EXPLORING JOB STRESS, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB INVOLVEMENT IN A SAMPLE OF NIGERIAN AIRFORCE PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT: This cross-sectional study anchored on the theoretical assumption of the integrated theory of job involvement investigated job stress and emotional intelligence as predictors of job involvement in a sample of Nigerian Air Force personnel in Enugu, Nigeria. Two hundred and nine (209) Air Force personnel, comprising 159 males and 50 females between the ages of 19 and 58 years (M=31.13; SD=5.58), participated in the study. They were selected via a two-stage (cluster and purposive) sampling technique. The 15-item job-related tension scale, 14-item emotional intelligence scale, and 20-item job involvement scale were completed by the participants. The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that job stress independently did not predict job involvement; and job stress and emotional intelligence independently did not predict job stress and emotional intelligence accounted for 23% of the variation in the job involvement of Air Force personnel. In view of these findings, this study has recommended that policy makers in the Nigerian Air Force personnel.

Keywords: Job Stress, Emotional Intelligence, Job Involvement, Airforce Personnel

INTRODUCTION

The activities of herdsmen, bandits, militant groups, and Boko-Haram jihadists, which pose a threat to national security, are likely to increase the job stress and emotional intelligence of the Nigerian Air Force personnel, affecting their job involvement. The personnel may become more engaged or disengaged depending on their emotional response to the activities of these groups; hence, this study to investigate job stress and emotional intelligence as predictors of job involvement in a sample of Nigerian Air Force personnel in Enugu.

Job involvement refers to the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his/her work or the importance of work in his/her total self-image (Biswas, 2011). According to Cooper (2002), job involvement is the degree to which an employee psychologically relates to his or her job, and the work performed therein. Employees who identify most strongly with their jobs focus their thoughts on work and interpret more situations as opportunities to perform work role activities (Kreiner et al., 2006). Therefore, an engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work. Govender and Parumasur (2010) view job involvement as the degree of identification that employees realize

in their jobs, and the degree of importance they perceive in their jobs. Khalid and Rashid (2011) refer to job involvement as employees' cognitive need, which helps them work harder and boosts their performance. DeCarufel and Schaan (1990) asserted that job involvement is the belief that work is important, and that people should engage in work to improve themselves.

According to Hung (2008), job involvement is a fixed variable that critically controls employees' working attitudes, such as job satisfaction, tendency to resign, and organizational commitment. Khalid and Rashid (2011) also view job involvement as the motivation to carry out work, and it is highly compatible with personal and organizational goals, which stimulate motivation among employees to generate positive work outcomes. Hodson and Roscigno (2004) suggested that job involvement has been repeatedly identified as an important variable for understanding the work behaviour of employees in organizations and, as such, that organizational success is defined in terms of heightened worker involvement. Therefore, every organization should gear its efforts to ensure that its workforce is well involved. Job involvement has been found to be associated with job stress. For example, Sun and Yeo (2019), in a study of the effect of the job stress of IT industry employees on job involvement and affective commitment, reported that the 'role ambiguity' factor and 'role conflict' factor among job stresses influence job involvement. Mugiono et al. (2020), in a study recognizing how job involvement, burnout, and self-efficacy influence work stress, reported that job involvement and burnout have a significant positive effect on work stress.

Stress is a "condition of strain on one's emotions, thought processes and physical conditions" (Ugoji & Isele, 2009). According to Campbell (2006), stress is the unpleasant response of people when they are subjected to extreme pressure or other kinds of expectations. Stress occurs when the demands that are being placed upon a person tax or exceed available resources are appraised by the individual involved (Riggio, 2000). Job stress, therefore, occurs when the demands of the job either over-task or under-task, the resources of employees leading to the body reacting physiologically, psychologically, and sometimes nonspecifically (Okonkwo, 2013). Job stress is also viewed as a physical and emotional response that occurs when an employee's capabilities and resources cannot cope with the demands and requirements of the job (Alves, 2005; Bianchi, 2004; Lindholm, 2006). According to Ugwu and Onyeneje (2002), stress in the workplace exists when there is a mismatch between the individual's potential and/or capabilities and the demands of the work. Alterman et al., (1999) conceptualized harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job involvement is also related to emotional intelligence. Several studies (e.g., Chakraborty & Saha, 2022; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Chikobyu & Harunavamwe, 2022; Irfan et al., 2021) have provided empirical evidence for the association between job involvement and emotional intelligence. For example, emotional intelligence within the workplace is positively related to the job involvement of employees, and employees with greater emotional intelligence have a higher level of job involvement (Najafpour, 2008).

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, to motivate oneself and manage emotions in oneself and our relationships (Cherniss, 2000). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide one's thinking and behaviour. In other words, emotional intelligence is the ability to manage

emotions to enhance thought and performance (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence also refers to the ability to process emotional information accurately and efficiently (Woolfolk et al., 2008). At work, emotional intelligence is important for career success and works in conjunction with other factors, such as integrity, persistence, passion and general intelligence (Ivancevich et al., 2008). As individuals ascend the organizational hierarchy, social intelligence becomes an increasingly relevant determinant of who will and will not be successful (Zaccaro, 2001). According to Muchinsky (2003), emotional intelligence is a construct that reflects a person's capacity to manage emotional responses in social situations. McGarvey (1997) views emotional intelligence as the ability of a person to relate with other people and understand their emotions as well as his or her own. Segal et al. (2012) further asserted that emotional intelligence involves communicating with others in ways that draw people to them, overcoming differences, repairing wounded feelings and defusing tension and stress. Job involvement in Nigerian organizations such as the Nigerian Air Force could result in factors such as job stress and emotional intelligence; hence, the interest of this study was to investigate job stress and emotional intelligence as predictors of job involvement in a sample of Nigerian Air Force personnel.

Theoretical Overview, Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

The integrated theory of job involvement (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977) explains the link between job stress, emotional intelligence and job involvement by highlighting that job involvement is related to three classes of working variables: the dispositional approach, the situational-determined approach, and the interaction between these approaches (disposition and situational approaches), which are labelled the dispositional situation. In the dispositional approach, job involvement is viewed as dependent on individual personalities. The influence exerted by some stable personal characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, external and internal control features, job seniority, dwelling locations, the intensity of high-level work demands in terms of time and responsibility and protestant work ethics, ensures that individuals hold different work attitudes and behaviours (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). Individuals are thought to own a certain amount of desires or values, and these desires or values drive them to work harder or impede them from job involvement (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). In this approach, job involvement is a personal characteristic; thus, it never changes easily within an organization (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). In a situation-determined approach, job involvement can be viewed as a personal attitude towards a particular job (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). In this view, job involvement is affected by leadership style, the opportunities the individual has to be involved in decision-making, social factors, job features and other conditional influences, including factors such as job stress and emotional intelligence. This theory also holds that the extent of values attached to work in these instances is the product of this externalized attitude borne by situational determinants. The interaction between disposition and situational approaches is labelled the dispositional situation. In this approach, personal characteristics and the environment (organizational setting) in interaction are used to explain personal work attitudes and behaviours. When personal characteristics and the situation reach congruence, the individual will develop a high sense of job involvement, such as in workplace settings where there is cooperation and solidarity, which can ameliorate job stress and enhance emotional intelligence.

The integrated theory of job involvement helps explain the link between job stress, emotional intelligence and job involvement. For example, the job stress of an employee could result from his/her personality. For example, employees (airforce personnel) with a type A

personality could be prone to more job stress than those with a type B personality. Similarly, employees' emotional intelligence could be influenced by personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, internal and external control features, job seniority, working experience, ranks, emotional stability, and problem-solving abilities; thus, influencing how personnel of the Nigerian Air Force in Enugu could be involved in their jobs. Therefore, the more Air Force personnel are elevated in ranks with more working experience, the more they develop critical thinking, which impacts emotional intelligence and employee involvement at work. Employees (airforce personnel) who are older and occupy higher positions because they have risen through ranks may be greater in emotional intelligence and less vulnerable to job stress, thereby increasing job involvement among personnel.

Job stress and job involvement

The literature has demonstrated both positive and negative relationships between job stress and job involvement. For example, Maryati and Kusumayuda (2021), in a study of 125 nurses from PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital, Indonesia, reported that job stress had a significant effect on job involvement. Sun and Yeo (2019), in a study of 352 employees in Seoul and Gyeonggi, South Korea, revealed that the 'role ambiguity' factor and 'role conflict' factor among the job stress factors influence job involvement. In a study of 129 nurses drawn from international hospitals in Jakarta, Indonesia, Mugiono et al. (2020) reported that job involvement and burnout have a significant positive effect on stress at work. Azila-Gbettor et al. (2022), in a study of 452 students in Ghana, revealed that perceived coworker support positively moderates the relationship between interns' job stress and job involvement. In a study of 287 respondents collected from online platforms, Roy et al. (2023) reported that stress-based job performance has a significant positive impact on job commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, Ojeleve et al. (2022), in a study of 266 public sector employees in Nigeria, revealed that perceived organisational politics and resilience have negative and positive significant effect on job involvement respectively while job stress has negative non-significant effect on job involvement. Zincirli (2021), in a study of 396 teachers working in state schools in Turkey, reported that teachers' stress perceptions predicted their job involvement perceptions negatively and significantly, Earlier, Adekeye et al. (2017), in a study of 180 employees drawn from private and public sector employees in Nigeria, confirmed a negative relationship between job stress and job involvement. In a study of 827 police officers drawn from Haryana State, India, Qureshi et al. (2019) reported that job stress negatively affected the job involvement, whereas Rakhshani et al. (2018) reported an inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress among 500 nurses sampled from Shiraz, Iran.

Emotional intelligence and job involvement

Previous studies have demonstrated a predictive link between emotional intelligence and job involvement. For example, Huang et al. (2019), in a study of 370 nurses in Taiwan, reported that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on social support and job involvement, whereas social support also has a positive effect on job involvement. In a sample of 125 employees in Indonesia, Herawati (2019) reported that emotional intelligence and political skills have positive and significant effects on job involvement. Previously, Mazadu et al. (2016), in a study of 250 organizational workers in Jos, Nigeria, reported a significant interaction effect of work locus of control and work emotional intelligence on job involvement. Recently, Irfan et al. (2021), in a study of 351 teachers from public sector

universities of Punjab, Pakistan, reported a significant positive relationship between the interpersonal dimension of emotional intelligence and work commitment. In a sample of 49 school administrators from districts in Bohol, Philippines, Chikobvu and Harunavamwe (2022) revealed a correlation exists between emotional intelligence and work commitment. A study by Yeh (2021) involving 209 frontline employees of five-star hotels in Taiwan, revealed that emotional intelligence had a positive influence on job involvement. Narayanasami et al. (2023), in a study of 511 employees working in the banking sector in southern India, reported employee commitment and emotional intelligence positively predict work engagement whereas emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between employee commitment and work engagement. In a study of 80 heads of higher secondary schools in western Bengal, India, Chakraborty and Saha (2022) revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job involvement. Selvi and Aiswarya (2023), in a study of 184 employees of automobile sectors in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India, reported a strong correlation between work engagement and emotional intelligence. In contrast, Irfan et al. (2021) in a study of 351 teachers from public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan, reported a significant negative relationship between the adaptability dimension of emotional intelligence and work commitment. Mérida-López et al. (2023), in a sample of 1166 Spanish teaching professionals, revealed that perceived stress partially mediated the link between emotional intelligence and work engagement.

Despite the fact that job involvement is an issue of global relevance, and that a remarkable amount of research has been conducted on widespread job involvement, its antecedents and consequences, few studies have focused on these concerns in diverse national contexts, specifically non-Western contexts. Most studies (e.g., Azila-Gbettor et al., 2022; Maryati & Kusumavuda, 2021; Mugiono et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2023; Sun & Yeo, 2019; Ojeleve et al., 2022; Oureshi et al., 2019; Zincirli, 2021; Adekeye et al., 2017; Rakhshani et al., 2018) have concentrated primarily on the relationships between job stress and job involvement, or on the relationships between emotional intelligence and job involvement (e.g., Narayanasami et al., 2023; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Mérida-López et al., 2023; Chakraborty & Saha, 2022; Chikobvu & Harunavamwe, 2022; Irfan et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2019; Yeh, 2021; Herawati, 2019; Mazadu et al., 2016), and relatively little or no research has been conducted on job stress, emotional intelligence and job involvement jointly. All these studies focused on Western and Asian populations, whereas few studies (e.g., Ojeleye et al., 2022; Adekeye et al., 2017; Mazadu et al., 2016) have been conducted in non-Western context of Nigeria, which concentrated on the relationship between job stress and job involvement, and emotional intelligence and job involvement did not consider Air Force personnel; hence, the present study tested the following hypotheses:

- 1. Job stress independently predicts job involvement among Nigerian Air Force personnel.
- 2. Emotional intelligence independently predicts job involvement among Nigerian Air Force personnel.
- 3. Job stress and emotional intelligence jointly predict job involvement among Nigerian Air Force personnel.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

A sample of 209 Airforce personnel (159 males and 50 females) between the ages of 19 and 58 years (M=31.13; SD=5.58) were included in this study. The researchers, via a two-stage sampling technique (cluster and purposive), drew the participants from three collocated units of the Nigerian Air Force Base in Enugu. In Stage one; the units in Air Force Base Enugu were in clusters (e.g., 39 Base Service Group, 95 Helicopter Combat Training Group and International Helicopter Flying School Enugu), and each unit formed a cluster. The participants were drawn from all the units of each cluster in the base. In Stage two; purposive sampling was applied to administer the questionnaire to the available personnel who met the selection criteria. The inclusion criteria considered non-commissioned officers from the ranks of aircraft man to master warrant officers, and commissioned officers from the ranks of flying officers to wing commanders who have served from three years and above, whereas the exclusion criteria involved newly posted personnel and those on course in the units. The choice of using only the personnel who have served from three years and above was to avoid lumping together those who have not gained the requisite experience, and those who are on different degrees of course in the units. A total of 240 questionnaires were administered to the personnel within a month. They took the copies home and returned them on a later date. Among the copies administered, thirteen (13) were not returned, eighteen (18) were discarded due to errors in completion, and 209 (83.6%) copies returned properly completed were scored and analysed when testing the hypotheses.

Measures

Three scales were used in this study. These scales include the Job-related Tension Scale (Kahn et al., 1964), Emotional Intelligence Scale (Law et al., 2004), and Job Involvement Scale (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965).

Job-related Tension Scale

Job stress was assessed via the 15-item Job-related Tension Scale (Kahn et al., 1964), which is designed to measure the nature, cause and consequences of two aspects of organizational stress. A sample item is "Feeling that you have too heavy a workload, one that you can't possibly finish during an ordinary work day". There are only direct scoring items. Ratings were made via a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (nearly all the time), with internal reliability coefficients of .78 and .39 reported by Oseghare (1988) in a Nigerian sample. Chikwendu (2017) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89 and convergent validity of .82, whereas Ndukwe et al. (2020) reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .63. The present researchers obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .85.

Emotional Intelligence Scale

Emotional intelligence was assessed via a 14-item emotional intelligence scale (Law et al., 2004) designed to measure four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, emotion appraisal of others, use of emotion and regulation of emotional intelligence. A sample item is "I have good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time". Both direct scoring and reverse scoring are used. Ratings were made via a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly

disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Emotional Intelligence Scale has reliability coefficients of .93 (Law et al., 2004). Okonkw et al. (2017), in a Nigerian sample, reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .77. The present researchers obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .83.

Job Involvement Scale

Job involvement was assessed via a 20-item job involvement scale (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) designed to measure the extent to which a person's work or an individual is attached to and engrossed in his or her general employment circumstance. A sample item is "I will stay overtime to finish a job, even if I am not paid for it". Both direct scoring and reverse scoring are used. Ratings were made via a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Job involvement has internal reliability coefficients of .72 and .82 for males and females, respectively, and a test-retest coefficient within a 50-day interval of .92 (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Mogaji (1997) reported concurrent validity coefficients of .23, -.09, -.09, -.09 and -.11. Okonkwo et al. (2018), in a Nigerian sample, reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .89, whereas Ndukwe et al. (2020) reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .67. The present researchers obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .77.

RESULTS

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	Beta	t	Р	Confidence limit		R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	р
					Lower bound	Upper bound	-				
	Job stress	.087	1.214	>.05	694	2.917					
	Emotional intelligence	135	-1.887	>.05	231	.005					
Job involvement	_						.179	.32	.23	3.406	<.05

Table I: Multiple regression analysis for job stress, emotional intelligence, and job involvement

The table shows the prediction of job involvement by job stress and emotional intelligence. The regression for job stress was .087, and emotional intelligence was -.135, which indicated a negative relationship, and independently did not predict job involvement at p = 0.05. Therefore, hypotheses one and two were not accepted. Job stress and emotional intelligence jointly predicted job involvement, with R2= .32, F(2.206) = 3.406 at p<.05, indicating a significant association between the predictor variables (job stress and emotional intelligence) and the criterion variable (job involvement). The R2 value (.32) indicated that the predictor variables (job stress and emotional intelligence) involvement, F = 3.406 at p<.05; therefore, hypothesis three was accepted.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the predictive role of job stress and emotional intelligence on job involvement among Air Force personnel in Enugu, Nigeria. In contrast, the first hypothesis, which stated that "job stress independently predicts job involvement among Air Force

personnel," was not confirmed. This finding shows that there is no predictive relationship between the job stress of Air Force personnel and their job involvement. This finding is in line with those of previous studies (e.g., Ojeleye et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2019; Zincirli, 2021; Adekeye et al., 2017), which reported negative relationships between job stress and job involvement. This finding contrasts with those of previous studies (e.g., Roy et al., 2023; Azila-Gbettor et al., 2022; Maryati & Kusumayuda, 2021), which revealed significant relationships between job stress and job involvement. This outcome implies that the stressors involved in military regimentation have no predictive influence on whether personnel become involved in their duties. The inability of job stress to predict job involvement in this study could be a result of relative peace in Enugu state, which bears on the operational stress of the personnel compared with their counterparts in volatile areas such as Maiduguri, Yobe, Benue, Yola, Kano, Kaduna, Taraba and Jos.

In contrast, the second hypothesis, which states that "emotional intelligence independently predicts job involvement among Air Force personnel," was not confirmed. This shows that no significant predictive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and job involvement among Air Force personnel. This finding is in consonance with those of previous studies (e.g., Irfan et al., 2021), which reported a significant negative relationship between the adaptability dimension of emotional intelligence and work commitment, and (e.g., Mérida-López et al., 2023), which revealed that perceived stress partially mediated the link between emotional intelligence and work engagement. This finding contrasts with those of previous studies (e.g., Huang et al., 2019; Herawati, 2019; Yeh, 2021; Chakraborty & Saha, 2022), which reported significant relationships between emotional intelligence and job involvement. The inability of emotional intelligence to predict job involvement in this study could be a result of the higher demand of obedience to authority and discipline in the military. Personnel are under oath to be diligent and committed irrespective of the level of intelligence. However, this leaves personnel with no choice other than to comply with the dictates of the job. This matching of personnel to the job demands of the military has a predisposition to inhibit the impact of emotional intelligence as a factor. This could make it practically impossible for job involvement as a factor to be associated with emotional intelligence.

In support of the third hypothesis which stated that "job stress and emotional intelligence jointly predict job involvement among Air Force personnel," was confirmed. The finding indicates that the interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence jointly predicts job involvement among personnel. This implies that when personnel experienced high job stress and low emotional intelligence, their job involvement decreased. When they experienced low job stress and high emotional intelligence, their job involvement increased. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies (e.g., Azila-Gbettor et al., 2022; Maryati & Kusumayuda, 2021; Mugiono et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2023; Sun & Yeo, 2019), which reported significant relationships between job stress and job involvement, and (e.g., Narayanasami et al., 2023; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Chakraborty & Saha, 2022; Chikobvu & Harunavamwe, 2022; Irfan et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2019; Yeh, 2021; Herawati, 2019), which reported significant relationships between emotional intelligence and job involvement. The significant prediction effect of job stress and emotional intelligence on job involvement in this study could be that emotional intelligence impacted job involvement during job stress. This outcome also implies that the emotional intelligence and stressors in military regimentation have a predictive influence on whether personnel become involved in their duties or not. Therefore, personnel's involvement in their job could be associated with the

regimental nature of military work, which has a job description that assigned tasks must be accomplished in accordance with instructional orders, which impacts job stress and have implication for emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the strong desire for promotions and peacekeeping operations prevalent in military organizations could impact personnel's job stress and emotional intelligence, thus enhancing job involvement in the organization.

Implications of the findings of the study

The findings of this study have theoretical, empirical and practical implications. First, the findings of this study have given credence to the theoretical framework of the study—the integrated theory of job involvement (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977) - by demonstrating the predictive role of job stress and emotional intelligence in job involvement.

Empirically, the findings of this study are consistent with previous findings (e.g., Azila-Gbettor et al., 2022; Maryati & Kusumayuda, 2021; Mugiono et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2023; Sun & Yeo, 2019), which revealed significant relationships between job stress and job involvement, and (e.g., Narayanasami et al., 2023; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Chakraborty & Saha, 2022; Chikobvu & Harunavamwe, 2022; Irfan et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2019; Yeh, 2021; Herawati, 2019; Mazadu et al., 2016), which reported significant relationships between emotional intelligence and job involvement.

Practically, the predictive role of job stress and emotional intelligence in this study is an indication that if policy makers in the Nigerian Air Force create conditions that factor job stress and emotional intelligence into their operational programmes, then job involvement would be enhanced among personnel.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies

The sample size in the present study was relatively small. Future studies in this area should expand the scope of such studies to cover larger areas and include more participants. The collection of data at one point in time and the use of self-reported data and correlations could not allow cause–effect inference. To obtain more objective data resulting in more robust findings, experimental and longitudinal studies should be considered in future studies in this area.

Conclusion

Job stress and emotional intelligence jointly predict job involvement, indicating that personnel who are high in emotional intelligence and low in job stress could be more positively involved in military operations than those low in emotional intelligence and high in job stress. Therefore, there is a need for policy makers in the Nigerian Air Force to consider job stress and emotional intelligence to increase job involvement among personnel, which has implications for personnel well-being, enhanced team performance and increased operational effectiveness. This, among other factors, helps address the high level of insecurity that ravages Nigeria.

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