectually more capable are attracted to master's courses and, after qualification, end up leaving the school in favor of higher education”<sup>37:83</sup>.

### *The Before and After of Doctors*

In the present investigation, only nine entrants were working in higher education in the private sector before starting their doctoral courses, and this evidence may be associated with the interest of the private sector in hiring professionals with master's degrees to raise the institution recognition and prestige<sup>6</sup>. Another important aspect to highlight is the high number of students that have taken this type of course without receiving any scholarship from research support agencies, which prevents them from being more dedicated to their studies as they have to meet additional demands<sup>9,18,32</sup>. Scientific production tends to be these students' main concern for their desire of having a scholarship and favoring their work in higher education<sup>17,18,38</sup>.

After doctoral course completion, the greatest professional insertion is in public higher education, followed by private higher education, in addition to post-doc. It is believed that this insertion results from a strong academic orientation, as well as from the prioritization of research activities<sup>6</sup>. The search for higher education contributes to strengthening Brazilian universities, especially by expanding lines of research, improving the quality of scientific production and increasing the prestige of Physical Education<sup>9,27</sup>. Despite this perspective, UFSC's graduates have in higher education their main place in the job market. Additionally, three other activities have been evidenced, and these scenarios inter-relate as the individuals seek greater qualification. After completing their courses, either master's or PhD, the four major professional scenarios in which these graduates may work, put in descending order as to insertion, are public higher education first, then private higher education, followed by



teaching in basic education, and, finally, non-formal contexts. This thus represents the journey of qualification and professional insertion of Physical Education postgraduates from UFSC.

## Conclusions

The evidence found brings important indicators for the consolidation of UFSC's Physical Education Postgraduate Program, comprehending its different areas of concentration and respective lines of research. Moreover, it reveals that most graduates meet the objectives set by the program itself with respect to practice in higher education and conduction of research activities in the same domain.

Throughout the investigation years, it is clear that the graduates are seeking greater qualification, thus ascending in their careers by means of doctoral or post-doctoral degrees, as well as favoring their insertion in the public sector. Teaching is valued and, therefore, stands as a field of increasing competitiveness, leading to a search for greater qualification in a short period of time, which explains the high number of graduates who take a course immediately after the other, with this clearly being a marketing perspective. In this sense, working at Higher Education Institutions seems to be the first option for doctoral graduates, although it is possible to observe the insertion of masters, though timid, in these institutions even before a possible admission to doctoral courses. Furthermore, this investigation also observed the insertion of master's and doctoral graduates in the non-formal job market, which reignites the debate around the academic orientation of the program and the sequential model of master's courses, discussed as a priority issue.

Further investigation in this field is recommended in order to deepen the analysis on the formative and professional journeys of graduates from Physical Education postgraduate programs, considering their respective areas of concentration, as well as to broaden knowledge about the level of regional mobility and the graduates' professional insertion in different work positions within this area. To overcome the fragility of using information from one source only, the triangulation of different sources of data should be employed, in addition to the combination of procedures that are usually adopted in quantitative and qualitative approaches in the area.

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