



## Personality Trait, Gender and Substance Use as Predictors of Antisocial Behaviour among Undergraduates in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

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### Abstract

The manner at which the youths of nowadays engage in self-defeating antisocial behaviour have becomes overwhelming. While it is generally hypothesized that due to the high rate and accessibility of illicit substances of self-destruction peddled across Nigeria, antisocial behaviour is inevitable. This study set out to specifically find out if personality traits, gender and substance use predicted antisocial behaviour among undergraduates. The study was anchored on Moffitt's Developmental Theory. Simple random sampling technique (hand picking) was used in selecting One hundred and fifty (150) participants comprising of (61) male and (89) female undergraduates of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. Participant's ages ranged from 16 years to 35 years, with a mean age of 20.46 (M = 20.46; SD = 3.16). The study adopted the Cross-sectional survey design and Hierarchical Multiple Regression was the main statistics used in the study. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Three instruments were used in the study. They are; Big Five Inventory, Antisocial Behaviour Scale (ABS) and Drug Use Questionnaire (DAST – 20). Result showed that the five personality traits extraversion ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ), agreeableness ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p > .05$ ), conscientiousness ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ), neuroticism ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and openness to experience ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ) were not significant predictors of antisocial behavior. Gender and substance use did not significantly predict antisocial behavior of undergraduates. The study concludes that antisocial behaviour among undergraduates could be caused by other factors that may interact with the variables studied. We recommend that factors such as social influence, frustration and modeling in relation to antisocial behaviour among youths should be explored in further research as they may be interfering with the variables studied in producing antisocial behaviour among undergraduates.

**Keywords:** Personality traits, Gender, Antisocial, Substance, Behaviour, Undergraduates

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## Introduction

Youths they say are the expected future leaders of tomorrow, but in a society where these would be future leaders are engaged in crimes, violence, and other delinquent and corrupt behaviours, a condition of doubt becomes pertinent. As Li (2023) informed, crime has increased globally in recent years as well as antisocial behaviours. Antisocial behaviour and aggression among youths have become a global phenomenon (Malete, 2007). Peace is an important phenomenon, a condition the nation, the world and every individual needs. The absence of peace suggests the presence of disarray, violence, crime and all other forms of misdemeanors. While it has been argued that researches on youths antisocial behaviour in Africa is sparse (Malete, 2007), in the contemporary Nigerian setting, the researchers observed that a lot of the youths exhibit dishonest behaviours without any fear of apprehension.

Carroll, Mikhail and Burt (2023) observed that continuity and change characterize youth's antisocial behaviour trajectories. Both in rural and urban areas, the streets and residences are no longer safe, no matter how well fortified they may be. Street-smart-boys popularly known as "Area-boys" are found everywhere roaming the streets, harassing and extorting money from innocent people. Bank robbery, money laundering, involvement in theft popularly known as "419; kidnapping, car snatching, armed robbery, cultism, assaults, rape, violence, substance abuse, alcoholism, certificate racketing, vandalism, examination malpractices to mention but a few are challenges created and faced by youths.

Meanwhile, it has been argued that as less developed society begins to modernize, the rate and the nature of its anti-social behavior are influenced by its rate of development (Chukumati & Akpan, 2013). Anti-social behaviour among young people has remained an issue of great concern worldwide. The alarming increase has posed a greater challenge to both developed and non-developed countries due to availability of the modern technologies in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Anti-social behavior refers to repeatedly violating the rights of others through intimidation and dishonesty. Antisocial behaviors population may show impaired functioning in their executive functioning on tasks (Jansen & Franse, 2024) which could potentially lead to obstruction of



peaceful task performance. Therefore, anti-social behavior causes harm to the individual perpetrating them and others in a given society and such people make life miserable for those who live around them (Nwankwo et al., 2010). Antisocial behaviors are the destructive or negative actions characterized by overt and covert hostility and deliberate aggression towards other individuals, places, or things (Khaliq, & Rasool, 2016) Anti-social behavior has serious negative impacts on young people, their learning and teaching process, the school and the society in general (Khaliq, & Rasool, 2016). Behaviours that are antisocial in nature are usually repeated over time and they violate the social normative behaviours and may further include; aggression, vandalism, rule infraction, defiance of adult authority and violation of the social norms and mores of society (Meyer, 1995).

Extant research suggests that some of the major causes of antisocial social behaviour among youths are caused by insufficient emotional, psychological, socio-economic development of children at home or under socialization in society which makes them proffer causes for pampering in an unacceptable behavior (Aboh, Nwankwo, Agu, & Chikwendu, 2014). Others (Li, 2023) noted that most data on antisocial behaviours are related to personality. Other conditions that may be implicated in antisocial behaviour are unhealthy social relationships among persons' family, community, peers, and/or educational environment. This may also be affected by the child's cognitive ability, his/her temperament and irritability, the intensity of attachment with deviant peers, deficit of cooperative problem-solving skills, and exposure to the violence (Khaliq, & Rasool, 2016). Antisocial behavior may be covert involving sponsoring aggressive activities such as vandalism, theft, and fire-setting; overt, involving antagonistic actions against peers, parents, siblings, teachers, or other adults such as bullying, hitting, and verbal abuse, etc. Overt Antisocial behaviors in early childhood and adolescents may include disobedience, sneaking, lying, or furtively destroying other's things (Murray & Farrington, 2005).

Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2002) suggested a list of psycho-social factors found through different researches from time to time that may lead human beings towards aggressive behavior (e.g., economic pressures, disappointment, exposure to violence through media, bumpy home environment, aggression in parents, socio-economic status, incompatibility with peers). Many



different types of extreme anti-social behaviors have been noticed and perceived among students in schools including aggression to those around them (e.g., violence, cruelty, scam, irresponsible, littering, arson, theft, impulsive, sabotage) (Light, Rusby, Nies, & Snijders, 2013). Also, other lesser anti-social behavior traits found in school going children are disobedience, lying, menacing, manipulation, and many other actions or activities are drug and alcohol abuse, etc. (Bor et al., 1997).

Drug abuse is a major cause of health challenge globally and existing research has indicated that drug abuse and antisocial behaviour co-occur (Obando, Trujillo & Trujillo, 2014). Majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities – social, educational, political, moral etc. Such drugs include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, Cocaine, Morphine, Heroin, Alcohol, Barbiturates, Amphetamines, etc. Oshikoya and Alli (2006) in their studies on perception of drug abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduates identified dependence and addiction as one of the major consequences of drug abuse, characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behaviors. These changes are maladaptive and inappropriate to the social or environmental setting and may place the individual at risk of harm (Abudu, 2008). Young people use drugs for many reasons, including curiosity, because it feels good, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increase the risk of using other drugs later.

The impact of drug abuse among Nigerian youths has been a hallmark of a morally bankrupt, decadence, wasted generation and loss of our societal values and ideals. 50% of young antisocial alcoholics have a close family member who is also alcohol dependent (Abudu, 2008). Meanwhile, alcohol is more likely to increase aggressive behaviors in people with antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) than in people without. This may be because alcohol interfere with executive functioning in the brain, which regulates and inhibit aggressive behavior. People with ASPD also show impaired executive functioning, which may make them particularly vulnerable to this effect (Aluede, 2000). Parents' personality traits can be transferred to their offspring. Soleymani and Akbari (2023) has shown in their research that parents with personality traits that



are related to antisocial behaviour transmit same to their children who continue to perpetuate these traits in the society.

Substance use has been related to crime desistance among young men as studies have shown (Hussong, Curran, Moffitt, Caspi, & Carrig, 2004). Some drugs that perform these maladaptive functions are those of amphetamine. Amphetamines usually look like small, dark- or light-blue tablets. It can be taken in half or in quarters. These drugs are used for symptoms of attention deficit hyper disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy because they increase one's focus and attention, and equally keep the brain awake. The average age of dependent young adults is almost 25 years old, and they first became dependent around 20 years old (Carmona, & Wandler, 2021). They also have high rates of psychiatric disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, social phobia, generalized anxiety disorder, antisocial personality disorder. They also have high rates of substance abuse: cannabis abuse/dependence, cocaine use disorder, opium use disorder, amphetamine abuse/dependence, and smoke cigarettes (Carmona, & Wandler, 2021). The economic situation of Nigeria in the current period induced and traced to bad government has resulted to different forms of violence, crime and criminal activities in forms of: bribery and corruption, killings, kidnapping, abducting and raping of fellow citizens, stealing, substances abuse of different kinds etc. These behaviours are illicit and demands urgent attention for the betterment of our future generation, the country and the world at large. This study pursues to understand whether personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) will significantly predict anti-social behavior among young people, if ill gender will significantly predict anti-social behavior among young people and investigate whether substance use will significantly predict anti-social behavior

### **Literature review**

Personality has been linked to both antisocial and hyperactive behaviours among youths with extraversion being the most linked measures with antisocial behaviours (O'Connell, 2023). Meanwhile, Eysenck (1991a; 1997) pointed out that nearly all large-scale studies of personality find the equivalent of the three traits such as Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N) and Psychoticism



(P). These traits are found across cultures worldwide (Barrett & Eysenck, 1984). Assessments of an individual on the traits are also relatively stable across time (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Antisocial behaviour is assumed to occur from antisocial personality disorder (van Dam, Rijckmans, & Bosch, 2022) and it is believed that it stems from a pervasive pattern of total disregard to the feelings of others leading to violation of people's right either by negligence or overt behaviour. Youths who display this maladaptive behaviour do so by evoking strong aversive emotions towards others without recourse to their fundamental human rights (Van Dam et al, 2022).

Other studies have found early internalizing and externalizing trajectories of adolescents as factors in substance abuse and antisocial behaviour (Picoito, Santos, & Nunes, 2021). This association remains a significant aspect of youth's involvement in illicit acts that threaten the peace of many societies. DeLisi, Vaughn, Salas-Wright, and Jennings, (2015) indicated that substance use and drug problems often accompany other antisocial behavior generally and violent behavior specifically; however, the specificity of the drug/violence nexus is less clear. Findings from their study indicated that the most serious violent offenders have substance use problems that appear amenable to treatment; however, the most antisocial violent offenders also have the most severe drug problems (DeLisi, et al, 2015).

Hussong et al, (2004) examined two hypotheses about the developmental relation between substance abuse and individual differences from antisocial behavior during young adulthood. Results showed that is a significant individual variability in initial levels and rates of change in antisocial behavior over time. Likewise, Bushman, and Cooper, (1990) studied the effect of alcohol on human aggression using quantitative and qualitative techniques to integrate the alcohol and aggression literature. The results indicate that alcohol does indeed cause aggression but alcohol effects were moderated by certain methodological parameters. Further research (Maldonado-Molina, Reingle, & Jennings, 2010) examined the relationship between alcohol and violence using a longitudinal survey of adolescents ages 11-26. Finding indicates that consistent alcohol use appears to be a predictor of serious physical violence, whereas physical violence does not predict problematic alcohol use ((Maldonado-Molina et al, 2010). Available research



findings from Bede (2017), on the perceived domestic violence influence on the psychological health and antisocial behaviour of adolescents in correctional centers in Lagos indicates that domestic violence independently predicted antisocial behaviour among the sample and gender was equally a predictor of antisocial behaviour. Research on gender and antisocial behaviour Burt, (Slawinski, & Klump, 2018) findings suggest that, at least in school contexts, the etiology of antisocial behavior does indeed vary across sex differences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Moffitt's (1993) developmental theory, "adolescence-limited offenders" become engaged in antisocial behaviour only temporarily. Presumably due to contextual phenomena that occur in contemporary adolescence (Moffitt, 1993). A sharp contrast exists between adolescence-limited offenders. Their delinquent involvement differs both in term of etiological factors and the chronic pattern by which the antisocial behaviour develops from an early age. A combination of neurodevelopment impairments and early environmental interaction, and the continuing and cumulating consequences of these, is believed to cause this relatively small group of offenders to develop a pathological adult antisocial personality structure (Moffitt, 1993).

A number of empirical tests of Moffitt's theory have been carried out. Some test the differences in the correlates between adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent offending (Dean et al., 1996; Jeglum et al., 1997; Moffitt et al., 1994; Moffitt et al., 1996). Others have examined sex differences in antisocial behaviour (Mazerolle et al., 2000; Moffitt et al, 2001). The stability postulate stems from the basic assumption of Moffitt's developmental theory that most adults who behave in an antisocial manner will have begun to exhibit antisocial behaviour in early childhood. Based on this assumption, Moffitt (1993) proposed the a prediction on the longitudinal stability of antisocial behaviour and estimates that the individual stability of antisocial behaviour are expected to violate the longitudinal law which states that relationships between variables become weaker as the time interval between them grows longer (Clarke & Clarke, 1984).

Accordingly, research on the stability of antisocial behaviour from childhood to adolescence with the stability from childhood to adulthood exists. It postulated that the stability from



childhood to adulthood should be higher than the stability between childhood and adolescence (Donker, Peter, Laan & Frank, 2001). Overt behaviour involves direct confrontation with others and the infliction or threat of physical harm (including behaviours such as physical aggression and threat); covert behaviour does not involve direct confrontation and is more deceitful in nature including theft and fraud (Donker et al., 2001). Although not explicitly stated in the originally presented theory, overt behaviour, particularly physical aggression, is now thought of as a hallmark feature of life-course-persistent delinquency (Moffitt et al, 2001). Persistent offenders were prone to fighting in childhood more often than adolescence-limited offenders and they commit more violent and other serious offenses than incidental offenders during adolescence (Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter & Silva, 2001). In contrast, adolescence limited delinquency is mainly characterized by non-aggressive or covert offending (Bartusch, Lynam, Moffitt, & Silva, 1997). As overt behaviour from early childhood is strongly associated with persistent and violent offender (Nagin & Tremblay, 1999), and these offenders tend to show the highest degree of stability in antisocial behaviour (Loeber, 1982). We are expected to find a higher stability between childhood and adulthood for overt behaviour than the covert behaviour and consequently, an increased likelihood that the longitudinal law would be violated. As violent and frequent offending is more associated with the life-course-persistent pattern than with the adolescence-limited pattern, it is expected that these combinations would show a higher level of stability from childhood to adulthood than from childhood to adolescence.

## Methodology

One hundred and fifty (150) undergraduate students comprising of 61 males and 89 females participated in the study. The participants were drawn from three faculties of Ebonyi state University, Abakaliki. Participants were drawn using simple random sampling technique. Participant's age ranged from 16 years to 35 years with a mean age 20.46 years. The demographic information obtained demonstrated that 140 (70.6%) participants are Christians, 7 (3.5%) are Muslims and 3 (1.6%) are others. The participants ethnic group; 117 (58.5%) participants are Igbo, 4 (2.1%) participants are Hausa, Yoruba 2 (1%) of the participants while 6 (3.1%) participants did not indicate their ethnic group, while 21(10.01%) were from other tribes (Ibibio, Ijaw, Efik etc)





A questionnaire comprising of three scales were used for data collection. The instruments are; Antisocial Behaviour Scale (ABS) Immanuel (2015), Drug Use Questionnaire (DAST – 20) SKINNER, (1982) and Big Five Personality Inventory.

The researchers approached the participants at their various classrooms after obtaining permissions through their class representatives. Before administering the questionnaire, the researchers informed the participants that they will be given consent forms so that they are aware of what is involved in the research and to sign if they accept to participate in the study. All the participants after reading the consent form accepted to participate in the study. Participants were equally assured that their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and that participation in the study is voluntary. Participants were asked to indicate whether they use drug or not; and whether they have been victim of domestic violence. This measure was used to establish a baseline and ensured that the right respondents were recruited for the study. One hundred and fifty-five (155) questionnaires were administered; while one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were returned. 150 questionnaires used were crosschecked properly before subjecting them to data analysis. Errors from improper filling or none completion was not recorded.

The design of the study was Cross-sectional survey research design while Hierarchical Multiple Regression was the main statistics used in the study. Analysis of data was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM version 26 software.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean and standard deviation) and correlations among the study variables are presented in table one. In table two, results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression conducted to test the hypotheses were presented. The variables were entered into the equation in models. In the first model of the equation, gender, age, and religion were entered in order to control for the likely impact they may have on antisocial behavior of the participants. The five personality traits were entered in model 2 of the equation, while substance use was entered in model 3 of the equation, all in a bid to test their predictive roles on antisocial behaviour of participant.



**Table 1: Correlations of gender, age, religion, personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, & openness), substance use and antisocial behaviour.**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Gender	1.61	.49	-									
Age	22.23	3.26	-	-								
2			.30**									
			*									
3 Religion	1.15	.53	-.15**	.17*	-							
			*	*								
4 Extraversion	27.86	5.13	.04	-.11	-.07	-						
5 Agreeableness	27.30	6.24	.05	-	-.09	.43**	-					
			.13*			*						
6 Conscientiousness	29.47	6.45	.04	-.06	-.07	.26**	.21*	-				
						*	*					
7 Neuroticism	28.46	6.86	.05	.07	-.02	.25**	.21*	.27*	-			
						*	*	**				
8 Openness to Experience	36.73	7.41	.07	.09	-.09	.28**	.25*	.25*	.41*	-		
						*	**	**	**			
9 Substance use	44.41	26.29	-.09	.01	-.06	.10	.09	.09	.13	.09	-	
10 Antisocial Behaviour	98.17	16.32	-.05	-.10	-.11	.09	.08	-.01	.01	.06	.07	-

\*\*\*p < .001; \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05

Result of table one above showed that the demographic variables gender ( $r = -.05$ ), age ( $r = -.10$ ) and religion ( $r = -.11$ ) were not significantly related to antisocial behavior. The five personality traits extraversion ( $r = .09$ ), agreeableness ( $r = .08$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = -.01$ ), neuroticism ( $r = .01$ ), and openness to experience ( $r = .06$ ) were not significantly related to antisocial behavior. Substance use has no significant relationship with antisocial behaviour of participants ( $r = .07$ ). Gender was negatively significantly related to age ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and religion ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Age was positively significantly related to religion ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and negatively related to agreeableness ( $r = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Extraversion was significantly related to agreeableness ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ), neuroticism ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and openness ( $r = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Agreeableness was significantly related to conscientiousness ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), neuroticism ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and openness ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Conscientiousness was significantly



related to neuroticism ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and openness ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Neuroticism was significantly related to openness ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting antisocial behavior from Personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness), gender and substance use.**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	-.09	-.10	-.09
Age	-.11	-.11	-.11
Religion	-.10	-.10	-.09
Extraversion		.06	.08
Agreeableness		.03	.02
Conscientiousness		-.05	-.05
Neuroticism		-.01	-.02
Openness to Experience		.06	.06
Substance Use			.05
R	.16	.19	.20
R <sup>2</sup>	.03	.04	.04
R <sup>2</sup> change	.03	.01	.003
F value	F(3,149)=.17	F(8, 144) =.53	F(9, 143)=.57

Note: \*= $p < .05$

The results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression in table 2 above indicated that the demographics, gender ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $p > .05$ ), age ( $\beta = -.11$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and religion ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $p > .05$ ) were not significant predictors of antisocial behavior among the participants. The demographic variables accounted for none significant 16% impact as predictors of antisocial behavior ( $R^2 = .16$ ). The five personality traits extraversion ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ), agreeableness ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p > .05$ ), conscientiousness ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ), neuroticism ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and openness to experience ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ) entered in model 2 of the equation were not significant predictors of antisocial behavior. They accounted for non-significant less than 1% variance in predicting antisocial behavior among the participants ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Substance use entered in model 3 did not significantly predict antisocial behavior among the participants. It accounted for non-significant less than 1% variance in predicting antisocial behavior among the participants ( $\Delta R^2 = .003$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, personality traits and core self-evaluation were indicated not to be potential factors that can explain antisocial behavior.



## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study have shown that the five personality traits extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience were not significant predictors of antisocial behavior. Consequently, substance use entered in model did not significantly predict antisocial behavior among the participants and gender was also not a significant predictor of antisocial behaviour among undergraduates. Findings from Yuan (2023) study indicate that the three vital personality traits in the big five personality trait test were found to be related to antisocial behaviour. Although other personality traits such as agreeableness, extraction, and neuroticism were not predictors of antisocial behaviour, the findings is in contrast to the findings of the present study as none of these personality traits studied predicted antisocial behaviour.

The finding of this study contrast with that of Bede and Akpunne (2017) who examined perceived gender influence on the psychological health and antisocial behaviour of adolescents in correctional centers in Lagos, and found that domestic violence independently predicted antisocial behaviour among the sample. The findings of that study proved that gender has significant influence on anti-social behaviour, which was not significant in the present study. The study indicates that females reported higher mean scores than their male counterparts in vandalism, theft, truancy, disruptive behaviour, general antisocial behaviour and psychological distress (Bede & Akpunne, 2017).

Other researches Olaseni (2023) found that gender was a predictor of antisocial behaviour such that male undergraduates showed high levels of antisocial behaviour that their female folks. This finding differs from the findings of this study because gender was not seen to play any significant role in the display of antisocial behaviour among the undergraduates studied. The difference could result from the location or study areas differences i.e South East and South West regions. Other studies found that females had high score on violence and on status offences which were related to somatic symptoms (Espejo-Siles et al, 2023).



## Conclusion

The study concludes that gender has no significant association with antisocial behavior. The five personality traits; extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience were not significantly related to antisocial behavior. It is also concluded that drug abuse has no significant association with antisocial behaviour among students. This could be probably resulting from the moral orientation given to the students. On the other hand, demographic variables such as age and religion are not determinants of the students' involvement in antisocial behaviour.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the literature viewed in the study, we recommend that substance use among undergraduates as well as adolescents be monitored and controlled so that it can lead to a decrease in violent behaviours. On the basis of our empirical findings, we further recommend that factors such as social influence, frustration and modeling in relation to antisocial behaviour among youths should be explored in further researches as they may be interfering with the variables we studied in producing antisocial behaviour among undergraduates.

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