

Effect of Domestic Violence Against Women on Marital Instability: A Study of Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of domestic violence against women on marital stability in Jalingo metropolis Taraba State, Nigeria. With the aid of the study objectives, hypothesis was formulated in the study. The survey research design was adopted in the study. A sample size of 212 was adopted from the target population of the study. The simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were variously applied in this study at different stages. The summation of all the responses was presented using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The mean analysis was used to analyze the data generated from the field while the chi-square statistical tool was employed to test the hypothesis formulated in the study. The test statistics reveals that women who suffer domestic violence end up more often leaving their marriages than those who do not in Jalingo metropolis. The study concludes that, domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State. The study recommends among others that, traditional institutions should support and encourage the liberation of women from unfair traditional practices and interventions for women experiencing domestic violence where they can be taught the relevant skills, norms and attitudes needed to instill stability in their homes. By so doing, domestic violence against women would be drastically reduced and marital stability ascertained in Jalingo metropolis.

Keywords: Women, Domestic Violence, Marital Instability, Patriarchal Theory, Taraba State

Introduction

Domestic violence has become more of a norm than an abnormal thing in the society. It is the intentional and continuous abuse of anyone in the family subsystem in a way that causes family instability, pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive or unlawful treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights (Dang, Wilson & O'Leary, 2015). Considerable number of studies have suggested that all the forms of domestic violence are related to each other, and they generally occur in women who reported gender violence (Stevenson, Postmus & Berry, 2009). Domestic violence according to Akpan and Usoroh (2005) is generally perpetrated by men who are, or who had been in the positions of trust, intimacy and power over the women. Domestic violence is perhaps one of the most terrifying illustrations of inequality between male and female. Women are more at risk from violence than men in all sectors of the society. This is because of the differential access to prestige, power, control of material resources, freedom to obtain knowledge and other basic needs of life amongst gender.

Frye and Karrney (2006) stressed that, even the most satisfied couple's experience problems in their marital relationships. Couples may respond to these relationship problems using several behaviors, ranging from calm discussion to severe physical aggression. Nevertheless, nationally and internationally representative surveys as well as relevant empirical studies have demonstrated high prevalence rates for domestic violence. Domestic violence against women has received amplified consideration from academic, clinical, and research communities. Studies have revealed high incidence of spousal assault and reported domestic violent acts among the most frequently committed crimes in the society. As one of the utmost obstinate societal hitches, domestic violence against women shows a serious defilement of women's human rights (Buchanan, 2014).

Ardayfio-Schandorf (1990) stressed that, marriage has been beset by many problems that have threatened its usefulness and existence in spite of its indispensability. The increased rate of divorce can be linked to inadequate length of courtship before marriage, dissimilarities between spouses in social and economic characteristics such as social class, ethnicity, religion and age. Other causes include sterility, adultery, desertion and excessive cruelty as well as default in remitting the family practices. The National Consultative Forum on Women Empowerment (2003) revealed that, women that do not have the means of making fortune do not have a say in the affairs of nuclear homes and large extended families. The women also fear the consequences of reporting gender violence and declare an unwillingness to subject themselves to the shame of being identified as battered women.

Domestic violence as stated by Animasahun and Fatile (2011), is considered as one of the social problems that is still in existence despite the necessary measures put in place by individuals, government, religious and traditional institutions to curtail the menace. In every society the fragility of the marital bond is a notable feature of societal degeneracy. Domestic violence makes society fragile and even jeopardizes marital stability that exit between spouses and the trust that sustains a home which can lead to separation or divorce. One sometimes has the impression that dissolution of marriages is considered the only way an abused woman can bow out of marital crisis. Marital instability according to Johnson, Cohan and Briggs (2005), has become a thing of concern in the contemporary society and this is associated with separation, divorce, and widowhood. Separation and divorce are social phenomena created by either husband or the wife or both, but widowhood is beyond the control of human being that is related to death and thus universal.

According to Finkelhor (1994), the increase in single-parent families over the past several decades has caused a rise in the prevalence of domestic violence. Domestic violence in discouraging marriage may be greater than a half-century ago because of the changes in the social and economic context in which violence is experienced and understood. These changes have made alternatives to marriage more feasible and more acceptable for abused women as well as altering women's expectations of marriage. In their own reaction, Goldstein and Kenney (2001), stressed that the rise of single parenthood provides the option of living without a partner to women who experience physical abuse in adulthood. Currently, there are options that allow for intimacy and motherhood but avoid the risk of living with a potentially abusive man. For many women according to Edin (2010), the experiences of domestic violence influence intimate unionism between spouses in ways that reduce the likelihood of stable and long-term marriage. Exposure to domestic violence can create wariness about marriages with men that makes women to be cautious about making long-term commitments and in some circumstances, quitting their marriages.

Statement of the Research Problem

Marriage is a union of two persons of the opposite sex, approved by society and governed by rules and customs which gives license for sexual relations and guarantees legitimacy for the offspring of the union. Ideally, marriage is expected to be enjoyed rather than being endured by spouses. In our contemporary societies, marriages appear to have been marred by domestic violence against women by their spouses. As a result, there appears to be marital instability because, the women are physically, emotionally and psychological affected in their matrimonial homes.

Issues on domestic violence against women have been on the increase which invariably appears to have affected the stability of most families. Taraba State government, traditional institutions, religious institutions and corporate bodies have advocated for financial empowerment of women, gender equality, legal penalties against gender violence etc., as measures to mitigate domestic violence against women. But however, domestic violence against women still persists in most families in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State. In addition, studies have been carried out by researchers such as (Edin, 2010; Ojo, 2022; and Vua *et al*, 2024) to examine the nexus between domestic violence against women and marital instability but none has been carried out in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria. This study therefore, investigates if domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are poses for this study:

- i. Is domestic violence against women prevalent in Jalingo metropolis?
- ii. Does domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of study is to investigate if domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State. Specifically, the study sorts to:

- i. Ascertain if domestic violence against women is prevalent in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State?
- ii. Examine if domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State?

Hypothesis

H₀: Domestic violence against women has no significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State.

Conceptual Classifications

For clarity and proper understanding of this study, domestic violence and marital instability are conceptualized.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence according to Akpan and Usoroh (2005) is violence in intimacy which can be physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional violence that are inflicted on women by their spouses. Domestic violence is a very serious social, economic and psychological problem that has no cultural, social, economic and psychological group inhibition. The manifestation of domestic violence has deep and negative consequences which ranges from physical, emotional and financial effects on the inhabitants of the home be it the women, children or men. Genyi (2005), posits that domestic violence is orchestrated as a desire of one party in a relationship to dominate and control the other partner. It may be power breakdown and distortion of an intimate relationship. Relationships that are categorized by violence may be distorted but may not be broken down. In his reaction, Garba (2008) contends that domestic violence is any form of abusive behavior in any relationship used by partner to gain or maintain power and control over another partner. Globally, domestic violence accounts for nearly one quarter of all recorded crimes and perhaps one of the most terrifying illustrations of inequality between male and female.

Zimmerman (1994), averred that domestic violence is a burden on numerous sectors of the social system and silently, affects the development of a nation. Batterers cost nations fortunes in terms of law enforcement, health care, lost labor and general progress in development. What begins as an assault by one person on another, resonates through the family and the community into the future. Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. World health Organization (2007) narrates that, domestic violence is deeply ingrained and has serious impacts on women's health and well-being. Its' constant existence is ethically vulnerable. Its' cost to individuals, health systems and society is mammoth. However, Seimeniuk *et al* (2010) opined that domestic violence is regarded as a representation of men's active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence and intimate partner violence. It is a pattern of abusive behaviors by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating or cohabitation

Marital Instability

Marital instability according to Hewitt, Baxter and Western (2006), covers divorce, separation and desertion as well as estrangement and the continuation of living together though without marital relations. Marital instability refers to the process whereby marriages breakdown through separation, desertion or divorce. Marital instability has been described as a situation whereby couples deliberately decide to separate for one reason or the other. The concept of marital instability is associated with separation, divorce and widowhood. Animasahun and Fetile (2011) maintained that the exchange of marital ideas gave rise to the modern concept of marriage in African society. These exchange of ideas and values of marriage led to a rich thinking and multiplication of ideas that depicts quality of marriage. However, despite the positive effect that recent observations had shown, there had been increase in number of factors that are seriously threatening stability of marriage in Africa. Most of these factors are traceable to some inherited behaviour and thinking from the ancient African society, and imported ideas from other sources that are beyond the African concept of marriage. These factors are the significant causes of marriage instability in modern African societies (Animasahun & Fetile, 2011).

Marital instability is a situation whereby a couple in a home is going through relational difficulties. It implies marital crisis or problems between couples that could result in marriage breakdown through separation, desertion or divorce. According to Alike and Edosa (2012), a marriage or family is structurally stable or unstable. An unstable marriage is one that is not structurally intact as a result of quarrels, fights, separation or even divorce. Such marriages are characterized with frequent quarrels, disagreements and fights between couples in the home. In their own quest, Oleabhiele and Ighalo (2020), stressed that marital instability has been observed as a contemporary social problem because, it significantly affects a number of homes especially in the Nigerian society. The situation in most homes is such that, even the children have become the burden bearers. This unpleasant experience many at times leaves children emotionally and psychologically imbalance with feelings of depression, anger and frustration as they are cut-in-between sides of their parent. These unpleasant experiences of children in the home front could significantly affect a child's concentration in school, thereby impinging on his academic performance.

Empirical Review

Adesina and Ojo (2022) carried out a study on ‘Perception of Spousal Abuse: The Bane of Family Stability in Nigerian Contemporary Society: A Study of Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State’. The study takes a look at spousal abuse as it affects the family stability as perceived in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Three research questions are posed for the study and a hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Descriptive research design was adopted in the study, the population of the study consisted of 200 respondents. The study combines both qualitative and quantitative methods, which involves the use of questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) to collect data. Data generated from the field was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using linear regression. The results of the study revealed among others that, wife/husband battering, insults/name calling, spousal rape/sexual deprivation, economic deprivation, and food deprivation constitute spousal abuse in Lafia, Nasarawa State. The study recommends among others that, more sensitization and education to end spousal abuse should be vigorously pursued in Lafia, Nasarawa State. Also, government and non-governmental organizations should create avenues where women are empowered as well as establish psychological centers for rehabilitation of abused women in Lafia, Nasarawa State.

Vua *et al* (2014), conducted research on ‘Divorce in the Context of Domestic Violence Against Women in Vietnam’. The research examined obstacles for women who face domestic violence in making decisions about divorce and in seeking and securing support for a divorce. The research was undertaken in the context of a project in one district of a coastal province in Vietnam that sought to reduce gender based-violence and mitigate its effects. Data from in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions were used to examine abused women’s attitudes, strategies and behaviours and the responses of people in their communities. The findings show that social norms supporting marriage, discourage abused women from seeking divorce and in some cases, discourage community-based support networks, police and local court systems from providing effective assistance to the women.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted in this study is the patriarchal theory. The patriarchal theory stemmed from the work of Michel Foucault in 1971. The theory was used to describe male dominance over women.

Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. In generality, the theory sees men as the Alpha and Omega and as such, women are expected to be submissive at all times to men. Kandiyoti (1988) averred that, patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic system that structure gender inequality between men and women. The theory of patriarchy views males as controlling access to institutional power, and it is argued that they mold ideology, philosophy, art and religion to suit their needs. The exercise of male power is viewed as at least somewhat conspiratorial, and whatever women's economic status are, they are perceived as an oppressed class by men.

The implication and relevance of patriarchal theory as it applies to this study is that, in a patriarchal society, there is a strong tendency to deny conflicts of interest between men and women despite obvious inequalities prompting the actions exhibited by men to their wives. Domestic violence against women cannot be overemphasized as it is still visible in the ways of life of the men especially in African societies which Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State is among, where men due to the norms, culture, customs and traditions prevalent, places women at disadvantage. As a result, women that are experiencing domestic violence in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State may not prefer to adopt the option of separation or divorce. They may also fear the consequences of reporting violence and reluctant to subject themselves to the shame of being identified as battered women. Also, the women can refrain from reporting domestic violence because of the fear that their husbands will further harm them in reprisal for revealing family secrets and degrading family reputation. In addition, as a result of the high rate of male prevalence and domination over women, the causes, effects and the necessary measures to mitigate the problems of domestic violence against women are not magnanimously addressed which can lead to marital instability in Jalingo metropolis Taraba State.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. Survey research design was relevant for this study because, it helps the researcher to have in-depth information on the phenomena under investigation. Also, the survey research design was adopted in this study because, it offers ample opportunity for investigators to display ingenuity and scholarliness for interpretation of data and understanding of the relationship between variables. The study was conducted in Jalingo metropolis. Jalingo metropolis is the headquarter of Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Jalingo metropolis is made up of has six wards namely; Barade ward, Maigwe ward, Majidadi ward, Sintali ward, Turaki A ward, and Turaki B ward (Wikipedia, 2020). Residents of Jalingo metropolis are Christian, Muslims and Traditionalists. The major tribes in Jalingo metropolis are Jukun-kona, Fulani and Mummuye who are mostly farmers, traders and civil/public servants. Other minor ethnic groups are the Hausa, Jenjo, Wurkum and Nyandang (Oruonye, 2011).

The target population of the study comprised 212 married men and women resident in Jalingo metropolis. The reason for the target population was due to the nature and phenomena under investigation. A sample size of 212 married men and women in Jalingo metropolis was adopted for the study. This was due to the fact that, the researchers are convenient with the target population of the study. In this study, the simple random sampling and the purposive sampling techniques were used at different stages. The simple random sampling technique was used to select four wards namely: Maigwe ward, Majidadi ward, Sintali ward, and Turaki B ward, out of the six wards in

Jalingo metropolis. This was to ensure effective coverage and conduct of the research. However, the purposive sampling technique was used to select 53 respondents from each of the four selected wards in Jalingo metropolis. This is due to the fact that the population of all the wards and communities in 2006 National population Census in Nigeria has not been officially released.

This study generated data through primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data collection consists of questionnaire. The questionnaire was deemed imperative for this study because, it creates room for the anonymity of respondents and ensures reliability and high response rate in research while the secondary sources of data collection consist of information generated from textbooks and journal articles. The questionnaire was tagged 'Domestic Violence Against Women and Marital Instability: A Study of Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria' (DVAWAMI-JMTSN). The set of closed ended questionnaire was divided into two sections in line with the study objectives. Section A comprised questions that aim at eliciting information on the socio-demographic data of the respondents while Section B comprised questions that aim at eliciting information on the phenomena under study. The questionnaire was structured in Likert modified four points responds scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The quantification for the responses was: Strongly Agree 4 points, Agree 3 points, Disagree 2 points, and Strongly Disagree 1 point. In this study, the frequency distribution tables was used to present the raw data from the field quantitatively for the purpose of easy and accurate interpretation, the simple percentages (%) was used to present the response rate of the questions asked and to convert data generated from the field into a more statistical construction so as to produce a concise report, the mean analysis was used to analyze the data generated from the field, while the chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool was employed to test the hypothesis formulated in the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of 212 copies of questionnaire distributed, 208 copies were successfully retrieved. It was based on the retrieved copies that analysis was made in this study.

Research Question: Does domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State

Table 1: Respondents perception on if domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1. Domestic violence against women can accrue to the women seeking for separation of marriages as an aspect of marital instability in Jalingo metropolis?	61	79	38	30	208	2.82	Accepted
2. Marital instability in the form divorce can take place due to, domestic violence meted out to the women by their husbands in Jalingo metropolis?	58	77	42	31	208	2.78	Accepted
3. Women who suffer domestic violence end up more often abandoning their marriages than those who do not in Jalingo metropolis?	60	81	47	20	208	2.87	Accepted
4. No matter the height of domestic violence against women, women in Jalingo metropolis do not frequently dump their marriages?	37	48	78	45	208	2.37	Rejected
Cumulative Mean						2.71	Accepted

Survey Data, 2023.

Table 1 shows the respondents perception if domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State. On item 1, out of 208 respondents, (29.3%) strongly agreed that domestic violence against women can accrue to the women seeking for separation of marriages as an aspect of marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, (38.0%) agreed, (18.3%) disagreed, while (14.4%) strongly disagreed. On item 2, out 208 respondents, (27.9%) strongly agreed that, marital instability in the form divorce can take place due to, domestic violence meted out to the women by their husbands in Jalingo metropolis, (37.0%) agreed, (20.2%) disagreed, while (14.9%) strongly disagreed. On item 3, out of 208 respondents, (28.8%) strongly agreed that, women who suffer domestic violence end up more often abandoning their marriages than those who do not in Jalingo metropolis, (38.9%) agreed, (22.6%) disagreed while (9.6%) strongly disagreed. On item 4, out 208 respondents (17.8%) strongly agree that, no matter the height of domestic violence against women, women do not frequently dump their marriages in Jalingo metropolis, (23.1%) agreed, (37.5%) disagreed, while (21.6%) strongly disagreed. However, the cumulative mean of 2.71 across all the items affirms that, the respondents responded greatly that domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: Domestic violence against women has no significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State.

H₁: Domestic violence against women has a significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State.

The hypothesis was tested using the values of responses on items 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively in table 1.

Table 2: Contingency Table of Observed Frequencies

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	61 _a	79 _b	38 _c	30 _d	208 _{B1}
2	58 _e	77 _f	42 _g	31 _h	208 _{B2}
3	60 _i	81 _j	47 _k	20 _l	208 _{B3}
4	37 _m	48 _n	78 _o	45 _p	208 _{B4}
Total	216_{A1}	285_{A2}	195_{A3}	126_{A4}	832_N

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Table 3: Calculation of Expected Frequencies

Cell A ₁ B ₁	$\frac{216 \times 208}{832}$ =54	Cell A ₁ B ₂	$\frac{216 \times 208}{832}$ = 54	Cell A ₁ B ₃	$\frac{216 \times 208}{832}$ = 54	Cell A ₁ B ₄	$\frac{126 \times 208}{832}$ = 54
Cell A ₂ B ₁	$\frac{285 \times 208}{832}$ = 71	Cell A ₂ B ₂	$\frac{285 \times 208}{832}$ = 71	Cell A ₂ B ₃	$\frac{285 \times 208}{832}$ = 71	Cell A ₂ B ₄	$\frac{285 \times 208}{832}$ = 71
Cell A ₃ B ₁	$\frac{195 \times 208}{832}$ = 49	Cell A ₃ B ₂	$\frac{195 \times 208}{832}$ = 49	Cell A ₃ B ₃	$\frac{195 \times 208}{832}$ = 49	Cell A ₃ B ₄	$\frac{195 \times 208}{832}$ = 49
Cell A ₄ B ₁	$\frac{126 \times 208}{832}$ = 31	Cell A ₄ B ₂	$\frac{126 \times 208}{832}$ = 31	Cell A ₄ B ₃	$\frac{126 \times 208}{832}$ = 31	Cell A ₄ B ₄	$\frac{126 \times 208}{832}$ = 31

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

Table 4: Placing the Observed and Expected Frequencies for Test of Hypothesis

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
61	54	7	49	0.907
79	71	8	64	0.901
38	49	-11	121	2.469
30	31	-1	1	0.032
58	54	4	16	0.296
77	71	6	36	0.507
42	49	-7	49	1
31	31	0	0	0
60	54	6	36	0.667
81	71	10	100	1.408
47	49	-2	4	0.081
20	31	-11	121	3.903
37	54	-17	289	5.352
48	71	-23	529	7.451
78	49	29	841	17.163
45	31	14	196	6.322
Total				48.459

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

From the contingency table,

$$\begin{aligned}
 DF &= (r-1)(c-1) \\
 &= (4-1)(4-1) \\
 &= 3 \times 3 \\
 &= 9
 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, DF = 9

At 0.5 level of significance with 9 degrees of freedom, the table value of chi-square (χ^2) is **16.919** while the calculated value of chi-square (χ^2) is **48.459**. Since the calculated value of chi-square (χ^2_{cal}) is greater than the table value (χ^2_{table}), the alternative hypothesis (H_1) which states that, domestic violence against women has a significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that domestic violence against women has no significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the hypothesis tested shows that, domestic violence against women has a significant effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State. The finding is in consonance with Edin (2010), who averred that, the experiences of domestic violence influence intimate unionism between spouses in ways that reduce the likelihood of stable and long-term marriage. Exposure to domestic violence can create wariness about marriages with men that makes women to be cautious about making long-term commitments and in some circumstances, quitting their marriages. Also, the finding is not in tandem with Vua *et al* (2014) in their study that, social norms supporting

marriage, discourage abused women from seeking divorce and in some cases, discourage community-based support networks, police and local court systems from providing effective assistance to the women.

Conclusion

Using violence against women at times, is a way for males to demonstrate their authority in contrast to their wives. Women are indeed victims of domestic violence due to many reasons that can be viewed under economic, socio-cultural and psychological perspectives. From the above findings, it can be seen that domestic violence against women has effect on marital instability in Jalingo metropolis, Taraba State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Traditional institutions should support and encourage the liberation of women from unfair traditional practices and interventions for women experiencing domestic violence where they can be taught the relevant skills, norms and attitudes needed to instill stability in their homes. By so doing, domestic violence against women would be drastically reduced and marital stability ascertained in Jalingo metropolis.
- ii. Religious institutions should regularly preach against domestic violence in their places of worship as well as organize marriage counseling and seminars to sensitize couples on the dangers of domestic violence. By so doing, the couples would acquire relevant knowledge on how to address issues that can accrue to domestic violence and maintain stability in their homes in Jalingo metropolis.
- iii. Taraba State government should continue to advocate for girl-child education. By so doing, the girl-child will acquire relevant values, norms, attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to be confident and develop a sense of respect, humility, dignity, self-worth and mutual understanding and shy away from domestic violence and marital instability when they are married.

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