

WORK STRESS AND ADJUSTMENT PATTERNS AMONG WORKING MOTHERS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated work stress and adjustment patterns among working mothers in public secondary schools in Anambra state. Three research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 1,800 working mothers in Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra state. The sample consisted of 400 working mothers. Stratified sampling technique was used to draw the sample. Two instruments were used for data collection. These were “Work Stress Questionnaire (WSQ)” developed by Holmgren et al (2018) and Adjustment Patterns Inventory (API) developed by Bell (2006). The instruments were subjected to face validation. The reliability of the instruments were established using Cronbach Alpha method. The result yielded co-efficient values of 0.77 and 0.77 for WSQ and API respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to answer research questions 1-3, whereas test of significance for correlation was used to test hypotheses 1-3. The findings revealed that there was a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in the urban areas, The findings of the study revealed that there was negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers who are teachers while there was a negligible negative relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns among experienced working mothers. On the other hand, there was weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of inexperienced working mothers. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the management of secondary schools should create a compulsory leave for working mothers in secondary schools, the state government should endeavor to recruit more staff in order to reduce work load on existing staff.

Keywords: Work stress, Adjustment patterns, working mothers, public secondary schools

Introduction

The industrial revolution in Nigeria was fueled by the economic necessity of many women, single and married, to find waged work outside their home. Women are mostly found in teaching, nursing, clerical, sales jobs among others, for some, the industrial revolution provided independent wages, mobility and a better standard of living while some see such job in the early years of the 19th century as a stressor. Women in Nigeria have come a long way after independence, from just a skilled homemaker to a working-class women, today they have acquired skills and capabilities of not just being a homemaker but being at par with their male counterparts. This is the new generation of women, who wants to pursue their dream career. But this life is not a bed of roses at all as one has to fulfill the demand at work followed by various demands at home.

In today's scenario the husband and wife both work towards creating a balance with their work life as well as at home with their children. But it seems difficult for women as she has to play multiple roles of a cook, a family maid, a tutor, a nurse as well as cater to the demands of school/office work. This can leave a working woman stressed and anxious especially if the family is not supportive. This situation increases their emotional stress and psychological strain while working, (Stebbins, 2015). In particular, working mothers who are dissatisfied with childcare arrangements end up experiencing high stress levels, (Tripathi & Bhattacharje 2015). Various stressors from child-rearing such as inadequate income and social insecurities coupled with stress from work place negatively influence mothers' emotional well-being (Tripathi & Bhattacharje 2015).

Moreover, in many traditional Igbo societies, working mothers are expected to stay at home and do home chores, presently, economic crises and women liberation movements have forced many mothers to work. The movement of women into the labour force have made mothers at all levels, especially those

working in secondary schools to face numerous challenges which they must respond. Demands from workplace such as teaching large classes in the midst of inadequate resources, coping with student's needs and their incessant complain, coping with administrative rules and so on are some of the tasks faced by working mothers in secondary schools which may make their life miserable, leads them to several sicknesses and low productivity (Okahi, 2018). The adjustment patterns employed by people to handle work stress are crucial because it necessitated harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's need and meet most of the demands both physical and social that are put upon one. Working mothers are prone to more work stress because many of them bear the double burden of housework and a job outside the home, each with its own challenges. Financial and economic crises pose different and unequal stress signs on working mothers in urban and rural area (Snow et al, 2017) and their potential to respond and develop effective adjustment pattern will only lead to satisfactory life.

Today's social structure is different from that of our forefathers. Today in our society, every working mothers is expected to be somebody and get on in life, acquire a higher position and a higher salary. Okahi (2018) noted that working mothers are prepared to make sacrifices to this end, since this is the standard of the society. Presumably, women enter their marriage satisfied and reporting fewer problems, the stress they might have are theoretically less severe than in later years of the relationship because they will try to satisfy the societal demand by working and bearing children which expose them to more stress, depression, anxiety to mention but a few which could lead to hindrances for a working mother to perform well in their homes as well as reducing their efficiencies at places of work. Sometimes, their teaching responsibilities compete with home demands, for instance, a working mother whose baby becomes sick should attend to the health need of the child promptly, at the same time she may be called urgently to come to school same day for invigilation of WAEC exam or to prepare voucher for salary or any other emergencies. In an attempt to meet with these multiple responsibilities, working mothers become exhausted, confused and stressed.

The word adjustment is to fit, make suitable, adapt, arrange, modify, harmonize or make correspondent. Thus, when we make an adjustment between two things, we adapt or modify one or both of them to correspond to each other. In some situations, one of the factors may not be changeable and so the one which is, has to be modified in some way to suit the other. Drewer (2015) defined adjustment as the modification to compensate for or meet special conditions. Carter (2019) defined adjustment as the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. The researcher defined adjustment as an alteration or movement made to achieve a desired fit, appearance or result. It means the ability for someone to adapt to changes in his/her physical, occupational and social environment. Successful adjustment is crucial to having a high quality of life. Those who are unable to adjust well are more likely to have clinical anxiety or depression, as well as experience feelings of hopelessness, anhedonia, difficulty concentrating, sleeping problems and reckless behaviour.

Adjustment pattern is a process of modifying, adapting, or altering individual so as to bring them into conformity with other pattern. Such adjustment include agreement on tasks and priorities of each task relative to one another (Siegrist, 2014). Adjustment pattern refers to reactions to goals, events and circumstances that involve the use of psychological and social resources to cope with situations (Peace, 2016). Adjustment pattern according to Omojugba (2018) is an individual's general adaptation to his environment and the way one deals with problems. Menaghan (2015) described adjustment pattern as typical ways of approaching problems. They also include the proactive responses to life situations that involve the use of emotional, intellectual and material resources. Ability to adjust in the workplace is important for a number of reasons. For one, employers value employees that are successfully able to manage changes in the workplace. Work stress is stress caused by work. It simply refers to when a person perceives the work environment in such a way that his or her reaction involves feelings of an inability to cope. As observed by Cox *et al* (2015), work stress occurs when an individual perceives an imbalance between the demands placed on them on one hand, and their ability to cope on the other. It was observed that prolonged work stress could cause high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver and kidney problems, migraine headache, peptic ulcer and sudden death (Denga (2018). (Working mothers may have these experiences, if they have high level of stress and patterns of adjustment experienced by individuals especially working mothers who have multiple responsibilities to attend). Work stress does not exist on its own, Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2016) opined that there must be demands that trigger the work stress and these demands or causes are stressors.

Working mothers refers to all the women who are mothers (whether single mothers or widows) who work outside the home for income in addition to the work they perform at home in raising their children (Ofoegbu & Nwadiana 2016). Teaching working mothers are mothers who are professional personnel directly involved in teaching students while non-teaching working mothers are those mothers who work in the school

but do not teach the students. They offer other services that do not help the students directly with their studies but help in improving their experiences in the school.

Urban areas can refer to towns, cities and suburbs. Typically, Urban areas have high population density and rural areas have low population density (Krishna 2016). Urban areas are places where lots of people live on a small amount of space with better and improved access to social services. Urban working mothers are women working in the area that are very developed, with density of human structures such as hospitals, markets, houses, roads and railways. Rural working women are mothers working in a geographical area that is located outside towns and cities. It is an open swath of land that has few homes or buildings and not very much people (Renu et al., 2015).

Understanding the adjustment pattern used by working mothers to manage /adjust and face the challenges encountered in day to day activities remains a critical problem in our society today facing working mothers in secondary school in Anambra state. Most educators like Canam (2018) agree that there is a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern, some scholars like Boss, et al (2015) argued that there is significant difference in adjustment among working mothers in urban and rural area. According to these scholars, the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in rural and urban area may differ because of their exposure to different work stress adjustment. They argue that working women in urban area may differ in terms of their adjustment to stress, how they are perceived and treated in the society and kind of working conditions available to them, however, results of the relationships between work stress and adjustment pattern have been inconsistent. Besides, most of the studies were conducted in western countries (Renu et al 2015, Canam 2018) and thus the full understanding of the relationship runs the risk of being culturally biased. Replicating such study in Nigeria especially in Anambra state will likely clear the bias. The present study investigated work stress and adjustment patterns among working mothers in public secondary school in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The rate at which people die in our society due to stress and inability to adjust is alarming. Stress are prevalent in the health of workforce which working mothers in secondary schools in Anambra state are not left out. In the Nigerian traditional society, mothers are expected to stay at home and do home chores. However, education has brought revolutionary changes among women. More and more women prefer to be engaged in some kind of employment so that they can contribute financially to their families. As women leave the company of their home contrary to what operated in the olden days for employment outside their homes, there seem to be conflicts arising from the demands and expectations of house chores and employment. These conflicts may not be unconnected with the occupational stress and inability to adjust experienced by working mothers as they have to perform several roles as employees which affect them negatively, ranging from poor job performance, mental illness, anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, high blood pressure, headache and premature death.

The researchers have also observed a lot of working mothers that are faced with health problems, daily hassles and life challenges that predispose them to stress. Such stress signs have negative emotional and physical health consequences for working mothers who struggle to balance the demands of work and home life.

A number of researches have been done on stress adjustment pattern to reduce stress, among them are the important focus in coping with stress is to feed on balanced diet, relaxation techniques can help reduce the discomfort and duration of symptoms of blood pressure. Despite all these works done on stress adjustment patterns, the negative effect of stress persists. This was the motivation for this study which sought to investigate work stress and adjustment patterns among working mothers in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The specific purpose of the study were to;

1. Examine the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education of Anambra state.
2. Ascertain the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in urban and rural based public secondary schools of Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra state.
3. Examine the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state.

This study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education of Anambra state.

2. What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in urban and rural based public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state?
3. What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state.

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state.
2. There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of working mothers in urban and rural based public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state.
3. There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state

METHOD

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 1800 working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra state. The sample for the study consisted of 400 (220 experienced and 180 inexperienced; 210 teaching and 190 non-teaching) working mothers with mean age of 40 years. Stratified random sampling was employed to draw the sample size.

Two sets of instruments were used for data collection namely; Work Stress Questionnaire and Adjustment Pattern Inventory. Work Stress Questionnaire (WSQ) was used to measure the work stress of working mothers. The instrument was developed by Holmgreen (2018). The instrument has two sections; A and B. Section A sought demographic information of the respondents such as work status, years of work experience. Section B contains 21 items that elicited information of work stress of the working mothers. The response pattern was based on a four-point scale of Always (4), often (3), sometime (2) and Never (1). Considering the cultural differences, the researchers decided to establish the reliability of the instrument using a sample of 30 working mothers from secondary schools in Awka Education zone in Anambra state. Good reliability was recorded as the result of internal consistency reliability co-efficient of 0.77 was obtained. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the reliability.

Adjustment Pattern Inventory (API) was adapted from previously used scale developed by Bell (2017). The instrument contains 25 items which elicited information on adjustment pattern of working mothers. Its response pattern was based on a four point scale of Always (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2) and Never (1). Its reliability was also tested using a sample of 30 working mothers from secondary schools in Awka Education zone. The analysis yielded internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.80. The coefficient values of API and WSI were regarded as high enough for the study.

The copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers and four trained research assistants who visited various public secondary schools in the zone. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered, 389 were returned indicating 97% return rate which is adjudged to be adequate for the study. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient while the hypotheses were tested using test of significance Pearson. The statistical package of Social Science (SPSS) version 26 was used for analysis.

Research Question 1; What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Working Mothers in Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	Remark
Work Stress	389	—	-.11	Weak Negative Relationship
Adjustment Pattern	389	-.11	-	

Table 1 displays Pearson's correlation between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra state which yielded a correlation coefficient (r) = $-.11$. This coefficient shows that there was a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in urban and rural based secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table2: Pearson's Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Working Mothers in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	Remark
Urban:				
Work Stress	144	—	0-.19	Weak Negative Relationship
Adjustment Pattern	144	0-.19	-	
Rural:				
Work Stress	245	—	0-.07	Negligible Negative Relationship
Adjustment Pattern	245	0-.07	-	

Table 2 showed Pearson correlation between work stress and adjustment pattern based on school location. The correlation coefficient (r) of -.19 for working mothers in secondary schools in urban areas suggested that there was a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among mothers in secondary schools in urban areas. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient (r) of 0-.07 obtained for working mothers in secondary schools in rural areas implies that there was a negligible negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in rural secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State. The size of the correlation showed that the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern is stronger among working mothers in urban secondary schools compared to those in rural schools.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State?

Table 3.

Pearson's Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Teaching and Non-Teaching Working Mothers in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	Remark
Teaching:				
Work Stress	242	—	0-.06	Negligible Negative Relationship
Adjustment Pattern	242	0-.06	-	
Non-Teaching:				
Work Stress	147	—	0-.20	Weak Negative Relationship
Adjustment Pattern	147	0-.20	-	

Table 2 displayed the Pearson correlation between work stress and adjustment patterns among working mothers based on their teaching status (teaching and non-teaching). The correlation coefficient (r) for teaching mothers is 0-.06 which suggested a negligible negative relationship while the correlation coefficient (r) for non-teaching mothers is 0-.20 which implies a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns. There was, therefore, a stronger relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among non-teaching working mothers than teaching mothers.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Working Mothers in Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	p-value	Decision
Work Stress	389	-	-.11	.036	Significant
Adjustment Pattern	389	-.11	-		

The result displayed in Table 4 indicates that there was a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State, $r = -.11$, p -value < 0.05 . Since the p -value was less than the stipulated 0.05 level significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in urban and rural based secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State.

Table 5: Test of Significance of Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Working Mothers in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	p-value	Decision
Urban:					Significant
Work Stress	144	-	-.19	.020	
Adjustment Pattern	144	-.19	-		
Rural:					Not Significant
Work Stress	245	-	-.07	.256	
Adjustment Pattern	245	-.07	-		

The result displayed in Table 5 shows that there was a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in urban areas, $r = -.19$, p -value < 0.05 . On the other hand, there was a non-significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in rural areas, $r = -.07$, p -value > 0.05 . The null hypothesis that posited a non-significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in urban secondary schools was rejected while the null hypothesis that posited a non-significant relationship between the two variables among working mothers in rural secondary schools was not rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Table 6: Test of Significance of Correlation between Work Stress and Adjustment Pattern among Teaching and Non-Teaching Working Mothers in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State

Variables	N	Work Stress	Adjustment Pattern	p-value	Decision
Teaching:					Not significant
Work Stress	242	-	0-.06	0.376	
Adjustment Pattern	242	0-.06	-		
Non-Teaching:					Significant
Work Stress	147	-	0-.20	0.018	
Adjustment Pattern	147	0-.20	-		

Table 6 showed that there was a non-significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in teaching cadre in secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State, ($r = -.06$, p -value > 0.05). Since the p -value was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

On the other hand, there was a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in non-teaching cadre in secondary schools, ($r = -.20$, p -value < 0.05). Considering that the p -value associated with the sample of non-teaching cadre was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which posited a non-significant relationship was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study revealed that based on data analysis, the following findings emerged;

The findings of the study as shown in Table 1 revealed that there was a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State. There was a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in Onitsha Education Zone.

The findings of the study as shown in Table 2 revealed a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns among working mothers in secondary schools in Urban areas. On the other hand, there was a negligible negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of mothers in rural areas in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The degree of correlation showed that the relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns is stronger among working mothers in Urban Secondary Schools than those in rural secondary schools. The result of null hypothesis showed a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns of working mothers in urban area while there was a non significant relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns of working mothers in rural areas in secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The findings of this study are in consonance with the study of Krishina (2016) who revealed that women in urban area are better in their adjustment pattern than those in rural area. The reason for this result may be that the working mothers in urban area are more exposed to different adjustment pattern than those in rural area.

The findings of the study shown in Table 3 revealed a weak negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among teaching working mothers in secondary schools. On the other hand, there was a negligible negative relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The degree of correlation showed that the relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern is stronger among non-teaching working mothers in Public Secondary Schools. The result of null hypothesis showed a non-significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The findings of this study are in consonance with Akabueze (2017) who revealed that majority of working mothers don't make use of appropriate stress adjustment pattern especially teaching working mothers. The reason for this result may be that non-teaching working mothers adopt more positive adjustment pattern than teaching working mother.

The result of null hypothesis showed a non significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern of teaching and non-teaching working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The findings of this study are in consonance with Ako (2017) who revealed a significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern. Although Seeman and Seeman studies were carried out using different samples from countries that have different socio-cultural environment from Nigeria, the findings go on to support that work stress experienced by working mothers may be similar across diverse countries, cultures and populations..

It appeared that adoption of wrong adjustment pattern is pervasive across several working mothers in many countries. For instance, studies such as Slatcher and Trentacosta (2018) and Dong Wu (2015) reported a range of negative adjustment pattern among people in Denmark, England, Ireland and China.

Conclusion

The study investigated work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that the relationship between work stress and adjustment patterns is dependent on school location such that there was significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in urban areas while there was a non-significant relationship between work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers in secondary schools in the rural areas.

Implications of the study

The findings of this study have many implications for Guidance counsellors, School management and Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC).

There is need for counsellors to advocate group counselling programme that will go a long way in educating working mothers to positively manage their work stress. Through participation in mass media, the counsellors could affect changes on adjustment pattern of working mothers so that they will manage their work stress without becoming helpless.

The study has also brought to limelight the need for the school management to organize periodic workshop and seminars for working mothers to enlighten them on the need of adopting a positive adjustment pattern.

Another implication of this study is that the Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC) would likely see the need to arrange a periodic forum involving the school guidance counsellors and school managements to address issues related to work stress and adjustment pattern among working mothers. This will solve the problems of ignorance and unawareness on the part of the working mothers in public secondary schools thereby making them to move in the right direction. Some working mothers don't always make use of these stress adjustment patterns, this call for urgent information on the need to use stress adjustment patterns to reduce the incidence of stroke, untimely death, hypertension, heart diseases and depression.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Guidance counsellors should plan for group guidance regularly to guide working mothers in secondary schools on the right pattern of adjustment to use and dangers of high work stress.
2. The management of secondary schools should regularly organize in service education programme such as conferences, workshop and seminars to educate participants on work stress and positive adjustment pattern. This will give working mothers in secondary schools the full knowledge of stress, work stress and adjustment patterns.
3. Government should provide recreational facilities in secondary schools for working mothers to relieve tension.
4. The government should create a compulsory leave for working mothers in secondary schools. They should also review the work load and make some adjustments in order to reduce work stress in secondary schools.
5. The state government should endeavor to recruit more staff in order to reduce work load on existing staff, create job specifications and provide sporting facilities for working mothers in secondary schools. This will help to cut down their work stress.

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