



Relationship of Anxiety Willingness to Communicate, Creativity and Self-Esteem in Academic Success/Failure: Standpoint of Pakistani EFL Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, self-esteem, and academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduates. The research aims to understand how these psychological factors influence the academic performance of students in a non-native English speaking context. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys to gather comprehensive data. The sample consists of undergraduate students from various universities across Pakistan, providing a diverse representation of the EFL learner population in the country. Preliminary findings suggest a complex interplay between the variables. High levels of anxiety appear to negatively impact both willingness to communicate and academic performance. Conversely, high self-esteem and creativity seem to foster a greater willingness to communicate, potentially leading to better academic outcomes. However, the relationship between these factors is not straightforward and is mediated by various individual and contextual factors. The study underscores the need for a holistic approach in EFL instruction in Pakistan, taking into account not just language proficiency but also psychological factors that can significantly impact learning outcomes. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the psychological aspects of EFL learning and provides valuable insights for educators and policy-makers in Pakistan and similar EFL contexts. Further research is needed to validate these findings and explore the implications for pedagogical practice.

1. Introduction

In the vibrant landscape of academia, a silent symphony plays out in the minds of students. This symphony, composed of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem, can either orchestrate success or conduct a performance of failure. This research article delves into this intriguing psychological interplay, specifically from the standpoint of Pakistani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduates. As noted by Safdar, Rashid, and Ahmed (2023), learners' attributions of academic success or failure at learning English contribute to their self-concept, motivation, and emotional reactions. Their research in the Pakistani EFL context stressed the significance of psychological variables—such as effort, anxiety, and perceived ability—in determining academic achievement, pointing to the need to investigate affective variables such as self-esteem and willingness to communicate in EFL learning. Imagine the classroom as a stage where each student is a performer. The spotlight is on their ability to communicate in English, a language foreign to their native tongues. The butterflies in their stomach, the

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surge of creativity, the strength of their self-esteem, and their willingness to express themselves - all these elements come into play.

Al-Saraj (2011) points out that foreign language anxiety, especially in culturally conservative EFL contexts, can severely impede learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and academic achievement. Her study illustrates that affective variables like anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are essential in determining students' classroom behavior and learning paths, validating the necessity for further investigation of psychological factors in EFL contexts such as Pakistan. This research article is not just a study; it's a journey into the minds of these young learners. It seeks to understand how their internal symphony affects their academic performance. So, let's tune into their world and explore the relationship of these psychological factors with academic success and failure. Welcome to a unique exploration of the EFL learning experience in Pakistan. Let the symphony begin!

1.1. Defining the Topic

The topic of this study centers on the intricate relationship between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem, and how these factors contribute to academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduates. This research aims to explore these psychological and behavioral factors in the context of second language (L2) acquisition, with a particular focus on how they interact to influence learners' outcomes. By examining these dynamics, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Pakistani EFL learners and offer insights into improving their academic experiences.

1.2. Background

Background of this study draws from the research literature on Language Learning Anxiety, Willingness to communicate, Creativity and Self-esteem which are known to play a central role in learners' performances in L2. Corbita (2023) emphasizes the strong interaction between self-esteem and adversity quotient among senior high school students, with lower scores in these areas hindering students' ability to deal with academic challenges. This correlation points to the importance of taking into account affective aspects, including self-esteem, in determining academic achievement and failure, especially in EFL settings.

Phothongsunan (2014) points out that Thai students in universities explain that their achievements in learning English can be contributed by teacher encouragement, effort on the part of themselves, and the positive class climate. The implications of the study emphasize affective and interpersonal aspects of language acquisition, where it is shown that variables of anxiety, motivation to communicate, and self-perceived competence influence academic achievement or failure among EFL learners significantly.

Although, a large number of researchers have investigated L2 learning in the context of Western students, much fewer studies have been reported in the context of Pakistani EFL students. Based on the fact that Pakistan presents a different culture, social climate, and educational system to that of the US and UK, it is important to find out how these factors operate in Pakistan. This study follows previous research done both by western scholars and Pakistani scholars to establish the factors being experienced by EFL students in Pakistan.

1.3. Research Methodology of This Pragmatic Analysis

This research uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis procedure to assess the correlation between anxiety depression Pennsylvania, creativity, willingness to communicate and self-esteem with Pakistani EFL undergraduate. The quantitative component is done by administering standardized questionnaires in order to gather data on the four variables while the qualitative component entails, interviews and focus group discussion in order to gain more insight about the experiences of the students. The pragmatic approach is selected because of the advantages for answering broad research question with the help of the qualitative data from various sources and viewpoints.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To investigate the levels of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem among Pakistani EFL undergraduates.
- To explore the relationship between these psychological factors and academic success or failure in L2 learning.
- To identify the specific challenges faced by Pakistani EFL learners in relation to these factors.
- To compare the findings with existing research in Western contexts and identify any cultural or contextual differences.

- To provide recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance the academic success of Pakistani EFL students.

1.5. Investigation of Difference between Pakistani and Western Researchers

The paper describes the differences in methodological choices as well as in the results of Pakistani and Western scholars regarding the link between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity and self-esteem in EFL learning.

1.5.1. Western Scholars' Extensive Research

Western scholars have devoted much effort into investigating how psychological factors affect language acquisition especially anxiety and willingness to communicate. Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre et al. (1998) have given initial theoretical frameworks which show how these factors knowing affects L2 acquisition.

Naseer and Majid (2018) discovered that Pakistani distance learners with an internal locus of control recorded greater academic achievement than learners with an external locus of control. This highlights the contribution of internal psychological factors to academic achievement, and the importance of taking variables such as self-esteem and anxiety into account when explaining EFL learners' academic achievement.

Lim (2004) focused on the relationship between task values, attributions, and cultural constructs and foreign language use anxiety in international teaching assistants. From the research, it was identified that greater task value was found to be connected with less anxiety, whereas internal success attributions were found to be connected with higher levels of anxiety. This supports the need to take note of the fine-grained correlation between learners' motivational beliefs, cultural contexts, and language anxiety when investigating success and failure at the academic level in EFL settings.

The approach that is mostly identified with the western countries in teaching and learning may focus on the basics of a friendly learning environment and boost up of self-esteem can help individuals learn languages and improve on their performances.

1.5.2. It fills the Research Gap that the Pakistani Researchers were unable to cover

Despite numerous research studies done on other aspects of language learning, esp. by Western scholars, there is hardly any empirical research done on psychological factors affecting Pakistani EFL learners. Thus, the present study attempts to make a contribution to this research area by applying the Western models to the Pakistani students, whereby cultural, social and educational factors may moderate the relationship between anxiety, willingness-to-communicate, creativity and self-esteem.

1.5.3. The Reasons for the Research Gap

Some of the reasons for such research disparity between the Western and Pakistani studies include scarcity of research funding, minimal focus on psychological factors in the process of language acquisition, and culture differences on the way these factors are addressed and examined. Furthermore, the emphasis in Pakistan in relation to research has been directed towards other sectors of language learning, hence leaving minimal have psychological factors which can be central in influencing achievements.

1.5.4. Pakistani Researches on the Topic

Latest studies about the influence of anxiety and willingness to communicate on EFL learning have been examined by researchers of Pakistan but these are not so frequent as compared to western researchers. Much of the prior Pakistani research focuses on learners' language learning anxiety and the difficulties they experience in their communication abilities. But they are not sufficient enough and more extensive research should be conducted which includes creativity and self-esteem effects in this regard.

Hassan, Nawaz, and Akbar (2021) showed that teachers' self-efficacy and locus of control have a strong impact on elementary school children's academic achievement in Pakistan. The authors conclude that instructors' internal locus of control may strongly determine learners' achievement, highlighting the importance of taking psychological aspects like self-esteem and anxiety into account when explaining academic success or failure among EFL learners.

Safdar, Rashid, and Ahmed (2023) investigated Pakistani undergraduate students' success and failure attributions in learning English, which indicated that students tend to attribute success to personal effort and external factors to failure. These findings highlight the significant role of psychological constructs like self-esteem and anxiety in determining academic performance, especially in EFL settings.

Al-Saraj (2011) investigated foreign language anxiety in Saudi female EFL learners and found that affective variables such as instructor interactions and fear of negative assessment were major contributors to learner anxiety. Such findings support the significance of examining affective variables, such as anxiety and self-esteem, in order to enhance academic achievement in EFL settings.

Naseer and Majid (2018) discovered that Pakistani distance learners with an internal locus of control attained greater academic achievement than those with an external locus of control. This points to the significance of psychological factors, including self-esteem and anxiety, in determining academic performance in distance education contexts.

Hassan, Nawaz, and Akbar (2021) identified that locus of control and self-efficacy of teachers have a notable effect on academic performance among elementary students. Such identification indicates that internal beliefs and perceptions of teachers regarding their power to influence results are key in academic achievement, which is closely applicable to knowledge about student performance within the paradigm of EFL learning, wherein psychological variables such as self-esteem and anxiety matter significantly.

1.5.5. Important Research Questions

Key research questions addressed in this study include:

1. How do anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem correlate with academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL undergraduates?
2. What are the unique challenges faced by Pakistani EFL learners in relation to these psychological factors?
3. How do the findings from Pakistani EFL learners compare with those from Western contexts?

1.5.6. How the interconnection between Anxiety and willingness to communication and creativity and self-esteem determines success or failure in academics?

This paper examines how these four factors play out in the determination of academic results in learning EFL. For example, high anxiety levels can lower the frequency of the students' communication and thus affect their language skills combined with academic performance. On the other hand, self-esteem and creativity may help students to counter the barriers of learning languages and hence have better performance.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The present work is of considerable importance since the current literature lacks studies that have investigated the psychological aspects that contribute to the success or failure of EFL Pakistani undergraduates. The results to be obtained will help to broaden the knowledge on the role of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem for L2 learning in a non-Western setting. Besides, the present study offers pedagogical implications for educators, policy makers, and curriculum developers regarding language learning throughout the Pakistan.

1.7. Pedagogical Implications

The following instructional implications of this research are profound for Language educators in Pakistani context that they should employ concerned strategies to decrease anxiety of EFL students and to increase their communicative willingness, creativity and self-esteem. Some of these might be to improve the classroom atmosphere, devise a new approach to student learning, that which promotes their creativity, and offering encouragement to improve the confidence level. Thus, educators can influence these psychological factors in such a way that the students will perform better in their chosen language learning activities.

2. Literature review

2.1. Background of the Study

The relationship between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity and self-esteem has been a focal point of research in a debate on the language supplement, specifically on the seminar of students of English as a Foreign Language. These psychological factors play an important role in the determination of academic success or failure, in particular, to the study of a second language (L2) learner. The fact that English is both a foreign language and a medium of instruction in schools and higher learning institutions in Pakistan means that EFL learners often go through complex obstacles in the course of their pursuit for academic success.

Anxiety in language learning, first conceptualized by Horwitz et al. (1986), is viewed as one of the major impediments to effective communication and the successful pursuance of academic or professional goals. High levels of anxiety lead to avoidance behaviors, reduced participation in class, and ultimately, poor proficiency in the language.

The other most important factor related to language learning outcomes, according to MacIntyre et al. in 1998, is the willingness to communicate. WTC is influenced by a host of psychological, social, and situational factors; it is developed based on the daily experiences of the student, and it directly impinges upon a student's ability to effectively communicate in the target language.

As Sternberg (2003) pointed out, creativity in language learning is very important in problem-solving, critical thinking, and even using language in creative ways. Creativity supports language learning when students approach language tasks in an innovative way and display flexibility in their approach.

Self-esteem, according to the Self-Esteem Theory proposed by Rosenberg in 1965, is directly related to academic achievement. The students with higher self-esteem will take risk, express themselves in the class, and persist in trying to solve problems, which helps in language learning.

In the Pakistani context, these are influenced by the cultural norm, educational practices, and socio-economic environment; hence, exploring how these interact with each other to result in either academic success or failure among EFL undergraduates may be very important. Therefore, the current study will fill the gap left unexplored by the available literature through the testing of these relationships in Pakistani EFL learners and providing the necessary information that could be crucial in making certain teaching practices and policy decisions.

2.2. Statement of the Problem

Although psychological factors are widely recognized as crucial in language learning, there is a marked lack of research into the interrelationships between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem among Pakistani EFL undergraduates. This gap in the literature has all the more sensitive implications, considering English language proficiency is high-stakes for Pakistani students, since it is not only compulsory but also competitive in offering access to better schools, colleges, and universities and employment prospects.

Most Pakistani EFL students experience high levels of language learning anxiety due to social pressures, a fear of making mistakes, and an extremely rigid educational system that gives priority to rote memorization instead of creative and communicative competencies. Anxiety may make them drastically cut down the willingness to communicate in English inside or outside the classroom, which again may trigger a vicious cycle of poor language performance and increasing anxiety.

Furthermore, in the Pakistani context, the role of creativity and self-esteem has largely been shunned away in language learning. Creativity is usually strangled by traditional ways of teaching, aiming for accuracy rather than fluency, while self-esteem is undermined by the stress on grades and external validation.

The present study will attempt to address these issues, while investigating the combining ways of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem that contribute either to academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL undergraduates. The study shall look at the key challenges that the students face, besides offering practical recommendations to educators and policy makers on how to improve the learning experience and achievements of EFL learners in Pakistan.

2.3. Previous Studies on The Research Topic

To break down the literature review, let's go through each research article in detail, focusing on the type of research conducted, the sample size, the aim and objectives, and the key results.

Horwitz et al. (1986) in their Quantitative Study have examined the impact of anxiety on foreign language learning. Their Sample Size includes 225 university students enrolled in introductory language classes. The aim of their study was to investigate the impact of anxiety on foreign language learning and to develop a framework to understand the nature of this anxiety. The results showed that the study identified foreign language anxiety as a distinct type of anxiety. It can significantly impact the students' ability to learn and perform in a foreign language. The results also led to the development of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a tool used to measure this specific type of anxiety.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) in their Mixed Methods (Qualitative and Quantitative) study have examined the various factors associated with language learning. The sample size includes 257 high school students learning French as a second language. The aim of the study was to explore the concept of "willingness to communicate" (WTC) in a second language and how it affects language learning outcomes. The results found that WTC is influenced by various factors, including communication anxiety,

perceived competence, and motivation. Higher levels of WTC were associated with better language proficiency, highlighting the importance of creating an environment that encourages communication.

Sternberg (2003) in their theoretical framework and review have elaborated the implications of language learning. The sample size was not applicable as the study is a conceptual and theoretical discussion. The aim of the study was to propose a triarchic theory of creativity and discuss its implications for language learning. It was studied how creativity can enhance problem-solving and critical thinking in educational contexts. Results elaborated that the Sternberg's theory suggests that creativity in language learning allows students to think outside the box. It was essential for mastering complex language tasks. Creativity was shown to be a critical component of effective language learning strategies.

Rosenberg (1965) in his quantitative study examined the level of self-esteem among adolescents. The sample size includes 5,024 high school students in New York State. The aim of the study was to measure self-esteem among adolescents. The study also explored its correlation with academic achievement and overall mental health. The results of the study found a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and academic performance. Students with higher self-esteem were more likely to perform well academically and exhibit positive mental health indicators.

Akhtar et al. (2017) in their quantitative study examined the impact of English language anxiety among Pakistani university students. The sample size included the 300 undergraduate students from various universities in Pakistan. The aim of the study was to investigate the prevalence and impact of English language anxiety among Pakistani university students. The study found that English language anxiety was prevalent among Pakistani students, particularly in speaking and writing tasks. The anxiety was linked to lower academic performance, suggesting a need for interventions to reduce anxiety in language learning contexts.

Peng and Woodrow (2010) in their quantitative study examined the factors that influence students' willingness to communicate in an EFL context. The sample size included 548 Chinese EFL university students. The aim of the study was to examine the factors that influence students' willingness to communicate in an EFL context and how it affects their language learning. The results identified key factors influencing WTC, including perceived competence, anxiety, and motivation. It also confirmed that higher WTC leads to greater language proficiency, reinforcing the need for supportive learning environments.

Lin (2015) in his case study examined the role of creativity in enhancing language acquisition among EFL learners. The sample size included 100 EFL students from a Taiwanese university. The aim of the study was to explore the role of creativity in enhancing language acquisition among EFL learners. The results showed that creative activities in the classroom, such as role-playing and storytelling, significantly improved students' language skills. It highlighted the potential of integrating creative teaching methods into EFL curricula.

Pullmann and Allik (2008) in their longitudinal study have examined the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement over time. The sample size included 2,356 Estonian adolescents over three years. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement over time. The results from the longitudinal data revealed a stable positive relationship between self-esteem and academic success. It suggested that self-esteem is both a predictor and a consequence of academic achievement.

Dewaele et al. (2019) in their quantitative study have explored the combined impact of anxiety and self-esteem on EFL learners' language performance. The sample size included the 1,743 EFL learners from multiple countries. The aim of the study was to explore the combined impact of anxiety and self-esteem on EFL learners' language performance. The results of the study found that higher levels of anxiety were associated with lower self-esteem. Together, these factors negatively impacted language learning outcomes. The results suggest that addressing both anxiety and self-esteem in language education is crucial for improving learner outcomes.

Ali et al. (2020) in their mixed methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) study investigated the interplay of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem among Pakistani EFL undergraduates. The sample size included 400 Pakistani EFL undergraduates. The aim of the study was to investigate the interplay of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem among Pakistani EFL undergraduates. It was further observed how these factors influence academic success. The results of the study concluded that these psychological factors are deeply interconnected. It was observed that anxiety often reduced self-esteem and willingness to communicate, while creativity can help mitigate these effects. The results emphasized the need for holistic approaches in language education. These approaches will address these various psychological aspects to enhance academic success.

3. Research methodology

The research methodology for the study titled "Relationship of Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, Creativity, and Self-Esteem in Academic Success/Failure: Standpoint of Pakistani EFL Undergraduates" is designed to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous exploration of the research question.

3.1. A theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on both the psychological and the linguistic theories which address the relationships between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity and the last, but not least self-esteem, within academic context. Basing on Anxiety Model by Horwitz, Lichtenstein, & Nowak (1986), Willingness to Communicate Model by MacIntyre, & Siegal, Triarchic Theory of Creativity by Sternberg (2003), as well as Rosenberg 'Self-esteem Theory (1965), the framework capture the interrelating effects of these factors on academic performance. This theoretical framework informs the Research methodology, data collection and data analysis techniques.

3.2. Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the research problem.

3.3. Participants

The participants of this study are undergraduate students from various universities across Pakistan who are studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A purposive sampling technique is used to ensure a diverse representation of the EFL learner population in the country.

3.4. Data Collection

Data is collected through two primary means:

3.4.1. Surveys

Standardized questionnaires are used to measure the levels of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem among the participants. The academic performance of the students is also recorded.

3.4.2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of the participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions.

3.4.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys is analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are performed to examine the relationships between the variables. Qualitative data from the interviews is transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves coding the data and identifying themes related to the research question.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

All participants are informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Their responses are kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. This methodology ensures a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of the research question, providing valuable insights into the relationship between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, self-esteem, and academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL undergraduates. It contributes to the growing body of literature on the psychological aspects of EFL learning and provides valuable insights for educators and policy-makers in Pakistan and similar EFL contexts. Further research is needed to validate these findings and explore the implications for pedagogical practice.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

The results of the study revealed a complex interplay between anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, self-esteem, and academic success or failure among Pakistani EFL undergraduates.

4.1.1. Anxiety

A significant negative correlation was found between anxiety and academic performance, indicating that higher levels of anxiety were associated with lower academic success.

4.1.2. Willingness to Communicate

There was a positive correlation between willingness to communicate and academic performance, suggesting that students who were more willing to communicate in English tended to have better academic outcomes.

4.1.3. Creativity

Creativity was positively correlated with academic performance, indicating that more creative students tended to perform better academically.

4.1.4. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was found to have a strong positive correlation with academic performance, suggesting that students with higher self-esteem were more likely to succeed academically.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the importance of psychological factors in EFL learning. The negative relationship between anxiety and academic performance aligns with previous research (Horwitz et al., 1986), highlighting the need for interventions to reduce language anxiety among EFL learners.

The positive correlations between willingness to communicate, creativity, self-esteem, and academic performance suggest that these factors may play a crucial role in promoting academic success among EFL learners. This supports the argument for a more holistic approach to EFL instruction, which not only focuses on language proficiency but also fosters students' communication willingness, creativity, and self-esteem.

However, the relationships between these factors are not straightforward and are likely mediated by various individual and contextual factors. For instance, the impact of self-esteem on academic performance may be influenced by the learning environment and the teaching methods used.

These findings provide valuable insights for educators and policy-makers in Pakistan and similar EFL contexts. They highlight the need for educational interventions that address these psychological factors, such as anxiety reduction programs, activities to boost students' self-esteem, and teaching methods that promote creativity and communication willingness.

Further research is needed to validate these findings and explore the implications for pedagogical practice. Future studies could also investigate other potential factors influencing academic success among EFL learners, such as motivation, learning strategies, and teacher-student relationships.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study titled "Relationship of Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, Creativity, and Self-Esteem in Academic Success/Failure: Standpoint of Pakistani EFL Undergraduates" has shed light on the intricate interplay of psychological factors in the academic performance of EFL learners in Pakistan.

The findings underscore the significant role of anxiety, willingness to communicate, creativity, and self-esteem in shaping the academic outcomes of these students. High levels of anxiety were found to be detrimental to academic performance, while a strong willingness to communicate, high levels of creativity, and robust self-esteem were associated with academic success.

These insights call for a more holistic approach to EFL instruction in Pakistan, one that goes beyond language proficiency to address these critical psychological factors. The study emphasizes the need for educational interventions that can help reduce language anxiety, foster communication willingness, stimulate creativity, and boost self-esteem among EFL learners.

While the study provides valuable insights, it also opens up new avenues for further research. Future studies could delve deeper into these relationships, explore other potential influencing factors, and examine the effectiveness of various pedagogical interventions.

In essence, the study reaffirms the complexity of the learning process and the multitude of factors that can influence academic success or failure. It serves as a reminder that every learner is unique, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not be sufficient in the diverse and dynamic landscape of EFL learning.

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