

Generation Stress Affecting Students' Interpersonal Skills at Higher Level

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Abstract

The research was designed to assess the level of stress and interpersonal skills of students at higher education level. Further to measure the effect of stress on students' interpersonal skills of young students. Research was of descriptive-correlational style. The population of the study was based on 9132 social sciences university students (session 2018). 724 students contributed in the data collection. Stress indicators assessment scale based on five sub scales (sleep, behavioral, emotional, personal and physical indicators) having 65 items and interpersonal skills assessment scale (60 items) were used to collect data. It was found that stress and interpersonal skills among young students were at moderate level. The study indicated that the stress effects negatively 31. 9% on the interpersonal skills. Further sleep disorder, behavior, Emotions, Physical and personal indicators had 9. 6%, 21. 7%, 25. 6%, 26. 3% and 21. 6% negative effect on students' interpersonal skills respectively. It is recommended for the educational institutions to encourage the social and community service programs to reduce stress and improve interpersonal skills among students.

Keywords: generation stress, interpersonal skills, sleep indicators, behavioral indicators, emotional indicators, personal indicators and physical indicators

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Introduction

“Generation Stress” is a term that is a topic of discussion now days with reference to the young generation. The young generation is considered as the asset of any nation. The nations need to focus on the youth if they want to excel in future. It has been observed worldwide that the youth are facing depression and anxiety more in comparison of past generation (Burwell, 2018). According to Burwell (2018) “the percentage of American college students receiving Psychotherapy is increased from 13 to 24% during the year 2007 to 2011”. He also reported that one out of four adults in United States is suffering from Anxiety. This is not the situation of United States only, the developing countries suffers more in this regard. The world is converted into a global village, so every new development, invention, and discovery is travelled to every part of the world quickly. However, this is not the whole picture. Due to this globalization the people not only share the beneficial things but the negative aspects also travel in the same way. This wave of globalization has increased the competition level for the youth. This wave of competition also increases the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Burwell (2018) also reported that there are three major causes of depression, stress and anxiety among students in United States. These causes are Safety, Economy and Social Media. These causes are not related to the students of United States. Students in other countries especially in developing countries face the same reasons. In context of Pakistan these causes are very obvious. Another mentioned cause of the stress is the rapid development and changes in social media. Students are disconnected from playgrounds and connected through media. The time they need to use in games and physical activities is given to the electronic gadgets. These activities create symptoms of stress. Extreme use of such media disturbs the sleep patterns, eating patterns and physical health.

Mental health care is one of the crucial but abandoned area in Pakistan. It is associated with many myths, assumptions and misconceptions in minds of people due to their ignorance. People take it usually as negative as a mental disorder. Instead of addressing it boldly, people prefer to hide mental sickness, which usually hits youth more than old aged lot. Adolescents become target of mental stress more easily due to lack of experience, maturity and ambitious nature. Therefore, people from 10-19 years age, face more mental issue and need for more preventive measures. According to Park (2004), mental challenges may encourage to find and adopt new strategies for dealing with maladaptive behaviours.

Here in Pakistan unfortunately we have faced multiple incidents of terrorism. Attack on Army Public School, Peshawar (16th, Dec, 2014) is one of the example in which 141 children died during the terrorist activity. This was not only an incident but a lifelong memory that affected the unlimited number of children, their parents and the common public. The children who survived faced the terror of that day and that terror would affect their memories and psychological stability. These types of incidents created a fear not only among students but among their parents. The unemployment rate in Pakistan is also a factor of fear among the youth of Pakistan. Students graduating from higher education institution are not sure about getting a reasonable job. This is an alarming situation. In this uncertain condition the student start finding job opportunities out of the country. This creates the reason for Brain drain. Here Brain drain is a situation in which the qualified graduates serve other countries for the sake of job opportunity instead of serving their own country. This situation of uncertainty create disappointment among the youth. This disappointment further leads to the disrespect to the society.

Keeping in view this situation as the burning issue the researchers decided to take this area for the exploration of the situation of youth in Pakistan. Pakistan being a developing country need to develop productive citizens. Citizens who can contribute in the progress of the country and develop it as a strong nation. We as a nation are in dire need to develop our youth. Thus, we need to assess the situation of our youth in Pakistan. Universities are the places where the youth can be easily accessed so the researchers decided to conduct this study on the higher-level students.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in many ways like it can trigger the minds of youth towards adopting effective strategies for stress management. It may also be helpful for changing mindset of people about negative connotation of mental health. In educational setup, study findings can contribute in policy making regarding discipline and motivation through presenting adolescents needs in a unique manner.

In light of the study, educational organizations can be converted more skilfully into a conducive place to learn through providing stress management opportunities. Parents even may be beneficiaries of the research for the sake of getting their children out of frustrated mental conditions towards a healthy lifestyle.

Curriculum designers may have support from such kind of studies while deciding content and adding concepts about stress management skills into the course content.

Statement of the Problem

Keeping in view the above discussion the researcher selected the area of generation stress. The study was designed to assess the stress level of young students, to assess the level of interpersonal skills of young students and to measure the effect of stress on interpersonal skills of young students. As mentioned before the youth is the asset of any generation, thus this study focuses on young students being victims of stress and how this stress affects the social / Interpersonal skills among them. The researcher analyzed the level of stress and interpersonal skills initially to have an overview of the situation. Then the analysis was extended to measure the effect of stress on the interpersonal skills of students. The indicators of stress focused in the study were sleep, behavior, emotions, physical and personal conditions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was based on two variables. The first variable was occupational stress and second was related to interpersonal skills. Conceptual framework of the study was based on the Interactional theory of occupational stress and interpersonal skills presented by the (Johns & Kinman, 2001). In this theory both variables of the study such as Occupational Stress Indicators and Interpersonal Skills were discussed. Interaction describes the association among the personal and environmental stress. This line describes that how interaction leads towards the clarification of stress. Further the concept of interactional theory was more elaborated by The Counseling Team International in (2018). They presented the comprehensive model of Occupational Stress Indicators which include five basic indicators were sleep, behavioral, emotional, physical and personal habits.

In the study of McCormick (2000) has found in the study that there is significant relationship between occupational stress and interpersonal skills among university teachers because the five occupational stress indicators (sleep, behavioral, emotional, physical and personal habits) were positively affected on interpersonal skills of the university teachers. While, the Interaction theory also explains how to create the associations and connections with other people. According to the views of (Goleman & Gardner, 2002) theories related to interpersonal relationships were facilitated to build the relations with others. Further the concept of this theory was more elaborated by the Pareek & Purohit. Interpersonal Skills indicators model was presented by Pareek & Purohit (2010) was selected as the conceptual framework of the study. It includes six dimensions that

were related to belonging, affiliation, extension, recognition, control and influence.

The teachers with good interpersonal skills are competent to deal with strain at workplace as well as in their relations (Spitzberg, 2013). It was originated that the stress symptoms include: panic, irritation, nervousness, anger and uneasiness are very common but the teachers who having superior interpersonal skills are managing with their stress appropriately at their workplaces.

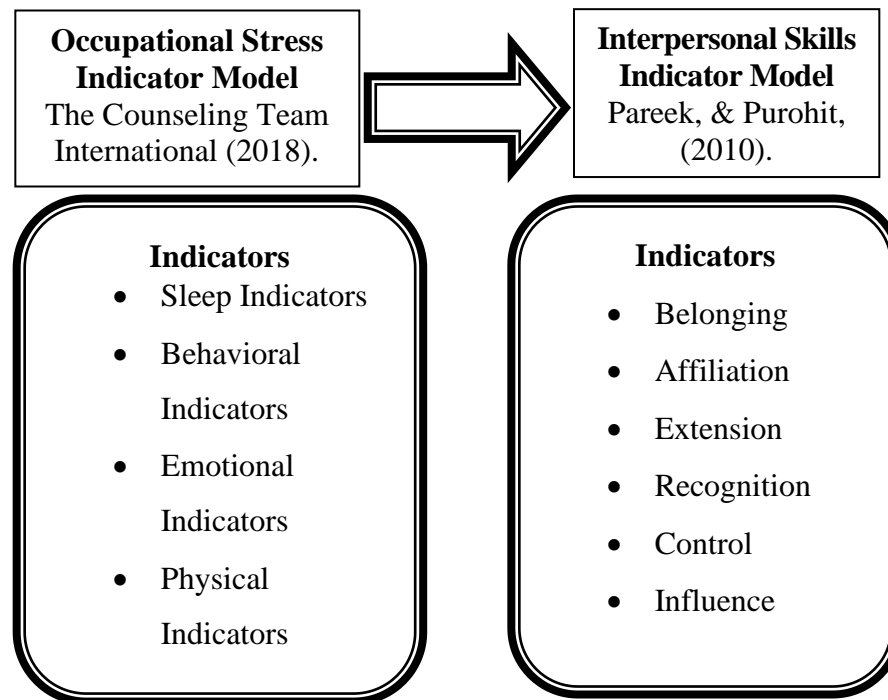


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the study

Research Objectives

The study was focused to

- i. Assess the stress level of young students.
- ii. Assess the level of interpersonal skills of young students.
- iii. Measure the effect of stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - a. Measure the effect of sleep indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - b. Measure the effect of behavioral indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.

- c. Measure the effect of emotional indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
- d. Measure the effect of physical indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
- e. Measure the effect of personal indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.

Null Hypotheses

- Ho1 There is statistically no considerable effect of stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - Ho1 a There is statistically no considerable effect of sleep indicator related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - Ho1 b There is statistically no considerable effect of behavioral indicators of stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - Ho1 c There is statistically no considerable effect of emotional indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - Ho1 d There is statistically no considerable effect of physical indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.
 - Ho1 e There is statistically no considerable effect of personal indicators related to stress on interpersonal skills of young students.

Literature Review

Stress is one of the most common issues being faced by the young generation. Today's life is the life of technology and electronic gadgets. Young generation is connected with the technology more instead of being connected with the people (Brown, 2005). Peer groups prefer to get connected through the use of social media instead of spending time with each other personally or physically (Arnett, 2008). This kind of living style is creating gaps between the individuals and effecting on their interpersonal behavior. The social and economic pressures are also affecting the human behavior. Due to such pressures the today's generation is more stressful as compared to the past one. People have less time for refreshment activities and they are continuously busy in fulfilling their official and professional responsibilities (Keating, 2016). Financial

pressures also cause stresses among the young generation (Kelly & Bridges, 2005).

The young generation is the future of any nation. The nations need to invest on the young people so in this way the stress especially among the young generation can be highly dangerous. The generation confronting the issues related to stress can be distracted towards the antisocial activities that can be harmful for the future of the nation (Keating, 2016). In the larger interest of the nation the society need to plays its role to provide a peaceful environment to the children so that they would have happy and satisfied life and personality. Such personalities can contribute to the national growth and development (Proulx, 2003). The ratio of young people indulging in the anti-social activities is increasing day by day in the developed countries even. The advancement of technology has not only provided us the better facilities but also has some negative effects as well on the children (Pettenger, Miller & Mott, 2004). They have easy access to the media and internet where they can explore some activities that are not healthy and in the interest of the nation. This also developed a gap between the parents and children. Having less interactive time from the parents can also lead the students to indulge in such activities that are harmful for them (Rasmussen, Aber, & Bhana, 2004).

The young generation is observed more stressful as compared to past. That is quite an alarming situation. The stress symptoms in young age also affect the future life of the individual (Pettenger, Miller & Mott, 2004). The generation we are producing today will serve as employees in different organizations in near future. If not groomed properly this generation stress would travel to the professional life as well. One of such stress is known as Occupational stress. Occupational stress refers to the stress created or caused at workplace due to the pressure of multiple factors such as work load, coworker support, supervision, work environment etc Rasmussen, Aber, & Bhana, 2004).

People select occupation for the survival of their life in a better way. The earning source is one of the most important factors in human satisfaction. Uncertainty in having a secured occupation creates a mental and psychological pressure on human mind (Keating, 2017). That is why the work place is the most important place for the employees. Employees in any organization have to spend a major part of their day time at work place. The peaceful and satisfactory environment at work place helps the individual to work with more motivation and dedication. Stress directly affects the health conditions (Keating, 2016). It causes sleep disturbance, behavioral issues, emotional disturbance, physical disturbance and personal habits. Gradually it effects the working efficiency of the employees.

Luthy & Deck (2007) reports that the ratio of stress is higher among young generation and to save the future of any country we need to build a strong generation. This strength comes with the peace of mind and soul. The adults usually tell to the young people that the young age is the best age of the life as it is free of worries and pains. However every age has its own issues and causes of stress (Rasmussen, Aber, & 2004). The thing that matters to one age group may not matter to the other age group (Morgan, 1997). This does not mean that that thing or issue is not considerable. Every age has its own colors. The young people are needier to provide ethical and moral support to learn the art of life. While not paying full attention to the needs of the young generation may cause stress and anxiety. Youth is the assist of the country and we need to keep care of this assist. Dealing with care, listening their problems and spending time with them can give wonderful results (Proulx, 2003).

Methodology

Research Approach

The quantitative research approach was used for the purpose of conducting the study. The data was based on numerical responses that were operationalized by using statistical Analysis. The data was analyzed by objective view from the point of view of the respondents. The nature of the research objectives and hypothesis demanded the quantitative approach to be followed.

Research Method

By method the research was of descriptive and correlational style. As the research topic was dealing with the current daily life issues and the researcher was interested to measure the effect of mental health crisis on student's interpersonal skills, so the descriptive-correlational research method was adopted to conduct the study.

Population

The population of the study was based on 9132 social sciences students' enrolled at (session 2018) higher level universities of Islamabad.

Sample

The sample of the study was selected by using disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. 10% of the population was selected as sample for the conduct at research that was consisted of 913 students. All 913 students were given the questionnaire while 724 students (male=342, female= 382) returned with complete response.

Data Collection Tool

Two sets of scales were adopted for the purpose of data collection. One was used to assess the stress indicators that was based on further five sub scales that were sleep, behavioral, emotional, personal and physical indicators having 65 items. The second set was based on the assessment of interpersonal skills of the students. It was consisted of 60 items.

Table 1
Reliability analysis (n=724)

Variable	Sub variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability
Stress Indicator Assessment Scale		65	.904
	Sleep Dimension	05	.620
	Behavioral Dimension	10	.608
	Emotional Dimension	21	.712
	Physical Dimension	20	.798
	Personal Dimension	09	.607
Interpersonal Skills Inventory		60	.808

Table 1 explains the reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of research tool. The table shows that stress indicator assessment scale was found reliable at .904 while its sub scales that were sleep, behavior, Emotional, Physical and personal dimension were also found reliable at .620, .713, .798, and .607 respectively. Interpersonal skills inventory was also found reliable at .808. Thus, both scale were good example to because to research.

Table 2
Intersection correlation of stress indicator assessment scale (SIAS) (n=724)

	Sleep	Behavior	Emotional	Physical	Personal	SIAS
Sleep	1					
Behavior	.530**	1				
Emotional	.483**	.662**	1			
Physical	.506**	.695**	.745**	1		
Personal	.381**	.553**	.542**	.627**	1	
SIAS	.640**	.830**	.889**	.922**	.729**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 displays the intersection correlation between the sub scales of stress indicator assessment scale (SIAS). There were five sub scales

(sleep, Behavioral, Emotional, Physical and personal indicators of stress). The highest score was found between physical indicators of stress and SIAS (.922**). While the lowest correlation was found between sub scale related to the sleep indicators and personal indicators (.381**). All the sections were statistically significantly correlated with each other.

Data Collection

Data was collected by the researchers personally. It took almost five months to collect the data from the students. The researcher contacted the students personally, for the assistance one faculty members from each department was requested to allow students to fill the questionnaires in the last ten mints of the class. In this way the teachers also contributed in the process of data collection.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by using statistical analysis and thus the findings were drawn and recommendations were made.

The following table explains the statistical tests used in relation to the research objectives.

Table 3
Statistical Analysis Description

Sr No.	Objectives	Hypothesis	Statistical Analysis
1	Assess the stress level of young students.		Individual score
2	Assess the level of interpersonal skills of young students.		Individual score
3	Measure the effect of stress on interpersonal skills of young students.	Ho 1 Ho 1a to Ho 1e	Regression analysis

Tables and Results

Table 4
Level of stress (n=724)

Sr No	Level of stress	Score	N	%
1	Low	65-151	24	3.31
2	Moderate	152-238	452	62.43
3	High	239-325	248	34.25

Table 4 describes the level of stress. Majority of the respondents had moderate level of stress as they scored from 152 to 238 score.

Table 5

Level of interpersonal skills (n=724)

Sr No	Level of stress	Score	N	%
1	Low	60-140	3	0.41
2	Moderate	141-221	650	89.77
3	High	122-300	71	9.80

Table 5 explains the level of Interpersonal skills of student's studying at higher level. Majority (89.77 %) of the students had moderate level of interpersonal skills.

Table 6

Effect of students' stress on Interpersonal skills (n=724)

R ²	β	t	Sig.
.319	-0.347	18.37	.00

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Independent variable: Stress

Dependent variable: Interpersonal skills.

Table 6 shows that the independent variable (stress) had 31.9% ($R^2 = .319$) effect on dependent variable (interpersonal skills) while this effect was negative and statistically significant (sig. = 0.00) ($\beta = -0.347$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1 is failed to be accepted.

Table 7

Effect of indicators of stress on Interpersonal Skills (n=724)

Sr No	R ²	β	t	Sig.
a.	.096	-1.52	8.74	0.00
b.	.217	-1.47	14.12	0.00
c.	.256	-0.929	15.77	0.00
d.	.263	-0.837	16.06	0.00
e.	.216	-1.82	14.09	0.00

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Independent variable:

- a. Sleep Indicators.
- b. Behavioral Indicators.
- c. Emotional indicators.
- d. Physical Indicators.

e. Personal Indicators.

Dependent variable: Interpersonal Skills.

Table 7 shows that the independent variable (sleep indicators of stress) had 9.6% ($R^2 = .096$) effect on dependent variable while this effect was negative and statistically considerable (sig.=0.00) ($\beta=-1.52$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1a is failed to be accepted.

Table 7 further shows that the independent variable (behavioral indicators of stress) had 21.7% ($R^2 = .217$) effect on dependent variable while this effect was negative and statistically considerable (sig. =0.00) ($\beta=-1.47$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1b is failed to be accepted.

The independent variable (emotional indicators of stress) had 25.6% ($R^2=.256$) effect on dependent variable while this effect was negative and statistically considerable (sig. =0.00) ($\beta=-0.929$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1c is failed to be accepted.

The independent variable (physical indicators of stress) had 26.3% ($R^2 = .263$) effect on dependent variable while this effect was negative and statistically considerable (sig. =0.00) ($\beta=-0.837$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1d is failed to be accepted.

The independent variable (personal indicators of stress) had 21.6% ($R^2 = .21$) effect on dependent variable while this effect was negative and statistically considerable (sig. =0.00) ($\beta=-1.82$) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis no. 1e is failed to be accepted.

Discussion

Human life is getting complicated day by day with the advancement of technology and this effects the human interactions (Arnett, 2006a). Roemmich, Gurgol, & Epstein (2003) reports that technology on one hand connects the people throughout the world, while at the same time it creates gaps between the people. The young generation all over the world is facing issues of stress and depression. The busy life pattern of parents and disconnection with the family creates a sense of insecurity. Many studies shows that that the children at high school are having sleep disorders that also effects their Physical health (Rasmussen, Aber, & Bhana, 2004). Here in the present study it has been found that stress among young students was at moderate level. That shows that our young generation is facing stress at moderate level and if we will not take any pro active action. It would increase to certain dangerous level.

The study also indicates that the stress also effect 31. 9% on the interpersonal skills of the young generation. Further sleep disorder effects 9. 6%, behavior indicators effects 21. 7%, Emotional indicators effects 25. 6%, Physical indicators effects 26. 3% and personal indicator of stress had 21. 6% effect on students' interpersonal skills of students. This is not the situation of Pakistan only, young generation all over the world is facing multiple problems and that is why the educational institutions are seriously concerned with the opening of student counseling cells. Youth is the most important part of population in any country. The social issue like drugs, violence etc is increasing any youth day by day (Brown, 2005).

Singh (2014) reported that the young generation in India is also indulging in the antisocial activities. Wilson (2005) recommended that the schools and teachers can play a vital role in the development of the nation. Burwell (2018) said that the young generation need to be involved in social activities so that their energies may be utilized in the positive direction. The youth of any generation can bring the revolutionary change in the development of the country (Serpell, 1993).

Economists often argue that "A youth bulge can either become a demographic dividend or a time bomb, depending on how young population is engaged in productive activities" (Hafeez, 2017). In national context, it is considered as a time bomb due to the lack of socio-economic opportunities and youth empowerment at the grass root level. It is assumed by Farooq, Idress, & Tariq (2014) that the alarming illiteracy rate, job scarcity, stagnant economy and political instability often divert the young generation towards extremism, violence, street crimes and anti-state activities. According to Lin (2012) unemployed lot of young cohort may become a high risk for social security due to their frustrated and disappointed mindsets. This young cohort is further designated with two types with reference to their age brackets like 20 to 24 years and other one is under 15 years old as per population census (2017). As mentioned in UN Population Fund report published in 2016-17 that in Pakistan youth is 63% of total population. This is dire need of the time to focus and address their needs and potential towards right and positive directions.

For the sake of increasing access to higher education, universities and degree awarding institutes are facilitated much by Higher education Commission claimed by Pakistan Economic survey (2016-17). In this regard,HEC target to give PhD degree has been doubled (156 to 300 degree holders) almost till 2025. Bright side of the picture is HEC has taken an initiative to make higher education grees compatible with social and industrial needs, through which unemployment issue can be addressed effectively. Secondly internship schemes have been launched by HEC aiming at mutual collaboration between young talented people and

industry. For actualization of the dream Lahore University of Management Sciences, Institute of Business and Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute have started working on it.

Conclusions

It was found that stress and interpersonal skills among young students were at moderate level. That actually shows that the students need training and assistance to reduce the stress and to improve the interpersonal skills to survive in the society.

The study further indicated that the stress effect 31.9% on the interpersonal skills. Further if we see the effect of each stress indicator separately. The sleep disorder, behavior, Emotions, Physical and personal indicators had 9.6%, 21.7%, 25.6%, 26.3% and 21.6% negative effect on students' interpersonal skills respectively. All indicators were having reverse effect on the interpersonal skills of the students. That clearly shows that if we want to make our future generation strong we need to work on developing stress free environment for the students.

Limitations

These research constrictions faced by the researcher throughout in the research procedure due to lack of the resources.

1. The present research focuses only on university students of social sciences departments. Further researches may be conducted to measure stress, and interpersonal skills among students of other departments and levels. The researcher could not cover the social and family environment that can also cause the stress among the students and can affect the interpersonal skills.

Recommendations

It is recommended for the educational institutions to encourage the social and community service programs. It needs to be compulsory for the students to conduct at least one social service project. It would contribute in the development of the society. The students need to be trained with the healthy life styles. Such as the eating habits, sleeping habits etc. for this purpose the teachers may organize the training sessions on monthly basis.

The students need to be aware with the stress reducing activities. In this regard the school and universities need to arrange get-togethers, discussions, games, sports, art and crafts competitions etc. The teachers

need to assign the projects that encourage the group work to develop interpersonal skills of the students. Teachers need to be a role model for the students to learn about good manner. There is a need of orientation session for the students based on the ethical and moral behavior that is the identity of the educated person.

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