

HEAD TEACHERS' AND PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD-FRIENDLY
ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS AS PREDICTORS OF PUPILS'
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA
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HEAD TEACHERS' AND PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS AS PREDICTORS OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated head teachers' and pupils' perceptions of child-friendly environmental status as it predicts pupils' academic achievement in Oyo state, Nigeria. Three research questions and four hypotheses guided the research. The study adopted correlational research design and multistage sampling procedure was used to select 300 pupils and 30 head teachers from six local government areas of the state. Four validated research Instruments-Head Teacher's Opinion on the Realization of Child's Right by the Teacher (HTORCRT), Child's Opinion on Teacher-Child Relationship (COTCR), Observation Tool on Child-Friendly Environmental Status (OTCES) and Pupils Academic Achievement Format (PAAF) were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Regression analysis and t-test. The result revealed that there is a significant relationship between pupils' academic achievement and child friendly environment ($r=.74$; $p<.05$). Head-teachers' and pupils' perceptions of child-friendly environment have significant joint contribution to pupils' academic achievement ($R=.272$, $R^2=.074$, $F_{(3,326)}=7.882$) while head-teachers' perception ($B=.254$, $t=4.512$, $p<.05$) and child-friendly environmental status ($B=.123$, $t=2.18$, $p<.05$) have significant relative contribution to pupils' academic achievement, the pupils' perception did not ($B=.042$, $t=.746$, $p>.05$). It was equally discovered that a good number of schools studied lack some good components of child friendliness like library, good toilet and good water supply. It is therefore recommended that government should provide more adequate toilet, library and conducive environment to make public schools friendly in Oyo State.

Keywords: Child-friendly environment, Head teachers' perception, Pupils' academic achievement.

Introduction

Education is a vital tool for national development. It is a process by which every member of the society is developed so as to become a responsible individual that will contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. In the teaching and learning process of education (most especially in a formal school system), an all important factor has been identified by different scholars to have great influence in the effectiveness of the process-the environment (Omotere, 2013; Aneke & Akpusugh, 2022). It can make or mar the process of education. The school environment, which include the classroom, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, teachers' quality, school management, teaching methods, peer factors and others are variation that affect students' academic achievement (Fayose, 2016; Maxwell, 2017; Edgerton & Mckechnie, 2023). The school environment is an important area that should be studied and well managed to enhance pupils' academic performance. The extent to which the pupils learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities, accessories, effectiveness and efficiency of the teacher (Muhammad & Almuntaqo 2016).

According to Abdullahi, Clement, & Sunusi, (2017), the specific roles for teachers of child friendly school include:- Making the class conducive to all learners; Maintaining updating health records of all learners; Ensuring a well-ventilated classroom, ensuring child-centered approach through teaching and learning and taking into consideration learning needs of the child. Environment is an inclusive term that incorporates all internal and external condition that affect the effectiveness of any given process (teaching and learning in this case), the environmental condition in which a child is exposed to, determines to a large extent overall

development of such child (Orlu, 2013). A lot of scholars like Puyate, (2016), Awe (2020), Bappah (2021) Thomas and Amaechi (2019) have stressed the sensitivity of the environment on the effectiveness of teaching and learning process of a child. Some of the foremost educational philosophers like Johann Friedrich Frobel (1782-1852), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and many other child educational philosophers made precise recommendations on the conduciveness of environment for effective teaching and learning process of a child (Owojori & Ojedokun 2013; Thomas & Amaechi 2019; Jarroslaw, 2020)

According to UNESCO 2001 in Somariah (2021), a child-friendly school (CFS) ensures quality education and positive learning for the child which promotes positive environment and quality education are the main traits of CFSs. Based on previous comparative research conducted in CFSs and conventional schools, the study found that CFSs have a better learning environment and academic achievement than conventional schools. The influence of learning environment on the academic performance of secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis by Aneke and Akpusugh (2022) adopted a descriptive survey design, randomly sampled 399 students, collected data using a validated questionnaire, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, the results revealed that adequate provision of infrastructures make students learn well which invariably increase their academic achievement. The study therefore concluded that learning environment influences students' performance.

Edgerton and Mckechnie (2023) studied the relationship between student's perception of school environment and academic achievement, adopted a correlational design, sampled 441 SS students in five secondary schools in Scotland, collected data using validated questionnaire. The regression analysis of the data revealed that students' subjective perceptions of their physical school environment significantly related with their academic achievement and that the relationship between the students' subjective perception of the environment and their academic achievement is mediated by in-school behavior and environmental difficulty.

Statement of the problem

Research findings and different statistical provisions revealed that there is depletion in the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools in external examinations. This decline in pupils' academic achievement has been attributed to a number of factors. These factors are encapsulated in the teaching and learning in which the pedagogical process is carried out, these determine to a great extent the achievement of pupils. Research reports equally found out that many public primary schools in Nigeria are still functioning below standard. Most of them are not child friendly enough. Although, these are different developmental, initiatives to improve the standard of education in the country especially the introduction of the Child Friendly School (CFS) by UNESCO, some schools are still not moving with the pace of development. Owing to the seriousness and emphasis placed on the conduciveness of children's learning environment, it is imperative to make critical, objective and progressive evaluation of the status of schools' child-friendliness and environmental condition in which pupils in Oyo State are learning. Much work had not been done in this area, hence this work will go a long way to sensitize the stakeholders to the need for implementing child-friendly standard.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims at making value judgement on the extent to which public primary schools in Oyo State are child friendly based on characteristics and standard of a child friendly school. The specific objectives are to:

- i) investigate the head teachers' and pupils' perceptions of child-friendly environment,
- ii) ascertain the correlation between the level of child friendliness of schools (public primary) and pupils' academic achievement in Oyo State,
- iii) predict the relative and composite contributions of the head teachers' and pupils' perceptions of child-friendly environment to pupils' academic achievement in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of the study:

- i. What is the teacher-child relationship in the school?
- ii. What are the facilities, building classroom and equipment available in the school?
- iii. How hygienic, health conscious and safety is the environment?

Hypotheses

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

- H₀1:** There is no significant relationship between pupils' perception, teachers' perception, child environmental friendliness and pupils' academic achievement;
- H₀2:** There is no significant relative contribution of pupils' perception, teachers' perception, and child environmental friendliness status to pupils' academic achievement;
- H₀3:** There is no significant composite contribution of pupils' perception, teachers' perception and child environmental friendliness status to pupils' academic achievement;
- H₀4:** There is no significant difference between non-child friendly schools and child friendly schools in their pupils' academic achievement.

Methodology

A correlational survey design which deals with the relationships between variables was adopted for the study. This design was considered effective for the present research as all the variables of the study were available at the field without any manipulation. All the 2,394 primary schools in the 33 local government area of Oyo state, their head teachers and their respective pupils in primary six constituted the population of the study. Multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. The sample was drawn from the three senatorial districts of Oyo State- Oyo North, Oyo South and Oyo Central. Using stratified random sampling technique, 3 local government area (LGA) from Oyo North: Iseyin, Atigbo and Itesiwaju Local Government Area; 2 LGA from Oyo Central; Afijio and Oyo East LGA and one L.G.A from Oyo South; Ibarapa East L.G.A were selected for the study. From each of

the six Local Government Areas, five(s) public primary schools were randomly selected making a total of thirty (30) schools from the state. Primary 6 pupils were purposively selected, simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 primary six pupils from each school with their respective head teachers. In other words, six Local Government Areas, 30 schools, 30 head teachers and 300 pupils were randomly selected for the study with which generalization was made to the whole state.

Four research instruments were designed and administered for the study. These are: Head Teachers Opinion on the Realization of Child's Right by the Teacher (HTORCRT); Child's Opinion on Teacher Child Relationship (COTCR); Observation tool and Pupils Academic Achievement Format (PAAF). The HTORCRT is a self-constructed and validated 20-item questionnaire with two section A and B. Section A obtained information about the name of the school, L.G.A and gender. Section B contains twenty questionnaire items using the Likert scale: SA, A, D and SD with scores of 4, 3, 2, 1 for positively worded items and the reverse for the negative items. It obtains the opinion of the head teachers on the realization of child's right by the teacher and the school environment and facilities. The COTCR is an eight-item questionnaire with two sections A and B designed for the pupils. B obtained the opinion of the pupils on the relationship they enjoy with their teachers. Section A obtains information about the name of school, local government area and gender. The observation tool (Rating scale) was used by the researcher to rate the extent to which educational facilities- buildings, equipment was available and how hygienic, health conscious and safe the school were. The pupil's academic achievement format was also to collect the primary six pupils' previous cumulative result in the previous three consecutive academic sessions. Moreover, the instruments were gathered and carefully assembled in a special file meant for the data collection. All the instruments were given to the experts in the field of early childhood education for critique and scrutiny. Their comments were incorporated in the final draft of the instruments to ensure their content, construct and face validity. Head Teachers Opinion on the Realization of the Child's Right by the Teacher (HTORCRT) was administered on five (5) head

teacher outside the state of taking Samples-Osun State. Their responses were coded and subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability measure which yielded a value of 0.83. Child's opinion on teacher-child relationship was administered to forty pupils in primary six in the same Osun State; their responses were coded and subjected to Cronbach's alpha statistical tool which yielded a value of 0.78. Interrater reliability distribution measurement of Scot Pi was used to rate the observation tool by observer of the trait tested schools outside the sample of the Study- Osun State. The scale yielded a value of 0.71 signaling high reliability of the instrument. Pupils Academic Achievement Format (PAAF) was used to record 40 pupils 3 consecutive sections

cumulative grade point and their scores were subjected to Kuder-Richardson-21 which yielded 0.73.

Thirty HTORCART and 300 COTCR were distributed to the head teachers and pupils respectively. The instruments were instantly returned by the respondents to the researchers for further analysis. The research assistants made observation of the school infrastructures and the environmental friendliness using the observation tool while they both extracted the three consecutive sections of the academic performance of the pupils selected using PAAF. Their co-operations were highly appreciated. The data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages for socio demographic

Results

The data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages for socio-demographic variables while Pearson Product Moment Correlation, regression analysis and t-test were used to test the set hypotheses.

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Pupils distribution by gender		
Male	150	50.00
Female	150	50.00
Total	300	100.00
Head teacher's distribution by gender		
Male	10	16.67
Female	20	16.67
Total	30	100.00
Pupils distribution by Local Government Area		
Afijio	50	16.67
Atigbo	50	16.67
Ibarapa	50	16.67
Itesiwaju	50	16.67
Iseyin	50	16.67
Oyo East	50	16.67
Total	300	100.00
Head teachers distribution by Local Government Area		
Afijio	5	16.67
Atigbo	5	16.67
Ibarapa	5	16.67
Itesiwaju	5	16.67
Iseyin	5	16.67
Oyo East	5	16.67
Total	30	100.00

From Table 1, one hundred and fifty (50%) were male respondent, while the remaining one hundred and fifty (50%) were female. There is gender balance in the distribution. From Table 1, there are ten male head teachers (33.33%) and twenty female head teachers (66.66%) respondents. Therefore, there are more female head teachers than the male teachers. There are six Local Government areas used and from each of the local government, fifty pupils were selected

(16.67%) from all the six local government area making three hundred respondents altogether. There is balance in the distribution of the respondents throughout the local government areas. Also, from the Table 1, the head teachers' respondents were five (16.67%) in each of the six local government areas (100%). We have balanced number of head teacher in all the local government area sampled.

Answer to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the teacher-child relationship in the school?

Table 2: Childs' Opinion on Teacher-Child Relationship.

S/N	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	I like my class teacher when teaching	220(73.33)	30 (10.00)	20 (6.69)	30 (10.00)
2.	My teacher is approachable, sociable, accommodating and friendly to me	211 (70.33)	29 (9.67)	32 (10.62)	28 (9.33)
3.	My teacher always want me to pay attention in class	210(67.00)	51 (17.00)	22 (7.33)	26 (8.67)
4.	My teacher is wicked	52 (17.33)	10 (3.33)	38 (11.67)	203 (67.67)
5.	My teacher allows me to participate actively in class	198 (66.00)	48 (16.00)	23(7.67)	31 (10.33)
6.	I am encouraged by my teacher to work with other pupils	150 (50.00)	80 (26.67)	20 (6.67)	50 (16.67)
7.	My teacher's voice, morale and approaches are friendly	200 (66.67)	30 (10.00)	40 (13.33)	30 (10.00)
8.	I am free to express my feeling to my teachers	170 (56.67)	48 (16.00)	50 (16.67)	32 (10.67)
Grand Mean = 2.96					

From the Table 2, two hundred and fifty (83.33%) agreed that they like their teacher when teaching while the remaining fifty (16.67%) disagreed with the assertion. Two hundred and fifty (80%) agreed with the statement that their teachers are sociable, approachable, accommodating and friendly to them while the remaining sixty (20%) disagreed with the statement. Two hundred and fifty-two (84%) agreed with the statement that their teacher always want them to pay attention in class while the remaining fifty-eight (16.00%) disagreed with the statement. Sixty-two (20.66%) agreed with the statement that the teacher is wicked, while to hundred and thirty-eight (79.34%) disagreed with the statement. Two hundred and forty-six (82%) agreed with the

statement that their teacher allows them to participate actively in class while the remaining fifty-four (18%) disagreed with the statement. Two hundred and thirty (76.67) agreed with the statement that they are encouraged by their teacher to work with other pupils, while seventy (23.34%) disagreed with the statement. Two hundred and thirty (76.67%) agreed with the statement that their teacher's voice, morale and approaches are friendly while seventy (23.33%) disagreed with the statement. Two hundred and eighteen (72.67%) agreed with the statement that I am free to express my feelings to my teacher, while eighty-two (27.34%) disagreed with the statement. Therefore, the teacher child relationship is cordial in the school.

Research Question 2: What are the facilities, buildings and equipment available in the school?**Table 3: Distribution of available facilities in school**

S/N	Facilities	Numbers of schools available	Percentage %	Numbers of schools not available	Percentage %
1.	Toilet	10	33.33	20	66.67
2.	Library	6	20.00	24	80.00
3.	Building and classroom	29	96.67	1	3.33
4.	Outdoor spaces	21	70.00	9	30.00
5.	Laboratory	9	30.00	21	70.00
6.	Water	8	26.67	22	73.33

From Table 3, ten (33.33%) have good toilet while the remaining twenty (66.67%) lack good toilet. Six (20%) schools have school library with recent books and furniture while twenty-four (80%) lack good library. Buildings and adequate classroom, twenty-nine (96.67%) of the thirty school have adequate classrooms while only one (3.33%) school lack adequate classroom. Twenty-one (70%) have adequate and good outdoor spaces while nine (30%) lack adequate outdoor spaces. Nine (30%) schools have well

equipped laboratory while twenty-one (70%) lack good science laboratory. Eight (26.67%) have portable water supply while twenty-one (73.33%) lack portable water supply. Therefore, ten out of 30 schools have toilet, only six out of 30 schools have adequate library, 29 schools out of 30 schools have enough buildings and classrooms, twenty-one schools have adequate outdoor spaces, nine schools have laboratory and equipment, 8 schools out of 30 schools have portable water supply.

Research Question 3: How hygienic, health conscious and safe is the school environment?**Table 4: Distributions of numbers of schools with hygienic health conscious and safe school environment**

Health facilities	Numbers of schools available	% of schools available	Numbers of schools not available	% of schools not available
Hygienic area for food vendor	22	73.33	8	26.67
Health clinic/first aid treatment	26	86.67	4	13.33
School environment safety	22	73.33	8	26.67

Table 4 reveals that hygienic areas for vendors were provided in twenty-two (73.33%) schools while eight (26.67%) schools lack such opportunity. Twenty-six schools have provision for health clinic/first aid equipment while four

(13.33%) lack such equipment. Twenty-two (73.33%) schools have a safe school environment free from intruder and noise while eight (26.67%) lack such safe school environment.

Hypotheses Testing

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between pupils' perception, teachers' perception, child environmental friendliness and pupils' academic achievement

Table 5: Pearson product moment correlation of the pupils' perception, teachers' perception, child environmental friendliness and pupils' academic achievement

Variables	Pupils' Perception	Teachers' Perception	School Childfriendly environmental	Pupils' Academic Achievement
Pupils' Perception				
r	1			
Sig.				
N	300			
Teacher' Perception				
r	0.52			
Sig.	.019			
N	330			
School Child-friendly environment Observation				
r	0.74	0.27	1	
Sig.	.007	.046		
N	330	30	30	
Pupils academic achievement				
	0.69	0.31	0.64	1
Sig.	.002	.009	.029	
N	300	330	330	300

Table 5 revealed that the relationship between pupils' perception and pupils' academic achievement is high, positive and significant ($r = 0.69$, $n=300$; $p<0.05$); teachers' perception and pupils' academic achievement is low, positive and significant ($r= 0.31$, $n=330$; $p<0.05$); likewise, school child friendly environmental observation and pupils' academic achievement is significant (r

$= 0.64$, $n=330$; $p<0.05$). Therefore, H_{01} is not accepted.

H_{02} : There is no significant relative contribution of pupils' perception, teachers' perception, and child environmental friendliness status to pupils' academic achievement.

Table 6: Regression analysis of relative contribution of pupils' perception, teachers' perception, and child environmental friendliness status to pupils' academic achievement.

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t.	Sig.
	Beta	Std-error	Beta		
Constant	561.701	79.595		7.060	.000
Head teacher's opinion		.864	.254	4.512	.000
Child's opinion	1.356	1.817	.042	.746	.461
Child friendly observation status	2.325	0.065	.231	2.183	.030

From Table 6, there are significant relative contributions of head teachers' opinion ($\beta=.254$, $t=4.512$, $p<.05$) and child friendly observation status ($\beta=.231$, $t=2,183$, $p<.05$) to pupils'

academic achievement. Whereas child's opinion ($\beta=.042$, $t=.746$, $p>.05$) did not significantly contribute to their academic achievement in schools.

Ho3: There is no significant composite contribution of pupil's perception, teacher's perception, and child environmental friendliness status to pupil's academic achievement.

Table 7: Regression analysis of composite contribution of pupils' perception, teachers' perceptions and child environmental friendliness status to pupils' academic achievement.

Model 1	R .272	R square	Adjusted R square		Std error 150.252	
Model	SS		Df	Ms	F	P
Regression	533.833.074		3	177944.358	7.882	.000
Residual	8.036.982.664		256	22575.794		
Total	8.570.815.738		359			

a. Dependent variable: Pupils academic achievement.

Table 7 indicated that the composite contribution of Head teachers' opinion, child's opinions and child friendly environment observation status to pupils' academic achievement is 0.272 (27.2%), other factors outside the pupils', head teachers' opinions and environmental friendliness status accounted for the remaining 72.8% of the pupils'

academic achievement in Oyo state. This contribution is significant [$f_{(3,356)} = 7.882$, $p<0.05$]. Therefore, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant composite contribution of pupils' perception, teacher perception and child environmental friendliness observation status to pupils' academic achievement was not accepted.

Ho4: There is no significant difference between non-child friendly schools and child friendly schools in their pupils' academic achievement.

Table 8: T-test analysis of difference between non-child friendly schools and child friendly schools in their pupils' academic achievement.

Child environmental friendliness	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.	Remarks
Friendly environment	22	48.910	9.443	28	11.052	0.016	*S
Unfriendly environment	8	17.132	15.721				

Table 8 shows that the difference between child's friendly and non-child friendly schools is significant ($t = 11.052$, $df = 28$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H_04 was not accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of the research, the teacher child relationship is cordial in the school meaning that the teachers build and sustain intimacy, cordial interactivity and engagement with the pupils in the schools that can easily foster adequate teaching and learning, this can be the major reason for the pupils' improved academic achievement. Majority of the sampled schools had inadequate functional toilets, library and laboratory, inadequate water supply, although majority of the sampled schools had enough classrooms and buildings for teaching and learning, also, many of the schools had

outdoor spaces for the pupils' extracurricular activities and exercises, the inadequacy of the toilets, library, laboratory and water supply in the sampled schools need urgent attention. It was also revealed that majority of the sampled schools had hygienic food vendor and safety cum first aid services. This result is in support of Sunday (2012) that the students with adequate laboratory, facilities in sciences better than those in schools with less or without facilities, this simply because laboratory forms part of enrichment of the physical school environment. It is also discovered that poor facilities and inadequate space as well as arrangement of items

including seats in the classroom, library and laboratory would affect the organization of learning environment. Favorable school climate gives room for pupils to work hard and enhance their academic achievement. Also with that of Child Friendly School (CFS) manual (2008), while Ndukwe (2002) on the other hand asserted that many of the primary school have no adequate games and recreational facilities this might have alluded to the reasons why the pupils in Oyo state are yet to attain optimum academic achievement in schools.

From the tested hypotheses, it was realized that the relationship between school child environment and pupils' academic achievement is significant. This means that school child environment whether favorable or unfavorable can influence the pupils' academic achievement. This is in line with Orlu, (2013), that reported a significant school environment influence on pupils' academic achievement. Similar reports were acknowledged by Orlu, (2013), Fayose (2016), Thomas and Amaechi (2019), Aneke and Akpusugh (2022), Edgerton and Mckechnie (2023) that child environmental status have significant impacts on pupils' academic achievement in schools. Additionally, from the study, it was identified that the teacher had significant role to play in the pupils' academic achievement. The teacher influences the performance of the pupils and he or she can either make or mar their performance. This is in agreement with the finding of Abdullahi, Clement, & Sunusi, (2017) who maintained that teachers' characteristics and pupils' academic achievement have positive and significant relationship.

Furthermore, there is no significant difference between non-child friendly schools and child friendly schools in their pupils' academic achievement. The friendliness in child-friendly schools stimulates the pupils' interest in schooling and learning thus account for improve pupils' academic achievement in child friendly schools than those is non-child friendly primary schools. This is in line with the reports of Owojori and Ojedokun (2013) that asserted that what makes a good school (a child friendly school) is a composition of trained teacher, functional,

instructional materials, good learning environment, co-operating parents and responsive pupils or students. Therefore, any school without these basic teaching facilities may be said to be a substandard (or non-child friendly) school. There was significant difference between the CFS pupils and the non CFS pupils. The result of this study indicated that most of the variable tested favored the CFS as their mean scores were higher than those of the non CFS, thus culminating into the higher enrolment figures with gender balance and better academic performance for the CFS pupils than those of the non CFS.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the findings of this research indicated that school environment significantly influence pupils' academic achievement. As observed from the evaluation made, pupils from schools with adequate learning facilities, good teacher-child relationship, a favorable learning environment perform better than their counterparts from non-child friendly schools. Therefore, the research concludes that school environment does influence pupils' academic achievement. Also, the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of school environment significantly contribute to the pupils' academic achievement in schools.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

- i. Federal, State and Local governments should refurbish public primary schools with adequate infrastructures like functional toilets, library, laboratory, water supply etc to enhance better child's and teachers' perceptions of their learning environment which invariable relate and boost positively the pupils' academic achievement.
- ii. Teacher should develop a warm intimacy teacher-child relationship with the pupils to foster interactivity and instructional engagement that enhance and empower pupils' academic achievement in schools.

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