

An Assessment of Stress Management Skills and Teachers' Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Benin Metropolis

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the level of stress management skills and teachers' performance in public secondary schools in the Benin metropolis. The dimensions of stress studied included physical stress, mental stress, emotional stress and social stress. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design using a sample of 171 teachers and school administrators randomly drawn from six secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State Nigeria. The secondary schools were selected from the three local government areas that make up Benin City (Egor, Oredo and Ikpoba-Okha). Using a convenient sampling technique, a self-developed instrument titled: Stress Management Skills and Teachers' Performance (SMSTP) was used to collect data for the study. The data were analysed using simple percentages. Underpinned by the psychological stress theory of Lazarus, the results showed that public secondary school teachers had a high level of stress and that there are no proper stress management techniques for them in the Benin metropolis. The findings equally revealed that stress has a direct relationship with teachers' productivity that invariably affects students' academic performance. Consequently, the study recommended that the same attention given to stress management by corporate organizations which are on the increase should be extended to the education industry.

Keywords: Stress, Management Skill, Teachers' Performance, Productivity.

Introduction

Stress management is the process of identifying, understanding, and taking action to manage stress to increase well-being. It includes activities such as analyzing stressors and learning to recognize signs of stress, developing coping strategies, and setting and achieving goals. Stress management can help people learn to reduce the physical and emotional symptoms of stress and improve overall life satisfaction. It is a critical component of successful teaching in today's complex educational environment. One of the most demanding professions is typically thought to be teaching and teachers are often faced with high stress levels due to increasing workloads, low salaries, and lack of support from administration. As such, it is important to assess the stress management skills of teachers to determine the impact on their performance. The teacher, who is the primary imparter of knowledge, must be highly motivated, healthy, and content with his/her position to perform at a high level (Adeyemi, 2016). The number of early retirements due to illness, prolonged absences due to chronic illness, and new instructors exiting either during training or five years after attempting to publish due to teacher stress is on the rise among teachers (Adeyemi, 2016).

Students' performance outcomes, attendance, communication skills, understanding of the topic taught in class, professionalism, decision-making, interpersonal skills, and classroom management all

contribute to a teacher's efficacy. Because teaching provides the foundation and sustenance for all other professions, it has long been acknowledged as a vitally essential vocation for the entire globe (Akintunde 2015). The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN 2000:39) cited in Odogwu (2002: 23), claims that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers". Secondary school teachers help pupils go from the foundational level of learning to a greater knowledge of some of the same concepts they were introduced to in elementary school.

Teaching skills that students will need as they progress to higher education institutions, in the workforce, or the performance of their civic duties as responsible, enlightened members of society, is the aim of teachers at this level. This stage of teaching can be particularly challenging. Adolescents go through quick physical and emotional changes that put them at risk for a wide range of issues. Numerous schools struggle with issues related to drugs, violence, gang activity, and overcrowding. These educators carry out their duties in this social setting by instructing students from a variety of racial, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The purpose of this study is to assess the level of stress management skills and the degree to which such skills improve teachers' performance in secondary schools in the Benin metropolis. The government will be able to use the data from this study to help create workplace (school) intervention programs that could protect teachers from the harmful effects of stress in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Education.

Statement of the Problem

There is no denying the fact that secondary school teachers frequently experience significant levels of stress. It should be noted that teachers who are under stress have problems with their health and well-being. However, the daily lives of students may also be impacted by teacher stress. Teachers who are stressed out, exhausted, or even depressed, are likely to have diminished or insufficient capacity to concentrate on building relationships with their students. When teachers lack the enthusiasm and motivation to inspire their students, the students might lose interest and motivation for learning. When stress is not properly managed, work output in schools will drop. Stress management can alter the way people respond to work situations. In an attempt to manage stress, some teachers resort to excessive drinking of alcohol, absenteeism, and having sex with students without their consent. Others attend classes, sign in, and register their attendance, but instead of teaching, simply pass the time by chatting with them. In light of the aforementioned, this work assesses teachers' performance in public secondary schools in the city of Benin as well as their ability to manage stress.

Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are to:

1. examine the extent to which the teachers' stress management skills affect their performance in public secondary schools in the Benin metropolis.
2. to assess the extent to which the school management implements procedures for regulating and decreasing stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Benin City.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. to what extent does stress affect teachers' performance in public secondary schools in the Benin metropolis?
2. to what extent does school management implement procedures and competencies for regulating and decreasing stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Benin City?

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Stress

Stress is a multifaceted and multilevel phenomenon that can be influenced by structural, environmental, or personal variables. According to Quick, Nelson & Quick (2001), cited in Tenibiaje (2015), stress is recognized as an occupational disease that causes considerable human illness, both physical and psychological. The Latin verb '*stringere*', which means to draw tight, is the root of the English word 'stress', which was first used to express hardships and affliction in the 17th century. According to research conducted by Tenibiaje (2015), 90% of teachers reported feeling overwhelmed in some form, and 95% claimed they required stress management training. To Kaur, Kumari & Sharma (2013), stress is a negative reaction that a person has to excessive pressure or other types of expectations. When a person's capacity for adaptation cannot keep up with expectations, stress is the result. Baraza & Simatue (2016) opine that the way one experiences stress determines whether it is positive or negative. It may act as a stimulant or an energizer (Gilibe 2013), in which case it is advantageous and favourable. The ability to thrive is threatened when stress becomes intolerable (Al-Srouf & Al-Oweidi, 2013). A little amount of stress may help a person satisfy demands and requirements. Although stress has a direct impact on the body, how stressed a person feels varies depending on a variety of factors, including how they view the stressful event.

It is impossible to avoid stress. It is a complicated and dynamic idea that psychologists, educators, and organizations alike are becoming increasingly concerned about (Owan, 2011). It is viewed as a typical aspect of human existence. Regardless of age, religion, gender, culture, or social class, everyone goes through it. However, there isn't a single, broadly acknowledged definition of stress. Stress has been characterized in a variety of ways by various authorities and commentators, particularly in the fields of psychology and mental health. According to Akintunde (2015), stress is a psychological, bodily, and emotional response that arises from a person's reaction to environmental anxiety, conflict, pressure, and similar other stimuli that intimidate a person's capacity for management. According to Tenibiaje (2015), it is a physiological and psychological response to specific environmental stimuli.

A special sort of occupational stress is teacher stress. According to Gliebe (2013), teaching is a stressful profession, and Nwimo & Onwuka (2015) identify this as a major issue in the educational system. According to some definitions, a teacher's stress is the experience of unpleasant negative emotions (such as anger and depression) and physiological changes (such as an accelerated heart rate) in response to aspects of the job that pose a threat to the teacher's self-esteem or general well-being. According to Nwimo & Onwuka (2015), teacher stress is the result of certain parts of a teacher's job and is characterized by unpleasant negative feelings like irritation, anxiety, melancholy, and anxiousness. Additionally, it has been hypothesized that different teachers may experience varying degrees of stress. At the beginning of their careers, new teachers may feel stressed out due to difficult students and classroom assignments, while veteran teachers may feel stressed out due to their changing roles, the addition of new responsibilities, and the changing nature of education.

Environmental factors and personal traits can contribute to the teacher's stress. Poor working circumstances, a lack of resources, a high workload and tight deadlines, a lack of job security, low pay scales, and student behaviour are major environmental variables. Individual traits include things like gender, age, personality, and the capacity to handle challenges (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016). School instructors are not exempt from experiencing job stress, which is common in all occupations. As shown and supported by the study conducted by Oguntimehin & Alaba (2017), teaching is now a stressful job in Nigeria at all levels of education.

Stress manifests in different ways for different people. Knowing or recognizing an illness' signs will notify the person in time to take preventative or remedial action. Among the signs of stress are perspiration, excessive sweating, frequent feverish condition, headache, cold, insomnia-inability to obtain adequate sleep, irritability (nervousness) - responding irrationally and getting angry, even with trivial matters, forgetfulness and loss of concentration. By identifying the individual stressors in a person's life and taking proactive steps to reduce their impact, a variety of approaches, programs and

treatments known as stress management can help people deal with stress in their lives more effectively. Teachers will be happier, healthier, and more productive if they can overcome the grip stress has on their lives. There are many different types of stress management techniques.

Types of Stress Teachers Experience

Teachers experience a variety of stress daily. These include:

1. **Interpersonal Concerns:** Stress associated with interacting with students, parents, and colleagues is a common source of stress for teachers. This can include dealing with disrespectful behaviour, managing challenging parent-teacher conferences, or feeling alienated socially from colleagues (Gluyas & Graham, 2017)
2. **Performance Pressures:** Educators often feel significant pressure to meet the needs of their students and to demonstrate successful outcomes (Walker et al., 2019). This can reflect as unrealistic expectations or demands coming from parents or administrators, or it could be self-imposed perfectionism
3. **Professional Demands:** Teaching involves endless multitasking and often requires teachers to balance several tasks at once. This can include lesson planning, assessment development, student tracking, and meeting administrative duties etc (Nguyen et al., 2017).
4. **The lack of control** that teachers have over the execution of their job can be a source of stress. This can result from a single administrator who is in control of their profession or a lack of resources to effectively do their job (Chong, 2019).
5. **Acute Stress-** Acute stress is the most common kind of stress and is typically caused by everyday events such as negative interactions at work or school, financial issues, or family problems. It can be short-term and can lead to physical and mental illnesses such as headaches, chronic fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and depression (Bowling, 2019).
6. **Chronic stress** is ongoing and can come from things like a demanding job, challenging relationships, or continuing to deal with difficult life situations every day. It can have long-term effects on the body such as hypertension, weight fluctuations, and depression (Bowling, 2019).
7. **Eustress** is a kind of positive stress caused by a situation that energizes or motivates you. It can motivate you to do something that you enjoy or something that will benefit you long-term. Common examples of eustress include setting challenges for yourself, pursuing goals, or studying for a test (Johns, 2018).
8. **Distress:** Distress is a negative type of stress caused by events such as economic hardship, physical pain, trauma, or challenging relationships. It has been associated with decreased life satisfaction, anxiety, and depression. It can also result in physical illnesses and can be detrimental to physical and mental health. (Johns, 2018)

Symptoms of Stress on Secondary School Teachers

Stress can affect secondary school teachers in a variety of ways. It can manifest itself in physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural symptoms.

Physical Symptoms

The most noticeable physical symptoms of stress experienced by secondary school teachers may include headaches, digestive problems, fatigue, and insomnia (Chearskul et al., 2017). Other physical symptoms such as muscle tension, chest pain, and an elevated heart rate may also occur (D'Amour, et al., 2014).

Emotional Symptoms

Secondary school teachers may experience a range of emotions due to stress, including irritability, anxiety, and depression (Kokkinos et al., 2011). Feelings of helplessness, guilt, or shame can also be experienced alongside a lack of motivation and joy in work-related activities (Chearskul et al., 2017).

Behavioural Symptoms

Behavioural symptoms associated with stress are not always easily recognizable in secondary school teachers but may include low productivity, absenteeism, substance abuse, eating disorders, and generally withdrawn behaviours (Kokkinos et al., 2011).

Stress Management Techniques

Time management: Properly managing time is essential for reducing stress. Teachers can prioritize tasks, create schedules, and set realistic goals to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

1. Breaking larger tasks into smaller, manageable ones can also help alleviate stress (Langill et al., 2016).
2. Setting boundaries: Teachers often feel pressured to go above and beyond their regular duties, leading to excessive workload and stress. Setting clear boundaries and learning to say no when necessary is crucial for managing stress. Teachers need to maintain a healthy work-life balance by allocating time for personal activities and self-care (Lam, 2014).
3. Mindfulness and relaxation techniques: Practicing mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga, can help teachers relax and reduce stress. These techniques promote self-awareness, allowing teachers to focus on the present moment and let go of unnecessary worries and anxieties. (Ruddell et al., 2015).
4. Social support: Building a strong support network among colleagues, friends, and family can provide teachers with emotional support and a sense of belonging. Sharing experiences, seeking advice, or simply venting can help alleviate stress. Collaborative work environments and supportive relationships can significantly improve job satisfaction and performance (Kang, 2020).
5. Physical well-being: Taking care of one's physical health is vital for managing stress. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep contribute to overall well-being and enhance stress resilience. Engaging in physical activities can help release endorphins, reduce tension, and improve mood. (Chiesa, et al, 2009)
6. Positive self-talk and reframing: Teachers can benefit from adopting positive self-talk and reframing negative thoughts. By replacing self-doubt or negative beliefs with positive and empowering affirmations, teachers can build resilience and manage stress more effectively (McKay, et al, 2019).

Empirical Framework

The moderating effects of resources on stress and performance were the subjects of a study by Manabete, et al (2016). They concluded that teachers' performance was negatively impacted by various stress-related contributing factors, whether they existed inside or outside the educational institution. According to the study, there is a clear link between instructors' stress levels and their productivity. Stress lowers both individual and institutional productivity, which has an impact on performance. Even when instructors have health and psychological issues, their level of motivation and job satisfaction declines.

In their study, Muthuvelayutham & Mohanasundaram (2012) empirically investigated the impact of occupational stress among teachers on Job Satisfaction and Job Involvement. They clearly defined the distinction between pressure and stress in this study. Pressure inspires us and helps us deliver our best work. However, if we are under excessive pressure without a chance to rest, we are unable to cope, which leads to stress. According to the study, stress can be decreased when certain factors that induce stress are taken care of. According to the study's findings, stress has a significant negative impact on teachers' job satisfaction and job involvement.

Aided school teachers (185) and 120 government teachers made up the sample in Jeyaraj's (2013) study on government and aided higher secondary school instructors. The findings indicated that instructors who reported higher levels of stress were less content with their jobs, had more absences overall and on a more frequent basis, were more likely to leave teaching (career intention), and were

less likely to return to it (career commitment). According to Steinhardt, et al (2011), cited in Oguntimehin and Alaba (2017), teachers' capacity to manage professional stress affects their ability to teach effectively and can result in burnout. Evidence suggests that ineffective stress management contributes to worse teaching quality (Zedan & Bitar, 2013) and that in turn, effective stress management boosts teaching proficiency (Watson, 2009). The majority of respondents in a study by Muiga, et al (2016) strongly agreed that management-related stress has a significant impact on teachers' performance in public secondary schools. Multiple regression analysis and correlation results also supported the findings. Additionally, the majority of respondents concurred that giving teachers a lot of work and not giving them enough credit for their accomplishments by the employer and school administrators lead to stress among teachers and have a big impact on how well they do their jobs.

Theoretical Framework

Lazarus' (1966) psychological stress theory, cited by Akintunde (2015) serves as the foundation for this study. Two concepts are at the heart of any psychological stress theory: appraisal - how people assess the relevance of what is happening for their well-being, and coping - how people attempt to think through and behave in response to particular pressures. It tends to assist us in evaluating how Benin's public secondary school teachers cope with stress.

Stress is not defined as a specific type of external stimulus or a certain pattern of physiological, behavioural, or subjective reaction. Instead, it is viewed as a relational term, namely the relationship between stress management and public secondary school teachers' performance. Instead, stress is seen as a connection (or "transaction") between people and their surroundings. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1986:63), "psychological stress refers to a relationship between the person and the environment, such as the school and its administrators, that the person depends on as significant for his or her well-being and in which the demands exceed available coping resources." According to this definition, coping and cognitive evaluation serve as the two main mediators in the person-environment interaction.

Stress is not described as a particular type of external stimulation or a state of being, but rather as a relational term, i.e. the relationship between stress management and public secondary school teachers' performance. Grasp stress-relevant transactions requires a grasp of the idea of appraisal, which was first introduced into emotion research by Arnold (1960) and developed about stress processes by Lazarus (1966), Lazarus and Launier (1997), as cited in Akintunde (2015). This theory is founded on the premise that genuine expectations that people express regarding the importance and outcome of a particular encounter are what drive emotional processes, including stress. In circumstances that are objectively equal for various people, this idea is important to explain individual variances in the quality, intensity, and duration of an elicited emotion. It is typically believed that a particular pattern of assessments creates, sustains, and ultimately modifies the condition that results. These evaluations, in turn, are influenced by a variety of individual and environmental elements. On the personal side, generic expectations, aspirations, and motivational tendencies are the most crucial elements. Predictability, controllability, and the approaching of a potentially stressful occurrence are significant situational characteristics. This theory will guide the research into how teachers' stress management abilities impact their performance in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Research Methodology

This study aims to assess the stress management skills of teachers and the impact on their performance in public secondary schools. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design. questionnaires were used to collect information from teachers on their stress management skills, including the types of strategies they use to manage stress, the level of stress experienced, and the extent to which they feel supported by their school's administration. Interviews and observations were conducted to gather further information on stress management skills and their impact on teachers' performance. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. The target population of the study was 293 teachers and school

administrators drawn from six public secondary schools in Benin City Edo State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study was 171 out of 298 staff of the aforementioned government schools. This was arrived at by using Taro Yamane formula. Using convenience sampling method, Benin City was chosen as the geographical scope in this study. Six public secondary schools in the three local government areas that make up the Benin metropolis were chosen. They are Evbereke Secondary School, Uselu, Egor local government area, Iyoba girls' secondary school, Egor local government area, Ogiomo secondary school Sapele road, Ikpoba Okha local government area, Niger College Ikpoba Okha local government area, Edo college M.M. Way Oredo local government area and Idia college in Oredo local government area, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. One hundred and seventy-one (171) copies of questionnaire were distributed while one hundred and thirty (130) copies were retrieved. This gave a return rate of 76%.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: To what extent does stress affect teachers' performance in public secondary school in the Benin metropolis?

Items in tables 1 and 2 are used to answer research question one.

Table 1. Question 1. Stress often leads to a negative and aggressive attitude in class.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	40	30.8
Agree	50	38.5
Undecided	5	3.8
Disagree	20	15.4
Strongly disagree	15	11.5
TOTAL	130	100

Source: field work 2023

From Table 1, 40 respondents (30.8 %) strongly agree that Stress often leads to a negative and aggressive attitude in class. 50 respondents (38.5%) agree that stress often led to a negative and aggressive attitude in class. Less than 30% of the respondents disagree while 3.8% were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondent was of the opinion that stress often leads to a negative and aggressive attitude in class.

Question 2. Teachers stress often lead to unproductivity in schools.

Table 2. Teachers stress often lead to unproductivity in schools

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	13	10.0
Agree	82	63.1
Undecided	7	5.4
Disagree	20	15.4
Strongly Disagree	8	6.2
TOTAL	130	100

Source: field work 2023

From Table 2, 13 respondents (10.0 %) strongly agree that teachers' stress often leads to unproductivity in schools. 82 respondents (63.1%) agree that teachers' stress often leads to unproductivity in school. Less than 30% of the respondents disagree while 5.4 % were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondent thought that teachers' stress often leads to unproductivity in school.

Research Question 2. To what extent does school management implement procedures and competencies for regulating and decreasing stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Benin City?

Items in Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide respondents responses to research question two.

Table 3: When teachers are stressed out at school, they can talk to a counselor.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	4.6
Agree	4	3.1
Undecided	20	15.4
Disagree	32	24.7
Strongly disagree	68	52.3
Total	130	100

Source: field work 2023.

From Table 3, 6 respondents (4.6 %) of the respondents strongly agree that there is a counsellor they can talk to whenever they are stressed up in their school. 4 respondents (3.1%) also agree while 32 respondents (24.7%) disagree that there is a counselor in their school that teachers can talk to whenever they are stressed up. 68 respondents (52.3) strongly disagree that there are counsellors in their school that teachers can talk to whenever they are stressed up, while 20 respondents (15.4) were undecided.

Table 4 Our principal/school administrator is always concerned about our psychological state of mind

Response	Frequency	Percentage.
Strongly Agree	6	4.6
Agree	17	13.1
Undecided	7	5.4
Disagree	52	40.0
Strongly Disagree	48	37.0
TOTAL	130	100

Source: field work 2023

From the data, it can be assumed that the majority of respondents do not think that the principal/school administrator is always concerned about their psychological state of mind before or after class. While 6 people strongly agreed, 17 agreed, and 7 were undecided. The majority (52) disagreed and 48 strongly disagreed. This implies that the principal/school administrator is not always concerned about their psychological state of mind.

Table 5. There is high level of implementation of procedures put in place by school administrators to regulate and decrease stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Benin City.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	27	20.8
Agree	11	4.5
Undecided	5	3.8
Disagree	43	33.1
Strongly Disagree	44	33.8
TOTAL	130	100

Source: field work 2023

From the data, it appears that the majority of teachers in public secondary schools in the Benin metropolis do not believe that there is a high level of implementation of procedures put in place by school administrators to regulate and decrease stress. Specifically, 44 (33.8%) teachers strongly disagreed, 43 (33.1%) disagreed, and 27 (20.8%) strongly agreed. This suggests that the procedures put in place are not being effectively implemented, and teachers are still experiencing high levels of stress.

Discussion of Findings

It is imperative to state that the result from table one above implies that the majority of the respondent thought that stress often leads to a negative and aggressive attitude in class. This finding is in line with the findings of Manabete, et al (2016) who concluded that teachers' performance was negatively impacted by various stress-related contributing factors. Besides, their study also affirmed that there is a significant relationship between instructors' stress levels and their productivity. To them, stress lowers both individual and institutional productivity. This also collaborated with the opinion of the majority in table two above in which the respondents agreed that teachers' stress often leads to unproductivity in school.

Tables three and four reveal that the teachers have no access to a counsellor whenever they are stressed up and that the school administrators are not always concerned about their psychological state of mind. This agreed with the findings of Zedan and Bitar when they opined that ineffective stress management by administrators contributes to worse teaching quality (Zedan & Bitar, 2013). In addition, Muiga, et al (2016) strongly agreed that management's inability to manage teachers' stress has a significant impact on teachers' performance in public secondary schools.

Findings from Table five equally show that the procedures put in place by management are not being effectively implemented and that teachers are still experiencing high levels of stress. This corroborated the findings of Steinhardt, et al (2011), cited in Oguntimehin and Alaba (2017), which state that teachers' capacity to manage professional stress affects their ability to teach effectively and can result in burnout.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In most nations around the world, scholars and practitioners are now interested in teachers' stress. Although this study found that secondary school students in the Benin metropolis experience stress, it must be noted that such generalizations should be made with caution. The symptoms that are due to stress including irritability, anxiety, and depression, feelings of helplessness can be better understood if additional research is carried out, perhaps including physiological approaches to the measurement of stress levels. The high levels of stress that secondary school teachers encounter can increase their vulnerability to health issues, decrease their productivity, and have a considerable negative impact on both the teachers and the school, its students, and the state as a whole.

To help instructors manage their stress, secondary schools should start stress management programmes. This is because stress management is a component of workplace health promotion, particularly in schools. For this purpose, the following suggestions are made:

1. Teachers should endeavour to keep a sense of humour during difficult situations and adopt a positive attitude to life by thinking and speaking positively at all times.
2. Teachers should find their optimal stress level and effectively manage it by adopting effective stress management strategies.
3. Teachers should avoid engaging in life activities that will generate negative stress because prevention, they say, is better than cure.
4. Seminars and workshops should be organized regularly for teachers, to keep them abreast of modern trends in stress management healthy lifestyles and optimal performance.
5. Government and school administrators should endeavour to make conditions of service favourable for the teachers through regular payment of their salaries and allowances and other welfare packages. These will increase their enthusiasm to become more productive.
6. Attention being given to stress management by corporate organizations is on the increase, the education industry should not be left out. Findings reveal that stress has a direct relationship with teachers' productivity that invariably affects students' academic performance.

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