

Health Status of Working Women in Higher Education in Pakistan: The Mediating Role of Familial Responsibilities and Spiritual Health Issues

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Abstract: This paper aims to evaluate health status of working women by the mediating role of familial responsibilities and spiritual health issues in higher education institutions. The health status of working women at the university level has been affected by several factors. This study uses a quantitative approach and a survey has been conducted. A sample of 754 women has been drawn from four (two public and two private sectors) universities in the Punjab province, Pakistan using a proportionate random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire has been administered by the researcher to collect information from the respondents. It uses an attitudinal scale of (dis)agreement and pilot testing has also been done on 30 working women to check the reliability of the instrument. The study findings conclude that there has been an association between workload pressure and health status of working women in higher education. The study findings reveal that there is significant difference of workload pressure and health status of working women in public and private sector, faculty job and administrative job, and working females have rural and urban residential backgrounds. The study also clinched that physical health issues, psychological health issues, and social well-being issues has been directly affecting the spiritual health issues of working women at university. The spiritual health issues, physical health issues, social well-being issues, psychological health issues, familial responsibilities, and nutritional diet issues have been directly affecting the health status of working women at the tertiary level of educational institutions.

Key Words: Physical Health, Psychological Health, Social Well-being, Health Status, Working Women, Familial Responsibilities

Introduction

It has been observed that workload pressure and health status issues faced by working women have paid attention to academicians and research scholars (Smele, Quinlan, & Lacroix, [2021](#); L. Webber & Dismore, [2021](#)). Several studies have been conducted on the issues by several scholars using multiple domains (Day, [2019](#); Jackson, Stone, Chilungu, & Ford, [2021](#); Majid & Siegmann, [2021](#); Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, [2024](#)). The occurrence (workload pressure and health status issues of working women) has appealed to media personalities, research experts, decision-makers, politicians, and scholars in the field of gender studies and sociology in the global south and global north (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, [2024a](#), [2024b](#)). In several countries (developed and developing), work conditions and environment for women have been improved concerning their workload pressure and health status (Roberts & Mir Zulfiqar, [2019](#);

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Shoaib, [2024d](#); Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, [2024](#); Virdee, [2019](#); Weiner & Weiner, [2018](#); Yang & Choo, [2019](#)). Workload pressure and health status issues faced by working women are increasing several socio-cultural challenges in Pakistan (Ahmad, [2020](#); Masood, [2018](#); Waqar, Khan, & Ullah, [2019](#)). It has been argued that few research studies have been conducted to address the issue under discussion specifically in Pakistan. Hence, the main objective of the study is to examine workload pressure and health status issues faced by working women at the university to initiate consideration of the concern.

Review of Literature

Research shows that women academicians in higher education have family responsibilities aside from their academic goals (Yang & Choo, [2019](#)). These studies have revealed that women academicians in higher education are allocated additional tasks along with teaching loads in most developing countries (L. Webber, [2015](#); L. A. Webber, [2017](#)). In this way, their teaching capacity is badly affected and they are unable to focus on teaching as a primary responsibility but rather do other additional tasks (Sikandar, Ahmad, Maqsood, & Maqsood, [2019](#)). They are assigned these tasks by their immediate bosses (Noor & Zainuddin, [2011](#); Ullah & Shoaib, [2021](#)). The objective of assigning these tasks is to keep them busy with clerical work (Malik, Saif, Gomez, Khan, & Hussain, [2010](#)). As long as the educational structure is concerned, it is unfortunate to mention that women academicians are assigned clerical work along with the teaching loads (Khurshid, Parveen, & Yousuf, [2014](#); Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, [2023](#)). It certainly affects their teaching capacity and performance (Erdamar & Demirel, [2014](#); Shoaib, [2021](#)).

There is the interplay of familial responsibilities and career (Ramadani & Gërguri-Rashiti, [2017](#); Shoaib & Ullah, [2021a](#)). Due to clerical loads, women academicians find less time for their family responsibilities (Waters, [2015](#)). Research shows that additional responsibilities of clerical nature have affected the family time of the teachers (S. Ali, [2017](#); Caracci, [2003](#); Fikree & Bhatti, [1999](#); Shoaib & Ullah, [2021b](#)). Research shows that most of the time is spent meeting the academic and clerical loads and thus families suffer the most (Rivas et al., [2019](#); Rowley & Warner, [2006](#); Shoaib & Ullah, [2019](#)). These studies also revealed that for the smooth working of individuals, working conditions should be appropriate (Perera, And, & Wickramanayake, [2005](#)). It is hypothesized that the higher the possibility of a good environment better will be performance (Nazneen, Hossain, & Chopra, [2019](#); Shoaib, Shaukat, Khan, & Saeed, [2013](#)). Research also shows that family responsibilities are also important for the effective performance of any individual (Morley & Crossouard, [2016](#); Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, [2021](#)). Based on the above findings, it is stated that family responsibilities need to address in a better way.

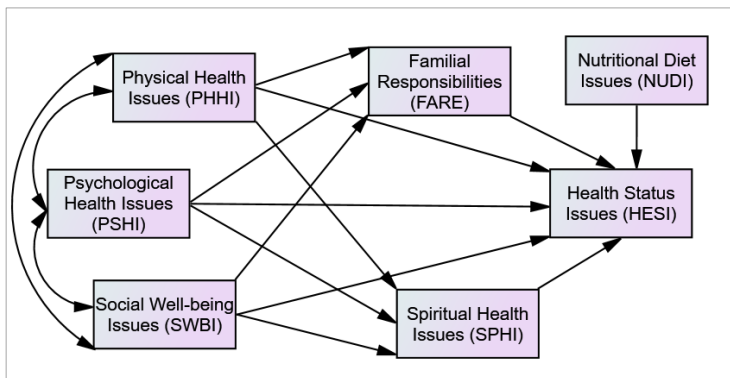
In any work environment, the attitudes of co-workers matter for smooth working conditions in all spheres including higher education (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, [2021](#); Zeab & Ali, [2015](#)). Research shows that the working environment is an important factor in the good performance of women academicians in any institutional setting of higher education (Shoaib & Abdullah, [2021](#); Yang & Choo, [2019](#); Zahid, Hooley, & Neary, [2020](#)). Similarly, the studies also revealed that the behavior and attitude of fellow academicians are also equally important to know the environment and trying to manage the working relations (Ull-ann Javaid, Khan, & Siddiq, [2020](#); Umer & Zia-ur-Rehman, [2013](#)). Without knowing the working relations, the attitude of any academician cannot be developed (Shoaib & Abdullah, [2020](#); Tower, Lazzari, Faul, & Alvarez, [2015](#)). It is therefore important to understand the working environment in higher education to get familiarize ourselves and respond to the issues in time (Shoaib, [2024d](#); Tara & Ahsan, [2020](#)). Similarly, working conditions also matter for the smoothness of workloads and other academic assignments (Shoaib, [2024c](#); Tamim, [2013](#)). However, the attitudes of academicians regarding the goals matter as long as the attitude develops (Shoaib, [2024b](#); Soomro, Shaikh, Saheer, & Bijarani, [2016](#)). It helps to increase performance among faculty and administration (Rehman & Azam Roomi, [2012](#); Shoaib, [2024a](#)).

Any person working in a new environment has to rely on the working conditions and attitudes of co-workers for the smooth functioning of institutions (Qureshi et al., [2013](#); Raziq & Maulabakhsh, [2015](#)). Similar happened in higher education (universities). The attitudes of fellow academicians of women are directly and indirectly proportional to smooth working conditions (Qidwai, Waheed, Ayub, & Azam, [2008](#); Shoaib, [2023c](#)). As long as the attitude of the workers is positive, the working conditions would be appropriate (Parvez, Rehman, Javed, & Raza, [2015](#)). It also increases performance and thus, an individual can better perform (Papanek, [1973](#); Shoaib, [2023b](#)). On the other hand,

co-workers with a negative attitude will not be helpful for the smoothness of any work (Nadeem & Abbas, 2009; Noor & Zainuddin, 2011; Shoaib, 2023a). So, the performance of the co-workers is badly affected. The results showed that the higher the good attitude of co-workers, the higher will be performance (Melin, Astvik, & Bernhard-Oettel, 2014; Miller, 1984).

The study reveals that dealing with issues is fun that everyone cannot do (Malik et al., 2010). However, the issues faced by women academicians in higher education are rather difficult conditions (R. Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024; Loureiro, 2019). It is because they are working in patriarchal higher educational settings (Kumar, Ahmed, Shaikh, Hafeez, & Hafeez, 2013). For this purpose, motivation is an important factor that contributes to the solution of the problem in a better way (Khurshid et al., 2014). It is important to pay attention to emotions when dealing with problems or issues while working in any organization (Abdullah, Usmani, & Shoaib, 2023; Kersh, 2018). Research shows that in dealing with issues one has to consciously respond to the issues one wanted to resolve while working with other academicians in the same setting (Kasbuntoro, Maemunah, Mahfud, Fahlevi, & Parashakti, 2020). It is also stated that women academicians working with high workloads are under great pressure from their colleagues (Jaaskelainen, López-Iniguez, & Phillips, 2020). Similarly, research also told that one must be prepared to resolve the issue (Hussain, 2009). By the same token, one has to identify the problem to reach a comprehensive solution (Hossain & Rokis, 2014). Research also shows that when two people are not able to resolve the issue then they must include the third person to mediate to resolve the issue (Hashmi, Khurshid, & Hassan, 2007). It is also unpacked that dealing with any issues needs understanding the issues at hand (Abdullah & Shoaib, 2021; Haq, Iqbal, & Rahman, 2008). Find its positive and negative sides to decide whether the issue needs to resolve or not (Hamid et al., 2020). Similarly, information is gathered to resolve the issues (Griffith & Altinay, 2020). After getting possible information, a possible solution has been generated in the light of above issues. The following conceptual framework has been developed based on above review of literature;

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework of Model



The Data and Methods

This article has opted quantitative study approach and the sample size is more than 30. The population in this study has been comprised of women working at higher educational institutions i.e., university level. These women are working at four universities of the Punjab province i.e., 1) Government College University Faisalabad, 2) The Islamia University of Bahawalpur 3) Minhaj University Lahore, and 4) University of Management and Technology, Lahore. This study has been conducted using a proportionate random sampling technique giving equal chance to every element/proportion of the study i.e., administrative and faculty jobs, public and private sector universities. A sample of 754 women working at the tertiary level of educational institutions in the Punjab province has been selected using a proportionate random sampling technique. Sample size determination formula (Yamane, 1967) i.e., $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ has been and further sample has been proportionally distributed to each public and private sector university. A survey method has been used to conduct the study on working women at the university. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect information and pre-tested from 30 randomly selected women. Further, the normality of data has been checked and Chi-square, and SEM Model has been used to draw conclusion.

Results and Discussion

The primary data analysis mentioned in Table 1 depicts the socio-demographic profile of working women at the university. It has been observed that 47.2 percent of women have 34 to 36 years of age and only 3.8 percent have up to 27 years of age bracket. Similarly, 45.4 percent of working women have 70001 to 80000 monthly income in Pakistani rupees and only fewer proportion has been reported to have income 90001 and above monthly income. Likewise, the educational qualification of working women ranges from 16 years to Ph.D. level. However, 52.7 percent of women have marital status as single and 32.1 percent as married. The results indicate that 56.6 percent of working women have no child or have marital status as single and only 2.9 percent have four to six children. However, family size is ranging from women to women as per their family composition.

The study findings show that 52.7 percent of working women are living with their parents and only 15.3 percent are living independently near the university for the job. Correspondingly, 63.4 percent of working women have their own house and 24.4 percent of women are living in a rented house. It has also been observed that 64.9 percent of working women have three to five years of job experience and 50.8 percent of women belong to urban residential backgrounds. It has been argued that the socio-demographic profile of working women has been varying from one family of women to another family of working women. However, the sample size has also been proportionally allocated to each university based on the total number of working women both in the faculty-administrative and public-private sections of the university.

Table 1
Socio-demographic Profile

Category	f	%	Category	f	%
Age (In Years)			Monthly Income (PKR)		
Up to 27	29	03.8	Up to 50000	02	00.3
28 - 30	58	07.7	50001 - 60000	107	14.2
31 - 33	280	37.1	70001 - 80000	342	45.4
34 - 36	356	47.2	80001 - 90000	259	34.3
37 & Above	31	04.2	90001 & Above	44	05.8
Total	754	100.0	Total	754	100.0
Educational Qualification			Marital Status		
16 Years	443	58.8	Single	397	52.7
18 Years	181	24.0	Married	242	32.1
PhD	130	17.2	Other	115	15.3
Total	754	100.0	Total	754	100.0
No. of Children			Family Size		
No child	427	56.6	1-3	08	01.1
1 - 3	170	22.6	2-6	231	30.6
4 - 6	22	02.9	7-9	323	42.8
7 - Above	135	17.9	10 and above	192	25.5
Total	754	100.0	Total	754	100.0
Living Status (With Family)			Housing Status (Ownership)		
Parents	397	52.7	Personal	478	63.4
Husband	242	32.1	Rented	184	24.4
Independent	115	15.3	Others	92	12.2
Total	754	100.0	Total	754	100.0
Job Experience (In Years)			Residential Background		
Up to 3	89	11.8	Rural	371	49.2
3 - 5	487	64.9	Urban	383	50.8
6 & Above	178	23.3	Total	754	100.0
Total	754	100.0			

Table 2 depicts the Chi-Square test using health status issues as the dependent variable. The study findings show that there is an association ($\chi^2=2784.386$, $df=976$) between heavy workload and health status issues among working women at the university. Similarly, there is an association ($\chi^2=2941.897$, $df=976$) between decision-making issues and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. Likewise, there is an association ($\chi^2=2132.593$, $df=854$) between responsiveness issues and health status issues among working women at the university. Also, there is an association ($\chi^2=2433.874$, $df=1098$) between familial responsibilities and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. Correspondingly, there is an association ($\chi^2=2734.312$, $df=1281$) between the attitude of co-workers and health status issues among working women at the university. Equally, there is an association ($\chi^2=2577.622$, $df=915$) between dealing issues and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. In the same way, there is an association ($\chi^2=3685.256$, $df=854$) between physical health issues and health status issues among working women at the university. By the same token, there is an association ($\chi^2=4220.306$, $df=854$) between psychological health issues and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. Correspondingly, there is an association ($\chi^2=3566.523$, $df=915$) between social well-being issues and health status issues among working women at the university. Equally, there is an association ($\chi^2=5279.236$, $df=915$) between spiritual health issues and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. Likewise, there is an association ($\chi^2=4616.595$, $df=915$) between nutritional diet issues and health status issues among working women at the university. By the same token, there is an association ($\chi^2=4910.644$, $df=976$) between health risk behaviour and health status issues among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. Alike, there is an association ($\chi^2=9401.725$, $df=4270$) between workload pressure and health status issues among working women at the university.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test (Dependent Variable=Health Status Issues)

Sr. No.	Independent Variables	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
i	Heavy Workload	2784.386	976	.000
ii	Decision-Making Issues	2941.897	976	.000
iii	Responsiveness Issues	2132.593	854	.000
iv	Familial Responsibilities	2433.874	1098	.000
v	Attitude of Co-workers	2734.312	1281	.000
vi	Dealing Issues	2577.622	915	.000
vii	Physical Health Issues	3685.256	854	.000
viii	Psychological Health Issues	4220.306	854	.000
ix	Social Well-being Issues	3566.523	915	.000
x	Spiritual Health Issues	5279.236	915	.000
xi	Nutritional Diet Issues	4616.595	915	.000
xii	Health Risk Behaviour	4910.644	976	.000
xiii	Workload Pressure	9401.725	4270	.000

Table 3
Independent Samples Test

Variables		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
Difference between Public and Private Sector Jobs among working woman										
Workload Pressure	Equal variances assumed	.657	.418	2.514	752	.012	2.839	1.129	.622	5.057
	Equal variances not assumed			2.523	742.189	.012	2.839	1.125	.630	5.049
Health Status Issues	Equal variances assumed	.703	.402	4.579	752	.000	4.613	1.007	2.635	6.590
	Equal variances not assumed			4.539	701.075	.000	4.613	1.016	2.617	6.608
Difference between Faculty Jobs and Administrative Jobs among working woman										
Workload Pressure	Equal variances assumed	1.727	.189	8.576	752	.000	9.256	1.079	7.137	11.374
	Equal variances not assumed			8.572	749.045	.000	9.256	1.080	7.136	11.375
Difference between Rural and Urban Residential Backgrounds among Working Women										
Health Risk Behaviour	Equal variances assumed	.004	.950	2.375	752	.018	.540	.227	.094	.987
	Equal variances not assumed			2.374	749.215	.018	.540	.228	.094	.987
Workload Pressure	Equal variances assumed	1.727	.189	8.576	752	.000	9.256	1.079	7.137	11.374
	Equal variances not assumed			8.572	749.045	.000	9.256	1.080	7.136	11.375

Table 3 provides the independent sample T-test reference to the dichotomous variables. The findings assert that there is a significant difference between public and private sector universities among working women regarding their workload pressure and health status issues. The study asserts that this difference has been based on the nature of the job, workload magnitude, and demands of the organization. Similarly, the study also finds that there is a significant difference in faculty and administrative job among working women in terms of workload pressure. It has been asserted that an administrative job is a different work environment from a faculty job at the university. Likewise, the results also reveal that there is a significant difference in rural and urban residential background difference among working women at tertiary-level educational institutions. The study concludes that the difference has been made based on the nature of institutions, nature of the job, and residential backgrounds of the working women in terms of workload pressure and health status issues at tertiary-level educational institutions.

SEM Model: Table 4 provides the direct effects of model as shown in conceptual framework 2 at the end of the review section. The results indicate that social well-being issues (Beta value=.208), psychological health issues (Beta value=.201), and physical health issues (Beta value=.089) among working women directly effecting familial responsibilities among working women in tertiary-level educational institutions. Likewise, the study findings also insights that physical health issues (Beta value=.311), psychological health issues (Beta value=.374), and social well-being issues (Beta value=.173) directly affect spiritual health issues of working women at university. Correspondingly, spiritual health issues (Beta value=.432), physical health issues (Beta value=.260), social well-being issues (Beta value=.187), psychological health issues (Beta value=.251), familial responsibilities (Beta value=.259), and nutritional diet issues (Beta values=.360) directly affecting the health status of working women at the tertiary level of educational institutions.

Table 4

Direct Effects of Model

Variables			Standardized Regression Weights	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SWBI	---	FARE	.208	.281	.054	5.226	***
PHHI	---	SPHI	.311	.335	.036	9.223	***
PSHI	---	SPHI	.374	.435	.036	12.152	***
PSHI	---	FARE	.201	.276	.055	5.060	***
PHHI	---	FARE	.089	.114	.055	2.056	.040
SWBI	---	SPHI	.173	.199	.035	5.622	***
SPHI	---	HESI	.432	1.556	.025	61.743	***
PHHI	---	HESI	.260	1.010	.027	38.072	***
SWBI	---	HESI	.187	.773	.025	30.476	***
PSHI	---	HESI	.251	1.055	.027	38.418	***
FARE	---	HESI	.259	1.062	.029	38.437	***
NUDI	---	HESI	.360	1.413	.019	72.510	***
Covariances							
PHHI	<-->	PSHI		4.426	.344	12.864	***
SWBI	<-->	PSHI		2.948	.305	9.670	***
SWBI	<-->	PHHI		4.516	.350	12.915	***
Variances							
SWBI				7.950	.410	19.404	***
PHHI				9.017	.465	19.404	***
PSHI				7.711	.397	19.404	***
e1				12.207	.629	19.404	***
e4				8.795	.453	19.404	***
e2				5.257	.271	19.404	***
e3				2.514	.130	19.404	***

Model Fit Summary: Chi-square = 650.470, df = 6, P = .000, AGFI=.928, GFI=.943, CLI=.899, RMSEA=.074

Figure 2

Model Diagram

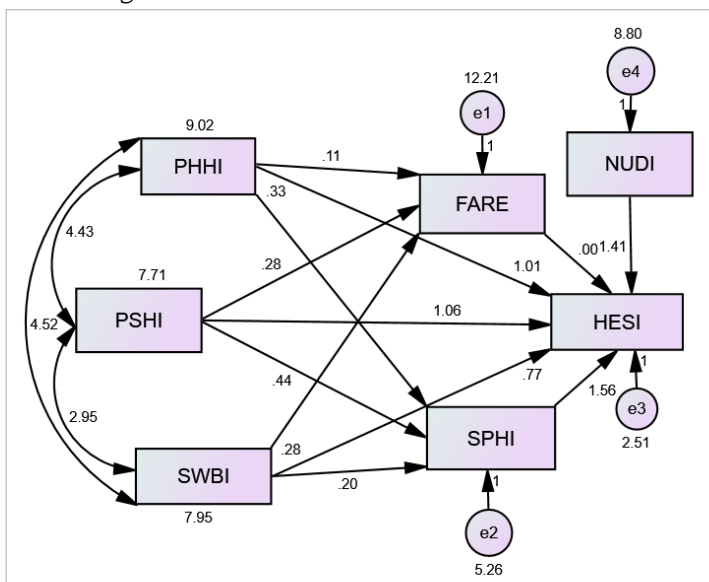


Table 5*Indirect Effects of the Model*

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
PSHI --> SPHI --> HESI	0.677	0.565	0.789	0.001	0.161**
PSHI --> FARE --> HESI	0.253	0.26	0.574	0.002	0.055***
PHHI --> SPHI --> HESI	0.521	0.386	0.651	0.001	0.134**
PHHI --> FARE --> HESI	0.035	0.002	0.111	0.073	0.008†
SWBI --> SPHI --> HESI	0.309	0.188	0.432	0.001	0.075***
SWBI --> FARE --> HESI	0.395	0.232	0.374	0.001	0.058***

Table 5 reveals indirect effects on health status issues as per conceptual model. It has been reported that health status issues of working women are indirectly affected by psychological health issues through the mediation of spiritual health issues (0.161**) and familial responsibilities (0.055***). Similarly, it has been informed that health status issues of working women are indirectly affected by physical health issues through the mediation of spiritual health issues (0.134**) and familial responsibilities (0.008†). Likewise, it has been stated that health status issues of working women are indirectly affected by social well-being issues through the mediation of spiritual health issues (0.075***) and familial responsibilities (0.058***).

The results of Model summarise that social well-being issues, psychological health issues, and physical health issues among working women directly effecting familial responsibilities among working women in tertiary-level educational institutions. Likewise, the study findings also insights that physical health issues, psychological health issues, and social well-being issues directly affect the spiritual health issues of working women at university. Correspondingly, spiritual health issues, physical health issues, social well-being issues, psychological health issues, familial responsibilities, and nutritional diet issues directly affect the health status of working women at the tertiary level of educational institutions.

Conclusion

The study findings conclude that there has been an association between workload pressure and health status of working women in higher education. The study also asserts that there is significant difference of workload pressure and health status of working women in public and private sector, faculty job and administrative job, and working females have rural and urban residential backgrounds. The study also concludes that physical health issues, psychological health issues, and social well-being issues has been directly affect the spiritual health issues of working women at university. Correspondingly, spiritual health issues, physical health issues, social well-being issues, psychological health issues, familial responsibilities, and nutritional diet issues have been directly affect the health status of working women at the tertiary level of educational institutions. Similarly, the study findings pointed out that physical health issues, psychological health issues, and social well-being have been indirectly effecting health status of working women in higher education through the mediation of familial responsibilities and spiritual health issues.

Policy Implication

A policy should be established at the university level to facilitate working women in higher education by facilitating though counselling, privacy room, and other interlined facilities.

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