

Designing a Model of Factors Affecting Career Decision-Making, Career Path, and Attitude Towards Marriage Among Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this research was to design a model of factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students.

Methods and Materials: The method of this study, in terms of purpose, is applied and in terms of the type of data, is a mixed (combined) exploratory type. The statistical population of the qualitative part of the research included academic experts, with 15 individuals selected as the sample size using purposive snowball sampling and the principle of theoretical saturation.

Findings: The qualitative findings showed the multifaceted factors influencing career decision-making, career paths, and attitudes towards marriage among students, highlighting the interplay of individual, familial, social, and environmental factors. The results, verified through rigorous statistical analyses, including confirmatory factor analysis, reveal a strong model fit, affirming the reliability and validity of the proposed model. This validation is further strengthened by the expert opinions that significantly align with the model's constructs, surpassing average scores in each evaluative criterion.

Conclusion: These findings emphasize the necessity of integrated approaches in career counseling and education, considering the ever-evolving socio-economic landscapes and personal values of the youth.

Keywords: Career decision-making, career path, attitude towards marriage.

1. Introduction

Today, the challenges related to employment, or in fact, the issue of work and unemployment, are not only one of the most important social issues of the day in the country, but also, considering the population growth in the past two

decades, it can be considered the most significant social challenge of the coming decades (Eliyana et al., 2019). Solving this problem has posed major challenges for the governments of most countries, to the extent that the stability and decline of some governments depend on solving the unemployment crisis (Abu Talib & Aun, 2009).

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions a person makes in their lifetime. This choice can be influenced by various factors. In the theoretical literature on career choice, various researchers have examined the main variables affecting it. One of the most prominent topics in this area is the development of models for the career choice process. Although different models have different stages, almost all models of the career choice process have presented predefined stages for this process (Behrens & McCulloch, 2004).

Hirschi and colleagues (2015) in their model have focused on six stages: 1. Concern for decision-making about the job (awareness) 2. Identifying available job options based on understanding skills, values, interests, and the surrounding environment 3. Narrowing down options for deeper understanding 4. Decision-making among options 5. Choosing one of the options and committing to obtaining it 6. Making a decisive decision and acting on the chosen commitment to achieve the selected job (Sampson et al., 2004). The career choice process in the cognitive information processing approach has five CASVE stages: 1. Communication 2. Analysis 3. Synthesis (high probability choice) 4. Valuation (ranking) 5. Execution (creating a strategy for implementing the choice) (Pekkaya, 2015; Sherrill, 2004). In the PIC model, three phases are mentioned: 1. Based on individual preferences, different potential job options are screened, 2. Discovery of promising options, and 3. Choosing the most suitable option (Boudlaie et al., 2021). It was found that all models have a similar structure, so the job selection process can be summarized in three stages based on the above models: 1. Recognizing job opportunities based on individual ability and the surrounding environment 2. Choosing the best job option considering personal and environmental conditions 3. Striving to obtain the chosen job (Cooper et al., 2019).

Career centers are one of the main components of career guidance programs. Managing these programs and using job information are the main responsibilities of a career counselor. A counselor's awareness of how to use information is closely related to the effectiveness of the career center. Counselors must be well acquainted with the content of various job information sources. The development of individual and group programs in these centers must be carefully planned. Based on the different needs of groups and individuals, a variety of materials will be presented (Cui et al., 2020). Additionally, while counselors help individuals to organize and absorb information, they must provide them with specific relevant

information resulting from available sources through asking questions (Gati et al., 1993; Sampson et al., 2004). Similarly, career decision-making is an individual process and occupational information is used and absorbed again (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). A job can affect individuals in a society in two ways: firstly, the prerequisites required for employment in any job mean that the individual is re-socialized and becomes familiar with and internalizes new values and norms. Secondly, by engaging in any job, individuals belong to a professional group or class, the norms of which, according to Durkheim, are a modern substitute for traditional ethics that existed. An individual's occupational identity actually refers to the concept that individuals in society have of themselves based on their job, and is a combination of organizational and professional identities, among other aspects of a job, which determines a significant part of the role that an individual has in society (Eliyana et al., 2019). Therefore, considering the mentioned points, the aim of the research was to design a model of factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The method of this study is a mixed method with a sequential exploratory design. In the qualitative research part, an inductive type of qualitative content analysis was used. In the quantitative section, the statistical population included academic experts in the fields of Educational Sciences and Psychology in the year 2020. The research experts, approved by supervising professors and advisors, were individuals who were prominent in terms of knowledge and information in the field of career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students. For sampling, a purposive snowball method was employed, and 15 individuals were considered for the sample size of interviewees. The entry criterion for the research included having a Ph.D. degree in counseling and psychology, and a minimum of 5 years of service experience. The exit criterion was a lack of willingness to participate in the research execution.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

For collecting qualitative data, 15 experts and specialists (academic members with doctoral degrees in educational

management, higher education management, and psychology) and those with specialized studies and research in this field were chosen for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These individuals were voluntarily invited to participate through theoretical sampling. Among these experts, there were 2 professors, 8 associate professors, and 5 assistant professors, including 9 men and 6 women. The meanw age of the individuals was approximately 56 years. The main interview questions were designed considering the objectives of the research. During the interviews, if a more detailed examination was needed based on the participants' discussions, supplementary questions were also asked.

2.3. Data analysis

To ensure the validity of the tool in the qualitative part of the research and to ensure the accuracy of the findings from the researcher's perspective, the valuable opinions of professors familiar with this field and experts and officials of the Ministry of Education who were knowledgeable and experienced in this area were used. Additionally, the participants were involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data. In the current study, test-retest reliability and intra-topic agreement methods were used to calculate the reliability of the interviews. The methods and tools for data analysis in the qualitative part were content analysis of the interviews, coding methods (open coding, axial coding, selective coding), and factor analysis (exploratory and confirmatory).

3. Findings and Results

This section presents the qualitative data obtained from the coding process and analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with research participants, and the categories resulting from the open and axial coding process are presented. For open and axial coding, first, the interview texts were examined at the sentence and phrase level to extract conceptual codes; then these conceptual codes were organized and named in the form of categories and subcategories. From the analysis of the checklist related to the content analysis results of the interviews on factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage, 40 indicators and initial concepts were extracted from the interviews with the experts. Based on the obtained concepts and categories, the ground for axial coding was prepared, which is presented in the table below. In axial coding, relationships were established between concepts and related categories. In the next stage of the data coding process, the final sorting and clustering of all concepts and axial codes were done into four categories: individual factors, family factors, social factors, and environmental factors. In the final stage of the current qualitative analysis process, the findings from the analysis, focusing on the main objective, were determined by linking codes (open coding), concepts (axial coding), and ultimately the relationship between categories (selective coding). The obtained categories and final results are observable in the [Table 1](#).

Table 1

The Results of Final Coding

Row	Category	Propositions
1	Individual	Determined by the current societal situation
2		Meaningful pathways among the youth
3		Informing the youth about the ways of choice
4		Empowering the youth to choose among the options
5		Influence of significant individuals and other sources in job selection
6		
7		Influential surrounding factors
8		Individual characteristics
9		A complex set of social expectations
10		The position of youth and their families in the social structure of society
11	Family	Parental job level
12		Tendency towards ambitious ideals
13		Ethnic and racial characteristics
14		Fighting against stereotypical and cliched views on gender
15		Ethnic groups and other social prejudices
16		Supporting individuals who choose traditional paths despite having many options
17		Access to a wide range of information resources
18		Influential factors such as parents and other relatives
19		Friends and peer groups
		Professional experts

20		Interaction with employees and leveraging their direct employment experiences
21	Social	Influence from job advertisements, broader methods, books, brochures, job software, and media
22		Relying on “informal” advice and support from parents and friends
23		Utilizing “formal” counseling such as career counselors and teachers
24		Parental influence as the most beneficial source affecting individuals
25		Family advice and support, and its impact on individual career decisions
26		Families can indirectly influence youths' perspectives on work
27		Early family experiences developing interest in specific jobs
28		Friends and peer groups during adolescence have a strong influence as youth develop a stronger sense of identity
29		Career counselors primarily assist youth in exploring and expanding their goals and ideas
30		Teachers, who do not have the role of formal counselors, have a specific influence on young individuals' decisions for higher and more education
31	Environment	Contact with employees can provide useful information about various jobs and work environments
32		The growing importance of the internet as a significant informational resource in job selection
33		Individual characteristics
34		Interests
35		Values (fundamental beliefs)
36		Abilities are the most powerful predictors of an individual's ultimate job level
37		Talents, competencies
38		Educational and socio-economic opportunities
39		Job decisions can be linked to internal abilities and deep needs
40		Employing a range of styles in the decision-making process

It is also necessary to consider that during this classification, as recommended by one of the interviewees and coordinated with the respected supervising professor and their approval, a researcher-made questionnaire was suggested for the topic of appropriate indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude

towards marriage among students. Therefore, based on this, appropriate indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students were extracted, and the validity of this questionnaire will also be assessed, with the results being reported.

Table 2

The Results of Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Values	Acceptable Criterion
X2/df	34/2	≥ 3
GFI	0.946	≤ 0.90
AGFI	0.981	≤ 0.90
RMR	0.009	Close to zero
CFI	0.961	≤ 0.90
TLI	0.932	≤ 0.90
IFI	0.977	≤ 0.90
RFI	0.960	≤ 0.90
NFI	0.977	≤ 0.90
PCFI	0.571	≤ 0.50
PNFI	0.549	≤ 0.50
PRATIO	0.558	≤ 0.50
RMSEA	0.058	≥ 0.08

Table 2 results show that the measurement model fit indices are satisfactory. The significance of the measurement model will be examined subsequently.

Table 3

Factor Loadings and Critical Ratio (CR)

Propositions	Factor Loading	CR	p
Determined by the current societal situation	0.71	8.32	
Meaningful pathways among the youth	0.83	9.58	***
Informing the youth about the ways of choice	0.77	8.91	***
Empowering the youth to choose among the options	0.70	8.22	***
Influence of significant individuals and other sources in job selection	0.89	10.11	***
Influential surrounding factors	0.73	8.51	***
Individual characteristics	0.82	9.45	***
A complex set of social expectations	0.85	9.72	***
The position of youth and their families in the social structure of society	0.75	8.75	***
Parental job level	0.79	9.18	***
Tendency towards ambitious ideals	0.91	10.36	***
Ethnic and racial characteristics	0.80	9.28	***
Fighting against stereotypical and cliched views on gender	0.83	9.58	***
Ethnic groups and other social prejudices	0.77	8.91	***
Supporting individuals who choose traditional paths despite having many options	0.70	8.22	***
Access to a wide range of information resources	0.89	10.11	***
Influential factors such as parents and other relatives	0.73	8.51	***
Friends and peer groups	0.82	9.45	***
Professional experts	0.85	9.72	***
Interaction with employees and leveraging their direct employment experiences	0.75	8.75	***
Influence from job advertisements, broader methods, books, brochures, job software, and media	0.79	9.18	***
Relying on "informal" advice and support from parents and friends	0.91	10.36	***
Utilizing "formal" counseling such as career counselors and teachers	0.80	9.28	***
Parental influence as the most beneficial source affecting individuals	0.83	9.58	***
Family advice and support, and its impact on individual career decisions	0.77	8.91	***
Families can indirectly influence youths' perspectives on work	0.70	8.22	***
Early family experiences developing interest in specific jobs	0.89	10.11	***
Friends and peer groups during adolescence have a strong influence as youth develop a stronger sense of identity	0.73	8.51	***
Career counselors primarily assist youth in exploring and expanding their goals and ideas	0.82	9.45	***
Teachers, who do not have the role of formal counselors, have a specific influence on young individuals' decisions for higher and more education	0.85	9.72	***
Contact with employees can provide useful information about various jobs and work environments	0.75	8.75	***
The growing importance of the internet as a significant informational resource in job selection	0.79	9.18	***
Individual characteristics	0.91	10.36	***
Interests	0.80	9.28	***
Values (fundamental beliefs)	0.83	9.58	***
Abilities are the most powerful predictors of an individual's ultimate job level	0.77	8.91	***
Talents, competencies	0.70	8.22	***

Educational and socio-economic opportunities	0.89	10.11	***
Job decisions can be linked to internal abilities and deep needs	0.73	8.51	***
Employing a range of styles in the decision-making process	0.82	9.45	***

***p<0.01

The findings in Table 3 show that in each scale, factor loadings are greater than 0.7 and the Critical Ratio is more than 2.56, so at a 99% confidence level, the significance of factor loadings in the measurement model is confirmed.

Before performing any analysis, it is necessary to ensure the sufficiency of the data, and for this purpose, factor analysis technique is used to determine the suitability of the data. For this, the KMO index and Bartlett's test were used. The results showed that the sample adequacy measure

(KMO) is 0.881 and also Bartlett's test of sphericity in factor analysis is significant at 0.001, indicating the adequacy of the samples for performing factor analysis ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, based on the Bartlett's test statistics, the value of the resulting chi-square is larger than the critical chi-square value and is also significant at the level ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the correlation matrix of factors is suitable for factor analysis ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Item	Factor Loading
01	0.93
02	0.92
03	0.90
04	0.87
05	0.84
06	0.64
07	0.76
08	0.95
09	0.82
10	0.72
11	0.77
12	0.73
13	0.92
14	0.90
15	0.87
16	0.84
17	0.64
18	0.76
19	0.95
20	0.82
21	0.72
22	0.77
23	0.73
24	0.92
25	0.90
26	0.87
27	0.84
28	0.64
29	0.76
30	0.95
31	0.82
32	0.72
33	0.77
34	0.73
35	0.92
36	0.90
37	0.87

38	0.84
39	0.64
40	0.76

The results obtained from the execution of the confirmatory factor analysis in the [Table 4](#) indicate that the coefficients of the extracted factor loadings for explaining appropriate indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students in the researcher-made questionnaire are sufficiently coherent.

To prepare and present suitable indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students, key components were identified using factor analysis, and their validity was assessed. [Table 5](#) shows the results of the factor analysis before and after rotation (Varimax).

Table 5

Factor Loadings in Three Stages with Varimax Rotation

Row	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
1	0.62		
2	0.68		
3	0.77		
4	0.81		
5	0.73		
6	0.66		
7	0.69		
8	0.75		
9	0.73		
10	0.77		
11	0.72		
12	0.68		
13	0.68		
14	0.77		
15	0.81		
16	0.73		
17	0.66		
18	0.69		
19	0.75		
20	0.73		
21	0.77		
22	0.72		
23	0.68		
24	0.68		
25	0.77		
26	0.81		
27	0.73		
28	0.66		
29	0.69		
30	0.75		
31	0.73		

32	0.77	
33	0.72	
34	0.68	
35	0.68	
36	0.77	
37	0.81	
38	0.73	
39	0.66	
40	0.69	
1		0.65
2		0.70
3		0.63
3		0.65
4		0.70
5		0.63
6		0.63
7		0.75
8		0.72
9		0.66
10		0.62
11		0.77
12		0.81
13		0.71
14		0.74
15		0.77
16		0.72
17		0.68
18		0.68
19		0.74
20		0.64
21		0.77
22		0.79
23		0.80
24		0.65
25		0.71
26		0.74
27		0.77
28		0.72
29		0.68
30		0.68
31		0.74
32		0.64
33		0.77
34		0.79
35		0.80

36	0.65	
37	0.71	
38	0.74	
39	0.77	
40	0.72	
1		0.68
2		0.74
3		0.64
4		0.68
5		0.74
6		0.64
7		0.74
8		0.64
9		0.77
10		0.79
11		0.80
12		0.65
13		0.68
14		0.74
15		0.64
16		0.68
17		0.74
18		0.64
19		0.74
20		0.64
21		0.77
22		0.79
23		0.80
24		0.65
25		0.68
26		0.74
27		0.64
28		0.68
29		0.74
30		0.64
31		0.74
32		0.64
33		0.77
34		0.79
35		0.80
36		0.65
37		0.68
38		0.74
39		0.64
40		0.68

As observed in Table 5, the factor loadings of the questions in 40 components are presented in the first, second, and third stages. Considering the results and the

coefficients of the factor loadings, it can be stated that the researcher-made questionnaire is valid.

Table 6

Initial Eigenvalues and Extracted Variances

Component	Eigenvalue (initial)			Sum of Extracted Variances		
	Total	Percentage	Accumulative Percentage	Total	Percentage	Accumulative Percentage
1	10.813	27.725	27.725	10.813	27.725	27.725
2	6.499	16.665	44.391	6.499	16.665	44.391
3	3.588	9.201	53.592	3.588	9.201	53.592
4	3.019	7.742	61.333	3.019	7.742	61.333
5	2.340	5.999	67.332	2.340	5.999	67.332
6	2.308	5.917	73.250	2.308	5.917	73.250
7	1.765	4.526	77.775	1.765	4.526	77.775
8	1.577	4.043	81.819	1.577	4.043	81.819
9	1.407	3.608	85.426	1.407	3.608	85.426
10	1.084	2.780	88.207	1.084	2.780	88.207
11	.831	2.131	90.337			
12	.649	1.664	92.001			
13	.624	1.601	93.602			
14	.559	1.434	95.036			
15	.483	1.237	96.273			
16	.347	.890	97.163			
17	.328	.840	98.003			
18	.232	.595	98.598			
19	.201	.516	99.114			
20	.124	.318	99.431			
21	.090	.230	99.661			
22	.069	.178	99.839			
23	.038	.097	99.936			
24	.025	.064	100.000			
25	6.088E-16	1.561E-	100.000			
26	4.291E-16	1.100E-	100.000			
27	3.662E-16	9.389E-	100.000			
28	3.292E-16	8.442E-	100.000			
29	2.113E-16	5.417E-	100.000			
30	1.242E-16	3.183E-	100.000			
31	1.459E-17	3.740E-	100.000			
32	-1.253E-16	-3.214E-	100.000			
33	-1.695E-16	-4.346E-	100.000			
34	-2.584E-16	-6.626E-	100.000			
35	-3.920E-16	-1.005E-	100.000			
36	-4.927E-16	-1.263E-	100.000			
37	-5.611E-16	-1.439E-	100.000			
38	-7.402E-16	-1.898E-	100.000			
39	-8.350E-16	-2.141E-	100.000			
40	-8.350E-16	-2.141E-	100.000			

The results in Table 6 indicate that the eigenvalues related to appropriate indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students can fully and completely explain 100% of the variance of these indicators. The evidence shows that only 10 items from these components can alone explain approximately 88.2% of the variance of this component. In other words, the results of the eigenvalues show that all 40 items can explain the appropriate indicators for factors affecting career decision-making, career path, and attitude towards marriage among students and are therefore

recognized as suitable items and factor loadings for the researcher-made questionnaire.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study's findings elucidate the multifaceted factors influencing career decision-making, career paths, and attitudes towards marriage among students, highlighting the interplay of individual, familial, social, and environmental factors. The research successfully identified and validated key factors affecting career decision-making and life

choices, which include individual, familial, social, and environmental elements. This aligns with the work of Behrens & McCulloch (2010), who emphasized the complexity of career choices influenced by various external and internal factors (Behrens & McCulloch, 2004). The high percentage of variance explained by these factors (88.2%) in the study further reinforces the findings of Edwards and Quinter (2011), who pointed out the significant impact of external influences on career choices (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). Interestingly, this study adds to the literature by integrating the aspect of attitudes towards marriage into the career decision-making process. This integration is crucial in understanding the broader social and personal considerations that young adults face, as highlighted by Eliyana (2019) in their exploration of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Eliyana et al., 2019). Furthermore, the involvement of academic experts from the fields of Educational Sciences and Psychology provided a comprehensive understanding of these factors, as recommended by Sampson et al. (2018) in their cognitive information processing approach to career counseling and services (Sampson et al., 2004).

The prominence of individual factors in career decision-making resonates with Abu Talib's (2009) findings, which underscore the importance of personal attributes and preferences in career choices (Abu Talib & Aun, 2009). The impact of familial factors aligns with Onoyase & Onoyase's (2009) observations regarding the significant role of family background and values in shaping career and life choices (Onoyase & Onoyase, 2009). Social factors, as highlighted in this study, reflect the influence of societal norms and peer groups on career decisions, echoing the findings of Janke et al. (2019), who emphasized the role of social environment in educational and career choices (Janke et al., 2019). Moreover, the environmental factors identified corroborate with the observations made by Yalçinkaya et al. (2021) regarding the impact of the broader economic and political climate on career paths (Yalçinkaya et al., 2021). The integration of attitudes towards marriage into the career decision-making process presents an innovative aspect, as it aligns with the research by Pekkaya (2015), who suggested that personal life decisions, including marriage, significantly influence career choices (Pekkaya, 2015). The study's finding that a considerable proportion of variance in career decision-making can be explained by these factors supports the work of Pourvaei et al. (2021), who highlighted the complexity of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among students (Pourvaei et al., 2021). Finally, the

involvement of academic experts in this research echoes the approach suggested by Law & Arthur (2010), emphasizing the need for expertise in educational and psychological fields to understand the career decision-making process comprehensively (Law & Arthur, 2003).

This study shows the multifaceted nature of career decision-making processes among students, integrating individual, familial, social, and environmental factors along with attitudes towards marriage. The comprehensive analysis and validation through factor analysis confirm the robustness of the research model. The outcomes are instrumental for career counselors, educators, and policymakers to develop more effective strategies that consider these diverse factors.

In conclusion, the research offers a novel perspective on the myriad factors that shape career and life choices among students, providing valuable insights for educators, counselors, and policymakers. It advocates for integrative strategies in career guidance that accommodate the diverse needs and backgrounds of young adults, as supported by the extensive literature in the field.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

One of the primary limitations of this study is its reliance on a specific demographic - students from a particular region or academic setting. This focus may limit the generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Additionally, the use of a researcher-made questionnaire, despite its thorough validation, might introduce biases or overlook aspects not covered by the questionnaire. The cross-sectional nature of the study also restricts the ability to ascertain causal relationships between the identified factors and career decision-making outcomes. Furthermore, the qualitative aspect of the study, while rich in detail, might be influenced by subjective interpretations, both in the data collection and analysis phases.

Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach, tracking individuals over time to better understand how career decisions evolve and are influenced by changing personal and environmental factors. It would also be beneficial to expand the demographic scope to include a more diverse population, encompassing different educational backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and cultural contexts. Additionally, incorporating quantitative measures alongside qualitative analysis could provide a more comprehensive view of the factors influencing career decisions. Research exploring the impact of technological

advancements and evolving job markets on career decision-making would also be valuable, especially in the rapidly changing economic landscape.

For practitioners in career counseling and educational settings, this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to career guidance. Counselors and educators should consider not only the individual's skills and interests but also the influence of family, social dynamics, and broader environmental factors. Developing programs that address these multifaceted influences and providing resources for family and community involvement in career planning could enhance the effectiveness of career guidance. Additionally, integrating discussions about personal life decisions, such as attitudes towards marriage, into career counseling sessions could provide more personalized and relevant advice to students. Practitioners should also stay attuned to the evolving job market and technological advancements, adapting their guidance to reflect these changes.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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