

ISSN No. 2455-5800

Journal of Scientific Research in Allied Sciences

Original Research Article

DETERMINANTS OF TEACHERS PREPAREDNESS IN HANDLING LEARNERS WITH CEREBRAL PALSY IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN LAIKIPIA-WEST DISTRICT, LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA

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Article history:

Submitted on: October 2015

Accepted on: October 2015

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to identify the level of teacher preparedness in handling learners with cerebral palsy in Laikipia-West district. The study had one objective; to determine the level of teachers' preparedness in handling learners with cerebral palsy outside classroom environment in special schools. The study analyzed 7 special schools and 3 units in public institutions. The district had 38 teachers in special school and 6 teachers in special units totaling to 44 teachers. The study employed descriptive survey design. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in data collection. Questionnaires for teachers and head teachers were used for data collection. Purposeful sampling technique was applied to sample out respondents. A pilot study was carried out in order to identify any weakness in the tools. The analysis of data as guided by research objective was done both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data collected was analysed using SPSS version 22.0 for windows and presented using qualitative statements, frequency tables, bar graphs and percentages. One of the findings of the study was that there was a problem in teacher preparedness in handling learners outside classroom environment. The study concluded that there was a problem in modifying adaptive devices necessary for teachers to help learners to cope with outside classroom environment. One of the recommendations was that in-house training refresher courses should be organized regularly in order to make teachers improve on mode of handling learners while they are outside

their classes. It further recommends that similar study should be repeated in another district to find out if the same result will be obtained.

KEYWORDS: Cerebral Palsy, Special Schools and Teachers’ Preparedness

INTRODUCTION

Globally, 5000 children are diagnosed with cerebral palsy every year (Chieni, 2003). According to Miller (2013) cerebral palsy is congenital defect and not an illness and it exists in three forms: Spastic, Athetoid and ataxia. For spastic cerebral palsy learners have problems movements and stiffness of the joint. For athetoid the learner is characterized by involuntary movement while ataxic cerebral palsy the learner has awkward movements and problems in depth perception.

Nelly (1996) added that there are some associated problems with learners with cerebral palsy; some of these may include problems in breathing, poor eating habits, problems in bladder and bowel control and speech difficulties. According to Gross Motor Function Classification System (2007) Children born prematurely have higher prevalence of contracting cerebral palsy and most children are diagnosed at around 18 months of age.

According to Baumgart and Johnson (2013), Kenya government acknowledges the existence of learners with cerebral palsy. Schools and units have been started as well as availing funds to school to support their education. Teachers have also been deployed to the concerned schools. However, poor identification has led to problems in making adaptive materials and instructions as well as rewriting objectives difficult. Kirk (2004) noted that learners with cerebral palsy have high level of frustration. Majority of teachers seemed not to be aware of how learners communicate. This may led to frequent misunderstanding and differentiating learner’s misbehaviour and the identifiable disability related to way of expression

Breed, (2002) observed that there is little government allocations of funds in Kenya that has led to a decrease in capacity building on current methods of handling learners with cerebral palsy. Barch (2004) noted that a few or no seminars had been organized to facilitate in-house capacity building by the year 2014. Emily (2013) added that corruption has been in on an increasing trend and this has affects the little the government allocates for the capacity building. There is also less technological sharing between the teachers and the therapists and no government therapist has ever been deployed to a school in order to assist teachers in management physiotherapy exercises (Jwan, 2010). The kind of specialized training that teachers have received from college

has also led to poor handling of the learners. In some instance teachers handling learners with cerebral palsy have not been specialised to deal with any other category of learners other than in their disciplines but they are erroneously deployed in schools for cerebral palsy (Brown, 2013)

According to Laikipia County Education Officer report on enrolment on learners with cerebral palsy (2014), there are 380 learners with cerebral palsy and 52 teachers deployed to handle them. Many of these teachers according to the report had not specialised in handling learners with cerebral palsy.

This means that the teacher who has little knowledge on medication is left to manage various symptoms, administer drugs so as to stop abnormal signal of epilepsy on daily bases and to seek medication before the situation gets worse. Juggling all these, it is impossible to give a sample picture of activities of a special education teacher dealing with learners with cerebral palsy in Laikipia County. This necessitated the researcher into carrying out an investigation on the level of teachers’ preparedness in handling learners with cerebral palsy in special schools in Laikipia-West district, Laikipia County.

Statement of the Problem

Determinants of special school teachers’ preparedness were studied in order to assess their effect on the way teachers handle learners with cerebral palsy while they are outside class room environment.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the level of teachers’ preparedness in handling learners with cerebral palsy, in order to determine their effectiveness in meeting their students’ learning needs in Laikipia-West district, Laikipia County.

Objective of the study was;

To investigate the level of teachers’ preparedness in handling learners with cerebral palsy outside classroom environment in special schools in Laikipia-West district, Laikipia County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Jenkinson (2009), a teacher leads other paramedic professionals in trying to mitigate the challenges caused by cerebral palsy. Consultation with other types of specialists for example physiotherapist occupation, speech therapist and others would help deciding the type of training technique for his or her learners. Hallhan and Kauffman(1999) added that it is important

for a teacher to have in-depth knowledge of cerebral palsy in order to make various accommodations and environmental adjustments to the child. A teacher needs to be flexible in adjusting to the materials used and instructions to give during outside activities and re-writing objectives to be able to be a problem solver. According to Breed (2002), a teacher needs to realize that every child is a responsibility and not a problem to be dealt with. He /she should believe on students’ ability to perform activities, although may not be able to communicate well; they may be gifted in some talents that are rare to others.

Kirk (1997) emphasised that student comfort will help their receptiveness to training in outside activities. The report also added that physical receptiveness in taking new information will determine which activities he/she may prioritise during instructions training.

Breed (2002) commented on muscular tension and fatigue during physical activities in outside activities. In his report he added that is it important for a teacher to ensure that a learner is changed position every 30 – 40 minutes. Checking of head and neck alignment is important when assisting a child proper head positioning. Normal arc of vision should also be checked when carrying out an activity.

Jenkinson (2009) citing on importance of teacher aides, he pointed out that because learners may have problems in holding play articles in and outside activities due to poor motor skills, it is important for a teacher aide to work closer to a child to enhance receptive to reduce high level of frustration due to repeated performance failure. Emerson (2013) added that student may take a few naps after sometimes during outside activities to reduce muscle tightness which may result to a learner becoming fatigued. A teacher should take note by ensuring learners can do something by themselves. This will promote creativeness in instructions received and realization of talents.

Baumgart and Johnson (2013) wrote that during outside activities a teacher should use better management and preparation techniques to prevent interruption. If interruption occurs a teacher should give independent activity to engage in while the teacher will be busy on other management practices. The choice of the activity will particularly be led by students needs and the one that involve a student, a teacher should get student’s input and let the student help to establish activity of their interest. Kirk (1997) also added that considering learners interest in the choice of outside activity, it will promote internal motivation to develop skills and talents. A

teacher should make assumptions and try to build on student strength to be able to figure out the kind of skills a learner with cerebral palsy need beyond the classroom standardized activities.

The choice of outside activities should be structured in a way that it experiences success and helps the learners to demonstrate their competence. Brown (2013) argued that a teacher helping learners with cerebral palsy need to make learners recognize that everyone is working towards a certain goal and it is not important for everyone to be doing same activity being done by all learners. During the assessment of certain skills, a teacher need’s to mark the assessment test of a certain activity with different criteria according to the student level disability to prevent unfair disadvantage to others who are severely affected (Barch 2013). Nelly (1996) noted that field trips help learners to learn more about outside world, however, he added that a teacher should consider accessibility and transportation for the areas to be visited.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Gender of the Respondents

The gender of the respondents was sought out and the results are as shown in following figure.

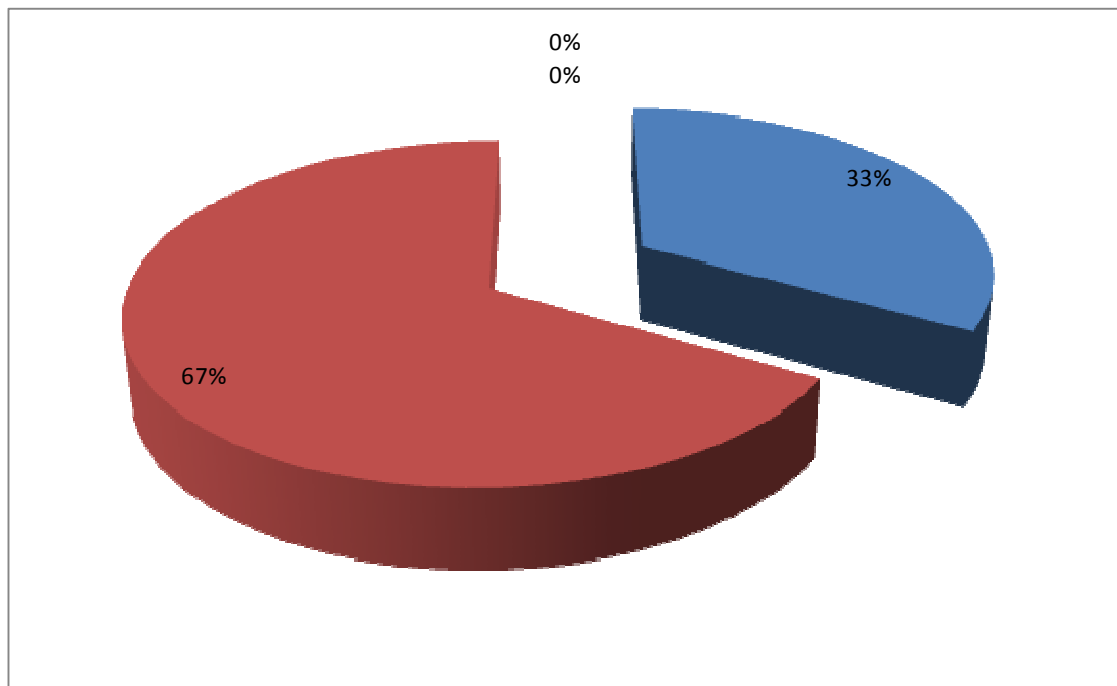


Figure 1: Gender of the respondents

From figure 1 above majority of the respondents 30 or 67.7% were female and 12 or 33.3% were males. The results show that gender distribution was not well balanced as the as male respondents were more than twice female respondents.

Age of the Respondents

The age bracket of the respondents was sought out and the results were as follows:

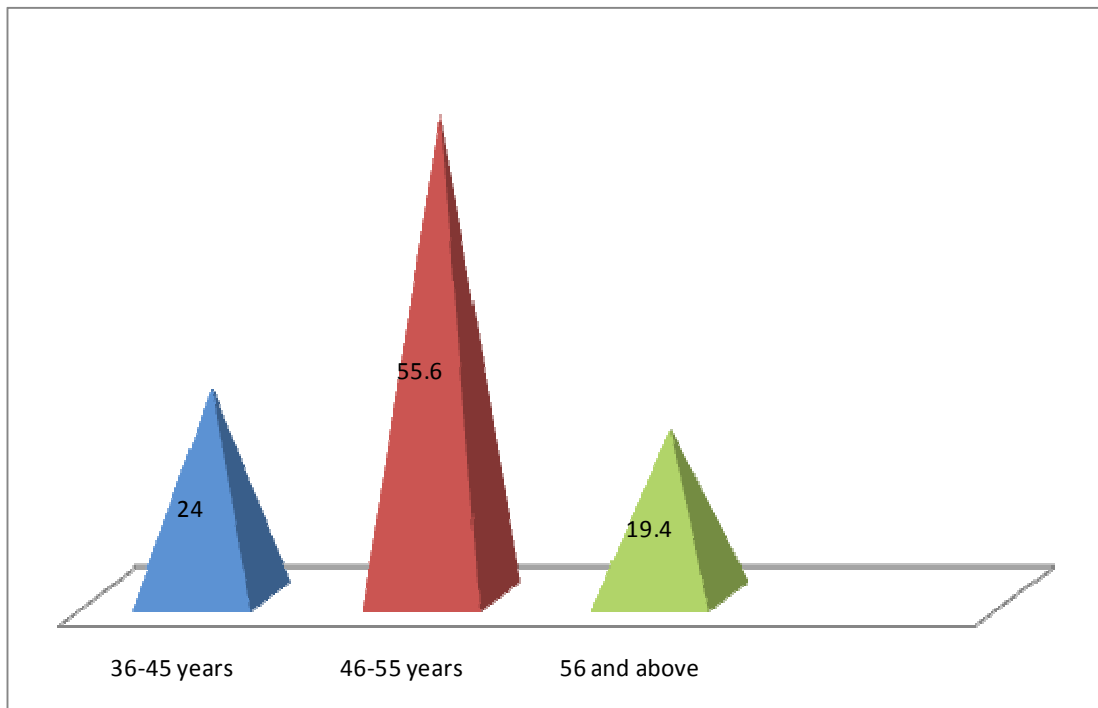


Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

According to the figure 2 above, majority of the respondents was aged between 36-45 years with a frequency of 24 representing 24%. Those who were aged between 46-55 years were 11 and they represented 55.6%. The smallest group was aged 56 years and above and it represented 19.4% and they were 9 in number. These results shows that young teachers below 36 years of age were not deployed were not deployed in special school may be because of the time taken for them to be absorbed by the relevant ministry.

Academic Qualifications of the Respondents

Respondents' academic qualification was sought out and the results were as follows:

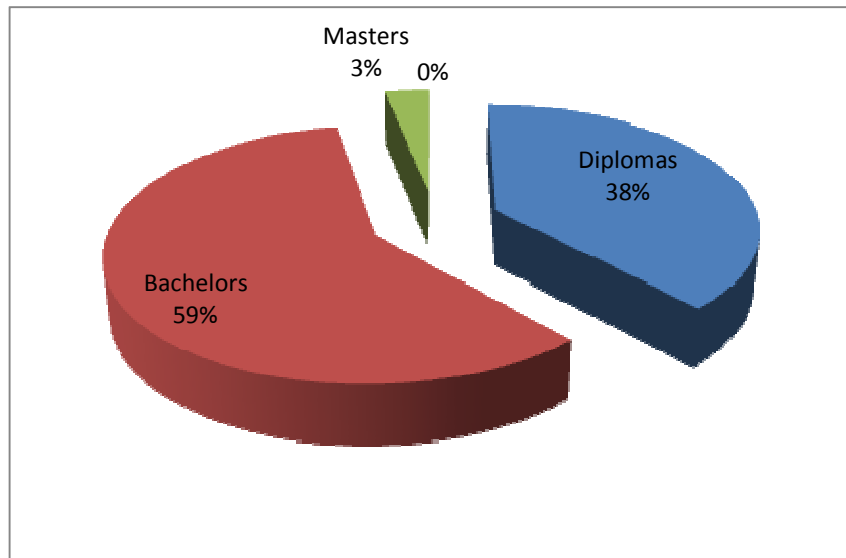


Figure 3: Academic Qualification of the Respondents

From figure 3 the respondents who had attained bachelor’s degrees were the majority as they 20 representing 55.6% of the respondents. Those who had diplomas were 16 representing 36% of the total respondents and those who had master’s degree were 3 representing 8.3% of the total respondents interviewed. This is a clear indication that a majority of the respondents had higher education qualifications.

Position held in School Respondents were interviewed on their position held in the current school. The results were as follows:

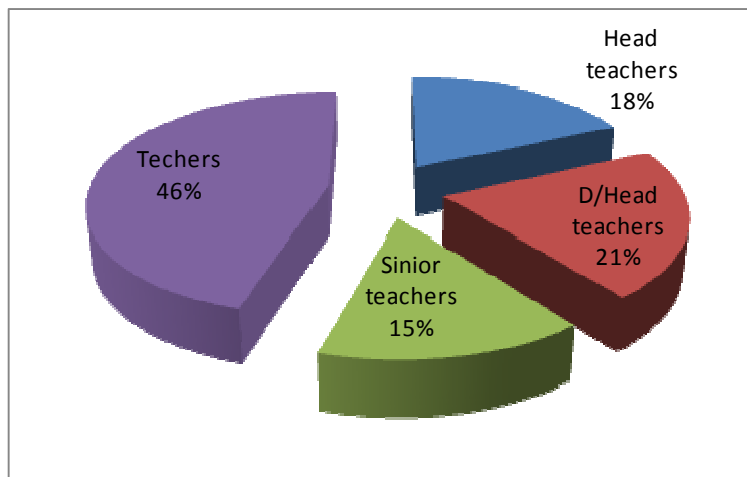


Figure 4: Position held by the respondents in their Schools

The respondents were interviewed on the positions which they held in their current schools. The results showed that majority of the respondents were classroom teachers who were 17 representing 46% of the respondents. Deputy Head teachers represented were 8 representing 21% while head teachers were 6 representing 18% of the respondents. Senior teachers were 5 representing 15% Of the respondents. These results shows that majority of the researchers’ were classroom teachers

Number of Teachers Experiencing Challenges in Participating in School Sporting Activities. The study sought to find out teachers response to the challenges they experience in participating in games activities. The results were as follows:

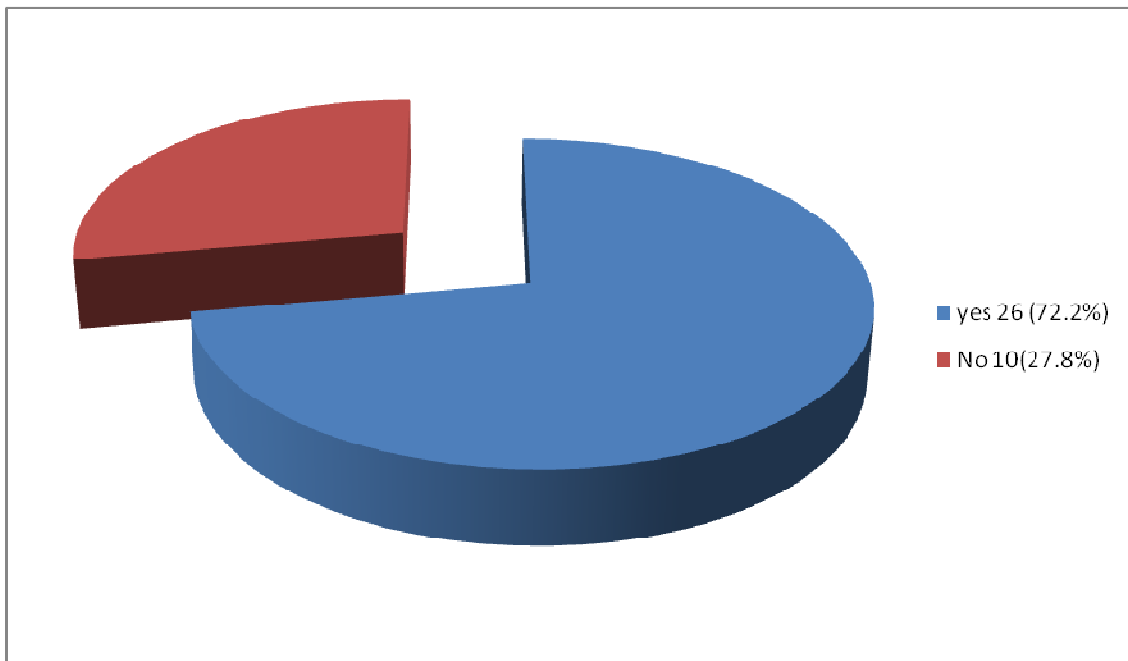


Figure 6: shows teachers experienced problems in sporting activities

From the figure 6 majority of teachers 26 representing 72.2% of the respondents said that they experienced problems while participating in sporting games activities while 10 representing 27.8% supported that they did not find difficulties when conducting sports activities. The findings seemed to reveal due to technical involvement in preparation of learners, modification and adaptations of devices, majority of teachers find it hard and much involving in participating.

Reasons for not being Active in Schools’ Sporting activities: The study also sought to find out teachers readiness in responding to sports and games activities to all forms of cerebral palsy,

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through listing some reasons for not being active in sports and games activities. The results were as follows as shown in the table 1 below

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of proper field	3	8.3
Mobility problems	6	16.7
Lack of adapted facilities and equipments	16	44.4
Lack of funds	2	5.6
Large diversity of cerebral palsy	6	16.7
Administration support	3	8.3
Total	36	100

From table 1, 3 teachers representing 8.3% of the respondents attributed their lack of not being active in sports to lack of proper field in their schools. 6 teachers representing 16.7% of the respondents reported that they had mobility problems, 16 teachers representing 44.4% of the respondents responded by saying that they lacked adapted facilities and equipment. 2 teachers representing 5.6% of the respondents reported that they were not involved in sports due to lack of funds , 6 representing 16.7% of the respondents said that it was due to large diversity cerebral palsy and finally 3 teachers representing 8.3% of the respondents said that their lack of involvement in sports was due to administration support.

The findings seemed to reveal that there were many reasons that made teachers not to active in sports while in schools. It further confirms that lack of adapted facilities was the major reason that made teachers not to involve themselves in sports. Most teachers were unable to modify some local materials and fields to enable the learners’ participation in sports.

Factors that hinder Effective Implementation of Physical Exercises in School as Stipulated in the Individual Education Plan

The study sought to find out reasons that teacher gave in relation to factor that hinder their effective implementation of physical exercises as stated in their Individual Education Plan. The results were as follow.

Table 3 shows factors that hinder effective implementation of physical exercises

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Large number of children	3	8.3
Diversity of cerebral palsy	10	27.7
Lack of time	2	5.6
Lack of facilities	6	16.7
Difficulties in modification	15	41.7
Total	36	100

It was evidenced from the table 3 that majority of the respondents, 15 representing 41.7% of the respondents cited difficulties in modification as a major reason why implementation of physical exercise is ineffective. Other constrains were large number of children, 3 or 8.3% of the respondents supported lack of time, while 10 respondents representing 27.7 of the respondents supported diversity of cerebral palsy , lack of time was supported by 2 respondents or 5.6% and lack of facilities 6 respondents or 16.7% of the respondents. When adaptation and modification of facilities are not provided learners with special needs are unable to utilize the ordinary facilities in games and sport events.

Factors That Hinder Effective adaptation of special devices as required by the learners

The study sought to investigate factors that hinder effective modification and adaptation of special devices as required by the learners. The results were as follows Table 4 shows factors that hinder effective modification and adaptation of special devices

Table 4: Factors that Hinder Effective Modification and Adaptation of Special Devices as Required by the Learners

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of seminars and work shops	16	44.4
Teachers specialisation areas	11	30.6
Large diversity of cerebral palsy	4	11.1
Lack of support from administration	2	5.6
Lack of time	3	8.3
Total	36	100

The findings seemed to indicate that 16 or 44.4% of the respondents said that lack of seminars and in house training were the greatest hindrance of modification and adaption of devices 11 or

30% supported the idea that they were not teaching what they had specialised in. 4 or 11.1% said that the hindrance was large diversity of learners with cerebral palsy. 2 or 5.6% reported that lack of support from administration was the hindrance and finally 3 or 8.3% supported that lack of time. The findings from this study seemed to attribute the greatest responsibility to seminars and in-house training to equip teachers with modern technology and ways of adapting and modifying devices. Teacher specialisation was the second to seminar where by majority of teacher respondents added that they were not posted to their areas of specialisation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives and findings, the study established that majority of teachers had problems in identifying various forms of cerebral palsy. Most of them find it hard to modify devices for games and sport activities. There are a few participation or games and sports activities in schools for learners with cerebral palsy. There are a few teachers who attend seminars and in house training to better their skills and that there are many constrains that teachers who have not specialized in physically handicap undergo while teaching learners in class.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should set aside funds for capacity building for in- house training courses to all teachers in cerebral palsy schools. This is to ensure that they get some refresher courses and seminars to equip them with the new technology of handling cerebral palsy cases. It should also establish workshop showrooms for various devices that have been made with the new technology. This is to make the teachers familiarise with the new technology when they visit these workshops.

Curriculum for teacher education should clearly entail elements such as adaptation, modification of resources as a major coverage to be taught to teacher trainees.

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