

Examining The Status of Parental Involvement in Preventing Students Dropout in Secondary Schools in Nyasa District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT: This study was grounded from the Tinto's students' retention theory to examine the status of parental involvement in preventing students' dropout in public secondary schools in Nyasa District, Tanzania. The mixed methods research approach was adopted, grounded in the pragmatism paradigm. The study employed a convergent parallel design. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview methods from a sample size of 147, which included parents, teachers, Village executive officers (VEOs), heads of schools and District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO). The findings revealed that there was low parental involvement in preventing students' dropout, as there was poor parental responses in monitoring students' behaviors and attendance, attending parent-teachers meetings, provision of school requirements on time and poor close parent-teacher relationship in public secondary schools. The study concluded that there is low parental involvement in preventing students' dropout in public secondary schools. Lastly, it was recommended that parents to establish close and strong relationship with teachers in order to improve their engagement preventing students' dropout in public secondary schools.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The involvement of parents in education of their children plays a great role in all academic endeavors. Parents are key stakeholders in enhancing academic excellence not only for their own children but also for schools' effectiveness (Nyembeke, 2016). Since Student dropout is a significant concern in educational institutions worldwide, impacting academic achievement, financial sustainability, workforce productivity and economic development and social mobility thus a comprehensive strategies that encompass both preventive measures and supportive intervention are required to end or decrease students' dropout in public secondary schools (UNESCO, 2005; Ball, 2017). Among other strategies, parental involvement in school's academic operations influences high completion rate and reducing students' dropouts in secondary schools (Canter, 2023). Parental involvement is described as involvement in a child's schooling and other school activities to monitor the child's academic progress (Ahmed, 2018). For example, it was revealed by Garcia and Thornton (2014) in the United State of America (USA) that family involvement in education raises student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and ultimately lowers the rate of school dropout. Particularly, Reynolds et al. (2015) asserted that parental involvement in education has been associated with many positive outcomes for students and reduces the likelihood that students may intend to drop out of school in USA. While in developing countries, efforts to address student dropout rates have led to various government initiatives. For example, the Kenyan government implemented Sectional Paper No. 1 of 2005 to enhance collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities and began training head teachers in 2004 to improve parent-teacher relationships (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Also, LoL, Banda and Banda (2024) in Malawi emphasizes the importance of parental support in fostering autonomy and reducing dropout rates. In Ghana, Osei-Afful and Aidoo (2017) asserted that family involvement in education plays a significant role in improving student achievement, reducing absenteeism, and lowering school dropout rates. In South Africa, Mlambo and Dube (2019) highlighted that parental engagement in education has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, such as better academic performance and a decreased likelihood of students dropping out of school. In Tanzania, parental involvement in education varies based on factors such as location and socio-economic status. According to Komba and Nkumbi (2008) and Nyembeke (2016), urban, educated parents often monitor schoolwork and attendance closely, while

rural or less-educated parents may be less involved due to work demands or lack of awareness. Supporting this notion, Omary, Salum, and Mapunda (2021) found a significant gap in knowledge among parents regarding effective engagement in school-related matters, suggesting that around 40% of parents lack awareness of their roles in supporting their children's education. Numerous parents in community secondary schools fail to guide homework completion, check assignments, or track attendance (Nyembeke, 2016). This lack of parental engagement is particularly pronounced in disadvantaged regions like Nyasa district, where Uwezo (2013) reports that only 32% of parents actively participate in their children's academic activities due to their unawareness. This limited support adversely affects students' academic performance, as many parents do not assist with homework, check assignments, or monitor attendance.

The alarming issue of student dropout rates in the Ruvuma region underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance parental engagement and improve student retention. Data on the dropout rates shows that in Ruvuma region, total number of 4,727 students dropped out of the secondary schools (Regional Administrative Secretary Office, 2023). Between 2018 and 2023, Ruvuma faced troubling dropout rates, with 1,500 secondary students reported as dropouts in 2018, 2,000 in 2019, 2,500 in 2020, 3,000 in 2021, 4,731 in 2022, and 4,000 in 2023 (BEST, 2022). Some areas reported rates as high as 25%. The foundation for academic success in later years of schooling depends heavily on school attendance and completion at the secondary level (Moshi, 2023). Data on the dropout rates shows that in Nyasa district, total number of 1,227 students dropped out of the secondary schools in 2022 (BEST, 2023). These alarming statistics reflect a growing trend in dropout rates, highlighting the urgent need for effective interventions.

Given their tender age, students require increased parental involvement in their learning processes. With this number of dropout in Ruvuma region; specifically in Nyasa district, the government's effort of giving access to education to all citizens is restricted. On the other hand, it is not clear that whether parents are involved in monitoring their children's progress when they are in school or they left teachers alone to deal with their students. To end this puzzle, the researcher inquires: How Students dropout is managed through Parents Involvement in Public Secondary Schools by using insights from Nyasa District in Tanzania. Understanding this dynamic is vital for developing effective interventions, as such research could provide insights into the barriers to parental engagement and inform strategies to enhance support for students, ultimately reducing dropout rates.

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study will shed light on the role of parental involvement in student dropout rates, highlighting the specific factors that influence this relationship. Understanding how parents engage (or fail to engage) in their children's education will enable educators and stakeholders to develop programs that foster greater parental participation. Research indicates that active parental involvement significantly impacts student outcomes, including retention rates. Moreover, by identifying best practices and effective communication methods, the research will guide schools and local authorities in implementing programs that empower parents to support their children academically.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory was developed by Vincent Tinto in 1975. The theory posits that students are more likely to persist in college and graduate if they are academically and socially integrated into the institution, building a sense of belonging and commitment. Thus, the model suggests that for a student to be retained in secondary schools depends on his/her prior experiences, skills, attributes, values and integration with the academic and social environment (Tinto, 1975). The present study adopt this model in a manner that; academic and social interactions are key towards students' dropouts.

In the context of this study, the theory is relevant to the current study given that the theory suggests that academic and social integration influence student persistence in education. If students feel unsupported by their family and school environment, they are more likely to drop out. Under Academic integration; the student needs encouragement from parents to attend school, complete homework, and perform well. While in Social integration; student will need support from peers, teachers, and family to remain in school. Conclusively, Tinto's model was applied in the present study to show how lack of parental involvement weakens both academic and social integration, leading to increased dropout rates.

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

The study by Nduka and Okwor (2021) investigated the role of parental involvement in preventing student dropout in secondary schools in Nigeria. Using a survey design, the researchers collected data from 200 students and 50 parents through questionnaires. The findings revealed that active parental engagement in academic activities, such as attending school meetings and assisting with homework, significantly reduced dropout rates. The authors emphasized the importance of communication between parents and teachers in supporting students' educational journeys. However, the study has content gaps as it did not address specific strategies for enhancing parental involvement. Additionally, there are contextual gaps since it was conducted in Nigeria, which may limit its applicability to other regions like Ruvuma in Tanzania. Methodologically, the study relied solely on quantitative data, highlighting a methodological gap in not incorporating qualitative insights from students or teachers. This study underscored the critical role of

parental involvement in promoting student retention, aligning with the objectives of assessing and enhancing parental engagement to reduce dropout rates.

The study by Chemagosi (2015) had the purpose of finding out influence of parental involvement on academic performance of pre-school children in Emgwen Division, Nandi Central District, Kenya. The study employed the use of descriptive research design whereby the data collected was not manipulated by the researcher in any way. The researcher targeted children, teachers and parents of preschool children in Emgwen Division. The study adopted both simple random sampling techniques. It was showed that children whose parents communicate with them perform better in academics than those who do not. The study concluded that only a few parents' respondents have high aspiration on their children's academic achievement. However, the study has content gaps as it did not address specific strategies for enhancing parental involvement parental involvement was discussed in this study but it has been largely on academic achievement and not dropout reduction. Additionally, there are contextual gaps since it was conducted in Kenya, which may limit its applicability to other regions like Ruvuma in Tanzania. Methodologically, the study relied solely on quantitative data, highlighting a methodological gap in not incorporating qualitative insights from students or teachers. Moreover, the study was very useful as it added important insights of parental involvement in other areas.

Similarly, Kikoti, (2018) conducted a study on parents' Participation in improving students' academic performance in community secondary schools in Tanzania. Three community secondary schools were involved with 97 respondents. Respondents include; heads of schools, students, teachers and parents. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed. Data obtained in this study was analyzed using content and descriptive analysis. The study revealed that there is minimal parents' participation in the education of their children and therefore contributes to poor performance among students. Poor communication between parents and teachers, lack of education, poor communication between parents and their children hinders parents' participation in secondary schools. It was therefore recommended in this study that Parents should involve directly in activities like encouraging their children to do their homework, monitoring their activities inside and outside their house, and providing coaching service for improving their learning in different subject. However, the reviewed study raises the content gap as it doesn't say explicitly on how parents' involvement could facilitate dropout reduction in secondary schools. Moreover, there are contextual gaps since it was conducted in Sumbawanga Municipal, which may limit its applicability to other regions like Nyasa district in Ruvuma region.

Tete (2018) had the study aimed at investigating the role of parents on influencing academic performance in community secondary schools in Mbozi district. The approach used to undertake this study was qualitative research approach whereby the work is mostly in descriptive manner. The study used a case study design. Data collection was done through interviews, documentary reviews and focus group discussions. The research included 70 participants who were purposively sampled. The findings prove that, majority of the parents play a little role in the supervision of their children because of the low level of education they have. Thus, the study recommends that; in order for the students to perform better, parental supervision is more needed for the improvement of students' performance. However, the study has content gaps as it did not address specific parental involvement in reducing students' dropout in secondary schools. Moreover, there are contextual gaps since it was conducted in Mbozi district, which may limit its applicability in Nyasa district due to different social economic characteristics between the two districts. Methodologically, the study relied solely on qualitative data, highlighting a methodological gap in not incorporating quantitative insights from parents or teachers. Also, no research paradigm adopted in this research. Additionally, the findings aligns with the present study on status of parental involvement in reducing dropout in secondary schools.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was grounded in the pragmatism paradigm. The choice of pragmatism paradigm enabled the researcher to maintain the best research techniques that contribute to the most effective answer to the research issue (Enosh, Tzafrir & Stolovy, 2014). Thus, the researcher captured diverse perspectives on the status of parental involvement in preventing student dropout in public secondary schools by gathering varied viewpoints through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The mixed methods research approach was also employed with a convergent parallel research design. Using simple random and purposive sampling techniques, the researcher selected a sample of 147 respondents, which included parents, teachers, Village executive officers, heads of schools and District Secondary Education Officer.

Data were collected through questionnaire method from teachers and parents, while interview method was used to gather data as the researcher conducted interviews to VEOs, school heads and DSEO. The validity of research instruments in this study was ensured by expert judgments, while the reliability of the research instruments was ensured when the researcher used test-retest technique so as to be assured of the consistency of the results. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data, as data were analyzed with respect to these steps: data cleaning and preparation which involves checking the collected data for errors, missing values and inconsistencies. Data were coded or categorized based on study objectives. Moreover, while thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data. The researcher read and re-read to gain in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the responses obtained from the interview. Secondly, the researcher coded features of the data. Thirdly, the researcher collated code into potential theme. Fourthly, themes were refined and lastly the report was produced. Furthermore, the researcher observed all ethical principles in this study (Creswell, 2018 & Stuckey, 2015).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the status of parental involvement in preventing students' dropout in Nyasa district, Tanzania. The researcher collected data from the key informants who were parents (n=96), teachers (n=35), VEOs (n=8), heads of schools (n=7) and DSEO (n=1). Questionnaire method was used to collect information from parents and teachers on the status of parental involvement in preventing students' dropout in secondary schools. This was scaled through 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. The interview method was used to collect information from heads of school, Village executive officers and DSEO. The findings are presented and analysed in Table 4.2 and table 4.3 below;

Table 4.2: Parents' responses on the status of parental involvement in preventing students' dropouts

S/N	Statement	Respondents	SD		D		N		A		SA		MEAN
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Follow up to students' attendance	Parents	49	51.04	27	28.13	5	5.21	12	12.5	3	3.13	1.89
2	Provision of school requirements timely	Parents	33	34.38	37	38.54	2	2.08	13	13.5	11	11.5	2.29
3	Follow up to students' behaviors	Parents	37	38.54	28	29.17	12	12.50	8	8.33	11	11.5	2.25
4	Close relationship with teachers	Parents	41	42.71	35	36.46	1	1.04	13	13.5	6	6.25	2.04
5	Attending parent-teacher meetings	Parents	35	36.46	28	29.17	2	2.08	11	11.5	20	20.8	2.51
Average mean score		Parents											2.20

Source; Field data (2025)

Table 4.3: Teachers' responses on the status of parental involvement in preventing students' dropouts

S/N	Statement	Respondents	SD		D		N		A		SA		MEAN
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Follow up to students' attendance	Teachers	17	48.57	13	37.14	1	2.86	2	5.71	2	5.71	1.83
2	Provision of school requirements timely	Teachers	16	45.71	11	31.43	2	5.71	3	8.57	3	8.57	2.03
3	Follow up to students' behaviors	Teachers	19	54.29	9	25.71	2	5.71	2	5.71	3	8.57	1.89
4	Close relationship with teachers	Teachers	14	40.00	17	48.57	2	5.71	1	2.86	1	2.86	1.80
5	Attending parent-teacher meetings	Teachers	10	28.57	13	37.14	0	0.00	7	20	5	14.3	2.54
Average mean score		Teachers											2.02

Source; Field data (2025)

4.3.1 Follow up to students' attendance

Data in table 4.2 above revealed that majority of parents (79.17%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make frequent follow up to the students' attendance in public secondary schools. While, data in table 4.3 revealed that majority of teachers (85.71%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make frequent follow up to the students' attendance in public secondary schools. Parents and teachers responded with a mean score of 1.89 and 1.83 respectively. These data show that the majority of parents and teachers disagreed that parents make frequent follow up to the students' attendance in school. This implies that parents don't regularly involve themselves in preventing students' dropout in secondary school due to the fact that poor students' attendance rate would lead to students' dropout. The task of tracking students' attendance is heavily casted to teachers in secondary schools while parents of these students don't bother themselves as they think it is none of their business.

One of the head of school when asked explained;

Preventing students' dropout in secondary schools is a collective task as both parents and teachers have to participate fully in this responsibility. But in my experience, there is low level of parental involvement in tracking their children's attendance. Some parents tend to leave their children alone at home as they go to farms, thus students become freely at home as decide their attendance since there is no one to follow up (Head of school 01, July 2025).

The response from interview data show that parents were busy with economic activities as they neglected their primary role of providing intensive children's care. Understanding that their parents are closely monitoring their school's attendance, students are in better position to dodge some class sessions which ultimately lead to dropout in secondary schools. Suffice to say that, if parents don't monitor students' attendance, students' attendance will be very low in secondary. Moreover, the findings are in line with Tete (2018) who proves that, majority of the parents play a little role in the supervision of their children's attendance due to the low level of education they have. That was why, the study recommended that; in order for the students to perform better, parental supervision is more needed for the improvement of students' retention and academic performance. Similarly, numerous parents in community secondary schools fail to guide homework completion, check assignments, or track attendance (Nyembeke, 2016). Furthermore, According to Komba and Nkumbi (2008) and Nyembeke (2016), urban, educated parents often monitor schoolwork and attendance closely, while rural or less-educated parents may be less involved due to work demands or lack of awareness.

4.3.2 Provision of school requirements timely

Data as presented in table 4.2 above revealed that majority of parents (72.92%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents provide school requirements timely to their children in public secondary schools. Particularly, data in table 4.3 revealed that majority of teachers (77.14%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents provide school requirements timely to their children in public secondary schools. Parents and teachers responded with a mean score of 2.29 and 2.03 respectively. These data show that the majority of parents and teachers disagreed that provide school requirements timely to their children. This infers that students in public secondary schools were not provided with necessary school requirements on time. Requirements like uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, food contributions and shoes were not provided to students on time.

One among the head of school elaborated;

There are various ways of parental involvement in preventing their children's dropout in secondary schools. Provision students' requirements is among of them. When parents fail to provide such important materials, their children will gradually loose interest to school hence stimulating dropouts. In our school, many parents don't provide school requirements on time while others provide very few of them. For example, parents don't contribute schools while students stay at school for more than ten hours (Head of school 2, July 2025).

The response from head of school 2 indicate that most parents do not engage fully themselves in preventing students' dropout in a sense that they have low response in providing their children with all necessary school requirements. Delay of parents in providing these important school requirements signaling low level of parent engagement in education. Timely provision of school requirements is among the way parents are involved in preventing students' dropout due to the fact that students are likely to be retained in secondary schools if they are provided with important school requirements. Thus, there is low level of parents' involvement in preventing students' dropout since parents don't provide school requirements on time. Moreover, these findings are in line with Chemagosi (2015) as the study concluded that only a few parents' respondents have high aspiration on their children's academic achievement. With Chemagosi's findings, it shows delays in provision of students' school requirements align with low level of parents' aspiration on their children's academic achievement.

4.3.3 Follow up to students' behaviors

Moreover, the presented data in table 4.2 above revealed that majority of parents (67.17%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make frequent follow up to the students' behaviors in public secondary schools. On the other hand, data in table 4.3 revealed that majority of teachers (80%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make frequent follow up to the students' behaviors in public secondary schools. With regard to mean score, parents responded with a mean score of 2.25 while teachers responded with a mean score of 1.80. These data show that the majority of parents and teachers disagreed that parents follow up students' behaviors. This shows that the responsibility of dealing with students' behaviors is left to teachers and school administration in public secondary schools. So teachers deals with students' behaviors at school while parents don't. This show that there is a gap in students' care when they are at home.

Similarly, head of school 3 had this to say when interviewed;

Irresponsibility of parents' in making follow up their children' behaviors signify how parents don't cooperate with schools in shaping students' behaviors. Let me tell you, if students are exposed to bad and dangerous behaviors, they will deliberately quit their studies or being expelled by school boards hence increasing number of students' dropouts. We try our level best at school to control students' behaviors but when they are at home, they lack behavioral guidance from their parents as they engage in bad groups, attending music shows, playing pool tables as well as in love affairs (Head of school 3, July 2025).

The response from interview data as presented by head of school 3, indicate that uncontrolled students' behaviors influence students' dropouts in public secondary schools. Uncontrolled students' behaviors will lead to early pregnancies, early marriages, spread of Human Immune Viruses (HIV), theft as well as increase of street children. Low level of parents' involvement in monitoring students' behaviors are one among causative of students' dropout. Parents can not involve themselves in preventing students' dropouts if they don't make significant follow up to students' behaviors. Furthermore, the findings coincide with Garcia and Thornton (2014) in the USA as they revealed that family involvement in education raises student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and ultimately lowers the rate of school dropout. Moreover, the active participation of parents in their child's education, including monitoring their academic progress and engaging in school-related activities (Ndiaye, 2020).

4.3.4 Close relationship with teachers

Furthermore, table 4.2 above indicated that majority of parents (79.17%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make close relationship with teachers in public secondary schools. Also, data in table 4.3 indicated that majority of teachers (88.57%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents make close relationship with teachers in public secondary schools. Parents responded with a mean score of 2.04 while teachers responded with mean score of 1.80. These data show that the majority of parents and teachers disagreed that parents make close relationship with teachers in public secondary schools. This infers that there is partial parents-teacher relationship in secondary schools that is both parents and teachers do not communicate regularly on school matters.

One among heads of schools explained;

A strong parents-teachers relationships creates a sense of students' safety and consistency in both home and school settings. Astonishingly, parents are mostly come when they are required to, especially in solving students' cases. There is no parent-teacher conflicts in our school but we don't communicate that much with parents. Parents have to establish communication with teachers because teachers cannot text or mail or even call every parents provided teachers have many students to with at school (Head of school 4, July 2025).

The findings from interview data above indicate that school administrators are aware of the important of developing strong parent-teacher relationship as the way to prevent students' dropout in secondary schools. When students know that their parents and teachers regularly communicate, they become more confidence in their learning abilities and afraid of misbehaving as results they are easily retained in secondary schools. However, despite this understanding, there such relationship in schools as each part (parents and teachers) hesitated to establish it. Absence of close relationship between teachers and parents creates hardship for parents to involve in preventing students' dropout hence indicating low level of parental involvement in preventing students' drop out in public secondary schools. Moreover, these findings align with the findings of Kikoti, (2018) as revealed that there is minimal parents' participation in the education of their children and therefore contributes to poor performance among students. Poor communication between parents and teachers, lack of education, poor communication between parents and their children hinders parents' participation in secondary schools.

4.3.5 Attending parent-teacher meetings

Additionally, data as presented in table 4.2 above illustrated that majority of parents (65.63%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents attend parent-teacher meetings in public secondary schools. On the other hand, data in table 4.3 revealed that majority of teachers (65.71%) strongly disagreed and disagreed that parents attend parent-teacher meetings in public secondary schools. Parents and teachers responded with a mean score of 2.51 and 2.54 respectively. These data show that the majority of parents and teachers disagreed that parents attend physical parent-teacher meetings prepared in secondary schools. Parent-teacher meetings are very significant in schools as they enable both parents and teachers to discuss issues concerning their children (students) education. These meetings are among traditional and common way that parents are get involved on school matters like students discipline, academic performance, attendance and dropout. Thus, failure of parents to attend parent-teacher meeting deny them opportunities of cooperating with teachers in enhancing smooth schooling of their children.

Another head of schools explained;

Despite the fact that parents are very important educational stakeholders as they offer significant influence to students' retention and academic performance in secondary schools, many parents don't attend scheduled parent-teacher meetings which are conducted twice per year. This deny us an opportunity of taking collective measure to prevent students' dropout which is very huge problem in our school. Dealing with students' dropout is not an easy task that is why we need to work together with parents, with parent-teacher meetings being among the platform that bring teachers and parents together (Head of school 5, July 2025).

The response from head of school 5 infers that there is low level of parents involvement in parent-teacher meetings conducted in secondary schools. Preventing students' dropout is not an easy task as it needs a highly level of cooperation from both parents and teachers. Thus if parents don't attend parent-teacher meetings means they don't want to be involved so they can't learn on their children's attendance rate at school. This, in turn, is expected to lead to poor students' academic and behavioral outcomes and a weaker collaborative relationship between teachers and parents, ultimately affecting the entire education system. Moreover, the findings align to that of Ciaraka (2003) had pointed out in his study that majority of the parents did not participate in school decision making neither did they attend school functions. While, Nduka and Okwor (2021) findings revealed that active parental engagement in academic activities, such as attending school meetings and assisting with homework, significantly reduced dropout rates. The authors emphasized the importance of communication between parents and teachers in supporting students' educational journeys.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Regarding the findings obtained from this study as presented and discussed in 4.0 above, the following can be drawn as conclusion; it is concluded that failure of parents to engage in their children's schooling may results to poor management of students' dropout in public secondary schools. For example, the findings showed parents even fail to monitor their child's attendance and behaviors and some parents did not provide students' school necessities on time. These practices did not encourage students' retention in secondary school and signaling low level of parental involvement in preventing students' dropout.

5.2 Recommendations

The study's findings proved there is low level of parent involvement in managing students' dropout in public secondary schools, there is the need of parents to establish close and strong relationship with teachers in order to improve their engagement and participation in education. Moreover, parents ought to timely provide basic school requirements to their children as well as tracking and monitoring children's behaviors and attendance.

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