

## **Is Paternalistic Leadership a Source of Job Stress?**

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**Abstract:** *Leadership has been shown to be one of many possible sources of stress in the workplace, but the magnitude of its effect varies across studies and by country. The research on leadership show that Eastern countries including Pakistan, China and Turkey exhibit the highest rates of paternalistic leadership. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job stress. Data collected from 155 employees showed that benevolent paternalistic leadership negatively and authoritarian paternalistic leadership positively effects role conflict. The results also showed that authoritarian paternalistic leadership positively effects workload. The interesting result of the study is benevolent and moral paternalistic leadership positively effect role ambiguity. The study provides fruitful results both for researchers and practitioners.*

**Keywords:** *Paternalistic leadership, job stress, Turkey, Turkish culture.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Identifying ways to enable organizations, institutions and individuals to exceed expectations is a necessity in a highly competitive and volatile business environment. According to Burns (1978), Bass (1985) and Bass (1990) challenging business environments reinforce the importance of leadership as an essential aspect of managerial roles. Thus, studies of organizational behavior and management often focus on the significance of leadership. A paternalistic style of leadership is identified as one of many different approaches and is increasingly becoming a research focus as a field of study. Nevertheless, research on the subject is characterized by divergent opinions and definitions of paternalistic leadership and its overall effectiveness. Farh and Cheng (2000:91) argue that irrespective of the multiple definitions of paternalistic leadership, it is typically defined as an approach characterized by strong discipline, authority and patriarchal compassion. Aycan (2006) notes the expectation for employees to demonstrate loyalty, respect and compliance to the paternal authority figure in return for care and protection.

Aycan, Kanungo, Mendonca, Yu, Deller and Stahl's (2000) critical research on paternalistic management styles across 10 countries, showed that Eastern countries including Pakistan, China and Turkey, exhibited the highest rates of paternalistic leadership. Aycan (2006) argues that paternalistic dimensions are commonly found in cultures identified as collectivist, hierarchical and high power distant and throughout the culture paternalistic leadership is promoted as appropriate and acceptable style. Although paternalistic leadership started to draw the attention of researchers, especially from the East, there still remains a room for investigating the relationship between some other work related variables in order to gain a deeper understanding.

Highly competitive and volatile business environment does not only reinforce the proper leadership style, it also affects the attitudes and psychological states of employees, too. Jha and Jha (2013) noted that recent changes in increased technocracy and competition within and between organizations impact not only working environment, but also psychological well-being of employees. Job stress is one of the most frequently experienced psychological state among employees in today's competitive and fast changing environment. Cox, Griffiths, Barlowe, Randall, Thompson and Rial (2000) highlight the high stress levels among employees around the world. Hoel, Sparks and Cooper (2002) argue that pressure on employees increases with continued removal of geographical boundaries in a global market and accompanying increased organizational rivalry in the struggle for market share and survival.

Experiences at work, such as an overload of demands and negative social interactions especially the behaviors of the leaders, can be a source of daily stress that employees experience at work. Therefore,

the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job stress of employees. It is thought that there will be a significant relationship between paternalistic leadership and job stress. This relationship would be negative for benevolent and moral paternalistic leadership behaviors and positive for authoritarian paternalistic behaviors.

## **2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Paternalistic Leadership (PL)**

Paternalism is used for a principle or managerial praxis for governing people, organizations or nations in a benevolent, fatherly manner or a father's raising his children in an intrusive way (Bing, 2004). Paternalism exists in the context of a dyadic relationship between a leader and follower(s) and is based on hierarchy and differing roles. In both work related and non-work related areas, leaders are tasked with caring for, protecting and guiding followers, in turn, loyalty and deference to leaders is expected from them.

Paternalism is a prevalent cultural characteristic of traditional Eastern societies such as China, Japan, India, and Korea (Ayca, 2001). There are some cultural assumptions that are compatible with paternalism. These are collectivism, high-power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, (Hofstede, 1980) assertiveness, and diffuse culture.

Pellegrini and Scandura (2006) note the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership within the framework of the Turkish business environment, due to the common family model across Turkey, under which decisions and rules set by the father. In traditional Turkish family structure, the elder member in the family, generally father or grandfather, defines the rules and gives the decisions on behalf of the other family members and these decisions and rules are accepted without a question. Furthermore, Pellegrini and Scandura (2006) suggest that the military influence facilitating creation of hierarchical relationships across organizations and working environments reinforce the paternalistic leadership style and culture in Turkey.

Despite the deviations in Turkish society, the Turkish culture is still characterized by high collectivism. Hofstede (2001) and House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004) argue the traditional Turkish organizational structure is characterized by high power distance and patterns of collectivism, providing a suitable environment supporting paternalistic leadership viability as a business strategy. Collectivist cultures emphasize maintenance of relationships and value loyalty and duty, reflecting the dynamics of relationships based on a paternalistic approach. Consequently, an expectation of a high degree of paternalism across Turkish business is quite logical.

Farh and Cheng (2000) identified three dimensions of paternalistic leadership - benevolent, moral and authoritarian leadership. Benevolent leadership is related to a personalized concern for employee needs and welfare, both at and outside the workplace. Benevolent leaders exhibit concern for all aspects of follower welfare and ensure families are well cared for. According to Tsui and Farh (1997) group members experience deep appreciation and an obligation to return the favor in future. Typical aspects of a benevolent leadership include a dedicated effort to care for group members, concern for employee comfort and encouragement when facing problems.

Moral leadership is characterized by treating others according to the virtues displayed and the absence of envy of the talents and virtues of others. Moral leaders refuse to take advantage of group members to serve their own ends, or use relationships to gain illicit advantage. Yang (1957) and Yang (1994) noted that employees show respect to their moral leader and imitate the actions of the leader. As noted by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) moral leaders show an emphasis on ethical values such as equity and justice.

Authoritarian leadership is characterized by extreme authority and control. The rules and decisions are neither open to discussion nor questioned. Chan Chi Hong (2007) also suggests that authoritarian leaders behave in a commanding manner when interacting with employees and inflict punishment when rules are broken.

Leadership style has been known to impact multiple areas of follower performance. A meta-analysis of 109 articles found a significant relationship between effective leadership and job wellbeing, sick leave, and disability pension claims (Kuoppala, Lamminpaa, Liira and Vainio, 2008). In a number of studies, leadership has been shown to be one of many possible sources of stress in the workplace

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(Johnsson, Johansson, Rosengren, Lappas and Wilhemsen, 2003; McVicar, 2003) but the magnitude of its impact varies across studies and by country. Because paternalism is one of the prevalent characteristics of Turkish culture and paternalistic leaders have been found in many Turkish organizations, it is thought that it would affect followers job stress due to its nature. Specifically, rules, extreme authority and control would lead to an increased level of stress among employees. Next section of the study focuses in job stress concept.

### 2.2 Job Stress

Stress is generally experienced as physiological and psychological responses producing negative human conditions in situations where individual capabilities are exceeded. According to Babatunde (2013), job stress is generally defined as incompatibility between physiological requirements demanded in an organization and the lack of employee ability to address such requirements.

Mc Vicar, Munn-Giddings and Seebohm (2013) argue that the significance of the sources of job stress become obvious as the body of published work expands. Murphy (1995) and Michie (2002) identified the sources of stress by developing a model. They defined number of factors such as the “factors that are intrinsic to job role (e.g. time pressures, work overload, lack of job control), role characteristics (e.g. role stress, role conflict, role ambiguity), career development (e.g. over promotion, under promotion, lack of job security), work relationships (e.g. superior/subordinate face-offs, bullying, dark leadership) and organizational climate/structure (e.g. management style, formalization, participation).

Job stress and its relationship to both individual and organizational outcomes has become an increasingly important area of study in recent years. Role characteristics, specifically role conflict and role ambiguity, have been cited frequently as sources of job-related stress and have been investigated quite often (Love, Tatman and Chapman, 2010; Elloy and Smith, 2003). We wanted to study how leadership, specifically paternalistic leadership is related to job stress and proposed the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between paternalistic leadership and job stress levels of employees.

However, we thought that the relationship between paternalistic leadership and job stress will be different for the dimensions of paternalistic leadership. Based on this, we proposed sub-hypotheses.

Benevolent paternalistic leadership is characterized by an individualized, holistic concern for the wellbeing of group members and shows respect, care, concern and support for group members. According to Neubauer and Lank (1998), a benevolent leadership is intended to establish high levels of trust, mutual support and open channels of communication with the followers. These positive attitudes and behaviors of a leader will not create job stress for employees. Thus, we expect a negative relationship between benevolent paternalistic leadership and job stress.

H1a: There is a negative relationship between benevolent paternalistic leadership style and job stress levels of employees.

Nielsen (1989) argues that a moral paternalistic approach to leadership embodies the expression of attitudes regarded as ethically appropriate and set the example for how moral problems and issues should be addressed by exercising unselfishness and self-discipline. If employees perceive that their leaders would never take advantage of them and never engages in behaviors behind the doors, they will trust in their leaders and they will not feel job stress. Therefore, we expect a negative relationship between moral paternalistic leadership and job stress.

H1b: There is a negative relationship between moral paternalistic leadership style and job stress levels of employees.

Pellegrini and Scandura (2008) describe authoritarian leaders as leaders exercising visible authority over group members and in turn, demanding unquestionable obedience from them. Managers adopting an authoritarian approach fail to simplify processes for the transferral of knowledge, skills and competencies for group members. Such an approach to leadership is based on obsessiveness and the centralisation of decision-making, which results in a lack of delegation and limits the ability of employees to contribute. Such behaviors would increase the stress levels of employees. Thus, we expect a positive relationship between authoritarian paternalistic leadership and job stress.

H1c: There is a positive relationship between authoritarian paternalistic leadership style and job stress levels of employees.

### 3. METHOD

This part presents the research sample, design and the measurement instruments of the study.

#### 3.1 Sample

Sample consists of 155 employees working in two companies located in İstanbul and İzmir. The company located in İstanbul is a branch of an employment bureau. It is a public institution which was founded in 1946. It has 160 branches and 5000 employees across Turkey. However, only employees of one branch contributed to the study.

The company located in İzmir is a family owned company which produces bicycles. It is the first serial manufacturer of bicycles in Turkey and a well-known brand in Turkish market. It has 250 employees and produces 800.000 bicycles per year. Convenience sampling is used. Total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to the employees of both companies. The participation was on a voluntary bases, so 155 surveys came back with a return rate of 62%.

#### 3.2 Measurement

Questionnaire was used as a data collection method. The instrument had three parts. The first part of the questionnaire included brief information about the study and some demographic questions such as age, gender, education level and tenure of the participants. Second part included the Paternalistic leadership items and the third part contained job stress items.

Paternalistic Leadership is measured using Paternalistic Leadership Scale developed by Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang & Farh (2004). There are 26-items measuring three dimensions of paternalistic leadership such as benevolent leadership, moral leadership and authoritarian leadership. A 6-point response scale was employed, ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (6).

The scale used for measuring Job Stress is a combination of three different scales: role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload. Role ambiguity and role conflict were measured using a scale developed by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970). Role overload was measured using a scale developed by Beehr, Walsh and Taber (1976). There are 17 items measuring role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload. A six point scale was used ranging from "totally agree" (6) to "totally disagree" (1).

### 4. FINDINGS

Participants' mean age is 31.76. Most of the respondents (71.6 %) are male. Majority of the participants were married (56.8 %). 31% of the participants had a bachelor's degree. The mean of total work experience is 11.369. Table 1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics of the sample.

**Table1.** Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Variable	N	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender	155			
Female	44	28		
Male	111	72		
Age	155	31.7	7.24	
Marital Status	155			
Single	67	43		
Married	88	57		
Educational Level	155			
Primary School	54	35		
High School	3720			
Bachelor's Degree	48	31		
Master's Degree	16	10		
Total Work Experience	155	11.3	8.8	
Seniority	155	4.4	5.0	

In order to find the factor structure of paternalistic leadership scale, factor analysis using principal components solution with varimax rotation was employed. 26 items of the Paternalistic Leadership (PL) measure were entered into factor analysis. KMO value was found as 910 which marked the homogeneous structure of the variables and the result of Bartlett Test (.000, Chi-Square: 1677.292, df: .136) values showed that the variables were suitable for factor analysis. After few rotations, 21 items

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were loaded on three factors explaining 60.078% of the total variance. The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 2. The factors were named as benevolent leadership, authoritarian leadership and moral leadership as Cheng et al. (2004) suggested in their model.

**Table2.** Results of the Factor Analysis of Paternalistic Leadership Scale

Factor loadings	
Factor 1 : Benevolent Leadership%	Variance:37.138
My supervisor encourages me when I encounter arduous problems.	.871
My supervisor is like a family member when he/she gets along with us.	.845
My supervisor handles what is difficult to do or manage in everyday life for me.	.834
Beyond work relations, my supervisor expresses concern about my daily life	.811
My supervisor takes good care of my family members as well.	.796
My supervisor will help me when I'm in an emergency.	.790
My supervisor ordinarily shows a kind concern for my comfort.	.764
My supervisor devotes all his/her energy to taking care of me.	.740
My supervisor tries to understand what the cause is when I don't perform well.	.737
My supervisor takes very thoughtful care of subordinates who have spent a long time with him/her	.730
My supervisor meets my needs according to my personal requests.	.729
Factor 2 : Authoritarian Leadership%	Variance:14.663
My supervisor scolds us when we can't accomplish our tasks.	.788
I feel pressured when working with him/her.	.764
We have to follow his/her rules to get things done. If not, he/she punishes us severely.	.736
My supervisor exercises strict discipline over subordinates.	.730
My supervisor always behaves in a commanding fashion in front of employees	.585
My supervisor emphasizes that our group must have the best performance of all the units in the organization	.584
Factor 3 : Moral Leadership%	Variance :8.276
My supervisor doesn't take the credit for my achievements and contributions for himself /herself.	.855
My supervisor employs people according to their virtues and does not envy others' abilities and virtues.	.732
My supervisor does not take advantage of me for personal gain.	.716
My supervisor never avenges a personal wrong in the name of public interest when he/she is offended.	.693
Kaiser – Meyer - Olkin value :.910; df : 253	
Bartlett significance value : .000; Chi – square value : 2184.704	

17 items of the Job Stress measure were entered into factor analysis. KMO value was found as .858 and the result of Bartlett Test (.000, Chi-Square: 1004.072, df: 45) showed that the variables were suitable for factor analysis. Two items were left out of the analysis due to low factor loadings and cross loadings and resulting 15 items were loaded on three factors explaining 76.746% of the total variance. The resulting factors were named as ‘‘role ambiguity’’, ‘‘role conflict’’ and ‘‘workload’’.The results of the factor are given in Table 3.

**Table3.** Results of the Factor Analysis of Job Stress Scale

Factor loadings	
Factor 1 : Role Ambiguity	% variance : 29.236
I know what my responsibilities are.	.911
I know exactly what is expected of me.	.871
I know that I have divided my time properly.	.857
I feel secure about how much authority I have.	.822
Clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my job.	.809
Explanation is clear of what has to be done.	.755
Factor 2 : Role Conflict	% variance : 20.827
I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.	.844
I have to do things that should be done differently.	.720
I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.	.710
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	.647
It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do.	.594
Factor 3 : Workload%	variance: 16..683

The performance standards on my job are too high.	.789
I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	.742
I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	.687
I have to buck a rule or policy to carry out an assignment.	.562
Kaiser – Meyer - Olkin value : .860; <i>df</i> : 105	
Bartlett significance value : .000; Chi – square value : 1367.182	

#### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

Before regression analysis, all variables were tested by a Pearson correlation analysis, as shown at Table 4, to examine relations between Paternalistic Leadership, and Job Stress. The correlations were significant at  $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$ .

**Table4.** Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients of Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Benevolent Leadership	4.32	1.163						
Moral Leadership	2.95	1.041						
Authoritarian Leadership	3.75	1.106	-.1401					
Role Ambiguity	3.45	1.220	.634**	-.028	1			
Role Conflict	3.13	.451**	.347**	.427**	-.341**	1		
Workload	3.75	1.163	-.262**	.351**	-.263**	-.229**	.609**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results show that role conflict and workload dimensions are negatively and role conflict dimension is positively correlated with benevolent paternalistic leadership and authoritarian paternalistic leadership. Role ambiguity is positively and strongly correlated with benevolent paternalistic leadership ( $r = .634, p < 0.05$ ) and authoritarian paternalistic leadership ( $r = .626, p < 0.05$ ).

#### 4.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was also run in order to test how much variance paternalistic leadership dimensions explain in job stress dimensions. Results are tabulated in Table 5.

**Table5.** Results of the Regression Analysis between Paternalistic Leadership and Role Ambiguity

Dependent Variable: Role Ambiguity			
Independent Variables	Beta	t value	p value
Benevolent Leadership	.376	4.105	.000
Authoritarian Leadership	.060	.996	.321
Moral Leadership	.349	3.793	.000
R= 0.675; R <sup>2</sup> =0.456; F value=42.135; p value=0.000			

Results of the regression analysis show that benevolent ( $\beta = .376; p = .000$ ) and moral paternalistic ( $\beta = .349; p = .000$ ) leadership explain the variance in role ambiguity.

Multiple regression analysis was run to test the relationship between paternalistic leadership dimensions and role conflict dimension of job stress. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 6.

**Table6.** Results of the Regression Analysis between Paternalistic Leadership and Role Conflict

Dependent Variable: Role Conflict			
Independent Variables	Beta	t value	p value
Benevolent Leadership	-.299	-2.888	.004
Authoritarian Leadership	.294	4.288	.000
Moral Leadership	-.160	-1.538	.126
R= 0.553; R <sup>2</sup> =0.309; F value=22.119; p value=0.000			

Results show that benevolent leadership explains the 29% of the total variance in role conflict and this relation is negative. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership explains the same amount of variance (29%) in role conflict however, the relation is positive.

Regression analysis was used to test the relationship between paternalistic leadership dimensions and workload. Results are shown in Table 7.

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**Table 7.** Results of the Regression Analysis Between Paternalistic Leadership and Workload

Dependent Variable: Workload			
Independent Variables	Beta	t value	p value
Benevolent Leadership	-.148	-1.318	.190
Authoritarian Leadership	.321	4.312	.000
Moral Leadership	-.106	-.936	.351
R= 0.424; R <sup>2</sup> =0.179; F value=11.006; p value=0.000			

Results of the analysis show that only authoritarian leadership explains 32% of the total variance in workload dimension of job stress. Other dimensions of paternalistic leadership have no significant relation with workload.

## 5. DISCUSSION

It has been proved that leadership would influence employee attitudes and behaviors either in a negative or positive way. It would also affect the intrinsic mind of subordinates, tightly connect with their feelings with the power of emotion, too (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Rafaeli and Worline, 2001). With this in mind, it is aimed to study the relationship between paternalistic leadership, which reflects the prevalent characteristics of Turkish culture, and job stress. There are several possible ways in which managerial leadership may affect employee stress. It is thought that strong discipline and authority of a paternalistic leadership would increase job stress of employees whereas, fatherly benevolence and moral integrity couched in a personalistic atmosphere would lessen it.

Based on the analyses, it was found that benevolent and moral paternalistic leadership positively effect role ambiguity. This interesting finding might be due to the unique and moral concern that the paternalistic leaders show to their followers. The leader acts like a family member, takes care of his followers, shows a kind concern for them and even for family members of followers, never takes advantage of them and never envies them. This emotional and moral concern may blur the borders of the work for followers. They may get confused about what is expected of them and explanations might not be clear because of this benevolent and moral treat.

It is also found that benevolent paternalistic leadership negatively and authoritarian paternalistic leadership positively effects role conflict. It is quite logical that when the leader exercises strict discipline over followers, behaves in a commanding way and always emphasizes that his followers must have the best performance, it is very likely that followers experience role conflict. They may receive assignments without the manpower to complete it or are assigned to work that exceeds their capacity. Omolayo (2007) found that employees working with an autocratic leadership style experienced higher job-related tension than employees working with a democratic leadership style. When paternalistic leaders take care of their followers and show a concern for them, they expect an unquestioned obedience from their followers. When they give assignment to their followers, it should be done without a question. Thus, working with such a leader may create role conflict for followers. On the other hand, when the leader acts like a family member, helps followers when they are in emergency and tries to understand what the cause is when followers don't perform well, followers do not experience any role conflict. Such behaviors of the leader prevent followers from experiencing role conflict. Followers do not have any question about the incompatibility of his/her role. This finding of the study may be supported by the overall results from studies investigating the direct relationship between leadership and employee health are that a relationship oriented leadership style is the most important one for the subordinates' wellbeing (Harris, 1999; McCain, 1995; Wilcoxon, 1989).

The results also showed that authoritarian paternalistic leadership positively effects workload. Authoritarian paternalistic leadership is related to exercising pressure and strict discipline over followers. Those leaders also expect followers to follow his rules to get things done. Otherwise, the leader punishes the followers. This type of leader expects high performance standards. Sometimes, followers may feel a pressure to perform their assignments and they may have assignments that may exceed their capacity. Therefore, it is very likely that those behaviors create workload for followers.

Although this study provides fruitful results in terms of paternalistic leadership, it has some limitations. The major limitation is the sample size. The results of this study are limited to 155 employees. Larger sample size would enable the researchers to generalize the results. Another limitation of the study is that data was collected from the same source and the results are based on

self-reported surveys. This may create common method variance. It is suggested that future research would collect data from both the followers and the leaders. By this way, researchers would also make a comparison between the perceived and the actual leadership style investigating the fit between the leader and the followers. Although paternalistic leadership started to draw the attention of researchers, more research is required to understand the facets and the consequences of the paternalistic leadership. This may contribute to the expansion of theoretical understanding of a paternalistic approach to leadership and may also contribute to the development of practical applications that can be applied by different types of organizations.

Exercising appropriate leadership behaviors is of critical importance to the improvement of employee attitudes and work performance. Results of this study showed that adoption of an authoritarian approach to leadership has an adverse effect on the psychological status of employees as well as their work performance. However, exercising paternalistic and moral behaviors would create role ambiguity for followers, too. This shows that leadership is achieving a balance in terms of right leader behaviors. Too much authoritarian behaviors create conflict and workload, whereas too much benevolent and moral behavior creates ambiguity for followers. Managers should be very careful in adapting the dose of their leadership style. Paternalism is a prevalent characteristic of Turkish culture and it cannot be denied. The question is not whether paternalistic leadership is a correct way of leading people in organizations. However, the question is how paternalistic leadership behaviors can be adjusted to the situation in terms of achieving the well-being of employees.

Concerning job stress, proactive interventions to prevent job stress have become necessary implementations within the structural context of work, such as job control, work schedules, physical work environment and organizational structure. Moreover, better organizational outcomes may also be achieved through effective implementation of managerial stress awareness programs, adjustments to workload, development of social structures, and clarification of work roles. In today's highly competitive and volatile work environment, managers should be more sensitive to the well-being of employees and try to adjust their leadership style in an attempt to achieve a balance between being authoritarian and benevolent leader.

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