

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECTING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT BURNOUT IN BANGKOK

Sawangjaitham P, Tanyasit K, Carrera M, Robkit A*,
and Krapookthong M

International College, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract: Student burnout is important, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and mandatory online learning. The purpose of this quantitative research is to examine individual factors and environmental factors affecting student burnout. And, to answer two research questions: 1) How individual factors and environmental factors are correlated to each other? 2) Which of both factors are the most important to student burnout in Bangkok? Therefore, understanding the problem would aid in preventing or mitigating student burnout. The sample group used in the study consisted of 230 undergraduate students studying in Bangkok. The researchers have used descriptive statistical analysis to analyze and process the obtained data from the online questionnaire. The result indicated that students felt more burnout over the past two years with online learning due to government restrictions. Among the six-sub factors including self-esteem, self-discipline, educational, friends, family, and school. Every sub-factor has a high level except school and education, which is a moderate level. We found that Thai undergraduates in Bangkok appear to have everything that would not cause burnout. It can be concluded that students may not know how to use the support and the abilities they have during 100% online learning, resulting in a significant level of burnout among students during the past two years. The researchers recommend that universities implement strategies such as promoting their student support structures (student-teacher mentorship), their health facilities (with online outreach) and providing physical space where students can meet safely in times of contagion. These strategies would help students reduce problems, develop healthy habits and reduce overall burnout.

Keywords: student burnout, individual factors, environmental factors, online learning

Introduction

On 13 January 2020, the first case of COVID-19 outside of China was identified in Thailand (World Health Organization, 2020; World Health Organization, 2021). By March 2020, all in-person classes at all levels were suspended due to the national lockdown protocol, with online protocol being implemented instead. While the lockdown protocol was used to prevent the spreading of the virus out of concern for health and safety, it led to increasing psychological issues due to disruption of learning habits and environment. Thailand's Department of Mental Health reported 29% of students were stressed, with 16% reported themselves experiencing burnout and some students even experienced learning regression (2021). The effect of online learning towards college students was immense as

they felt disconnect from peers, professors, and college community, leading to feeling more exhausted and generally felt more cynicism (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Burnout is defined by three dimensions for this study the researchers: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Maslach and Leiter (2016) defined emotional exhaustion as “wearing out, loss of energy, depletion, debilitation, and fatigue”. Cynicism is seen as “negative or inappropriate attitudes... irritability, loss of idealism, and withdrawal; and inefficacy refers to “...reduced productivity or capability, low morale, and an inability to cope”. Therefore, this research aimed to examine the impact of individual and environmental factors affecting student burnout in order to better understand the phenomenon.

Research Questions

1. How individual factors and environmental factors are correlated to each other?
2. Which of both factors are the most important to student burnout in Bangkok?

Scope of Study

This research focuses on the influence of individual factors (self-esteem, discipline, and education) and environmental factors (school, friends, and family) on undergraduate student burnout in Bangkok. The data collected between March and April 2022. The time period under study is January 2020 to January 2022, since these are the years that most undergraduate students in Bangkok are facing the adjustment from in-class learning to online learning due to the closure of the university as a result of COVID-19.

Literature Review

Student burnout and impact

The structure of activities and tasks students are required to perform (attendance and reaching goals) resemble those of numerous occupations (Reis, Xanthopoulou, & Tsaousis, 2015).

Student burnout can have a significant negative impact on students' performance at school. College students are particularly prone to burnout since they experience multiple social-economic, relational, and socio-professional outcome concerns during their studies. Understanding that these potential negative effects exist, the researchers' investigation will hopefully contribute to lessening these unfortunate consequences. (Maroco & Campos,2012). Wu (2010) explains that learning burnout is a mental sensation. Learning inactivity caused by stress in school is physical and mental fatigue, which is a negative feeling that affects a person. In which a person will have a tangible expression of speech, facial expressions, and gestures that are unsatisfactory with the status quo. According to Rhein (2022), changing the educational style from in-class to online due to COVID-19 resulted in increased academic stress, reduced motivation, struggles with personal space, and financial problems. Students age 18-23 are within the age group where most disorders have been found (Rhein,2022).

Factors related to student burnout

Individual factors includes self-esteem, self-discipline, and education. Self-esteem refers to self-evident feeling of self-acceptance, self-worth, and self-confidence, in both positive and negative light (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is associated with academic achievement in a way that lower self-

esteem would reflect in lower academic performance (Redenbach, 1991; Asghari, A. & Saadati, S., 2016). Self-discipline refers to the control over one's behavior, emotion, thoughts, and to resist impulses to divert from long-term goals (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007); Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2008). Education related burnout is caused by the lack of control as students are unable to control their assigned tasks or have no control over their assigned tasks' guidelines for solving the problem. If students have low self-discipline, efficiency of self-control will be reduced, resulting in learning burnout (Pongpisanrat, 2019). Education level can influence burnout with the higher level of academic workload the higher the potential for burnout (Kerdphol, Phattharayuttawat, and Singhakant (2019), Pamungkas (2021)

Environmental factors includes school or university, friends (peers), and family. School (university) contributes to burnout via structure and order in classroom, level of teacher involvement, and level of support by teachers and peers (Lin and Yang, 2021). Friends (peers) provides companionship, social life, and social connection to students. During the pandemic, students found online learning setting to be isolated and lack of healthy social life (Gonzalez-Ramirez et al (2021). Family affect school burnout both positively and negatively. Increased levels of burnout were negatively affected by families that lacked significant understanding and warmth (Bogenschneide & Johnson, 2004; Lin and Yang, 2021). In the work of Ye, Huang, and Liu (2021), social support has significant impact towards the development or resistance of academic burnout in university students as it interplays with their life satisfaction.

Materials and Methods

This research uses an online questionnaire survey for data collection to study the factors affecting undergraduate student burnout in Bangkok. The researchers used descriptive statistical analysis to analyse and process the obtained data from the online questionnaire, Participants were recruited online. Measure into protecting their privacy and consent were exercised. The size of sample group is 230 undergraduate students residing in Bangkok. The questionnaire employs 5-points rating scale with (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The mean and S.D. will then be generated by excel and SPSS. Level of consensus will be interpret based on the average score as following: average 1.00 – 1.80 considered 'strongly disagree', 1.81 – 2.60 considered 'disagree', 2.61-3.40 considered 'neutral', 3.41-4.20 considered 'agree', and 4.21-5.00 considered 'strongly agree'.

Results and Discussion

Level of Burnout

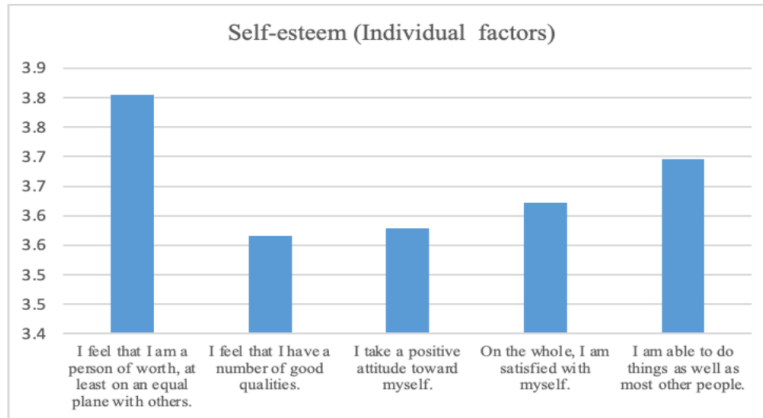


Figure 1 Level of Burnout

The findings show that students strongly agreed that they felt worn out after taking online class and felt greater burnout with online classes. Students become less mindful of their assignments and develop a negative attitude toward their academic work over the past two years.

Self-esteem

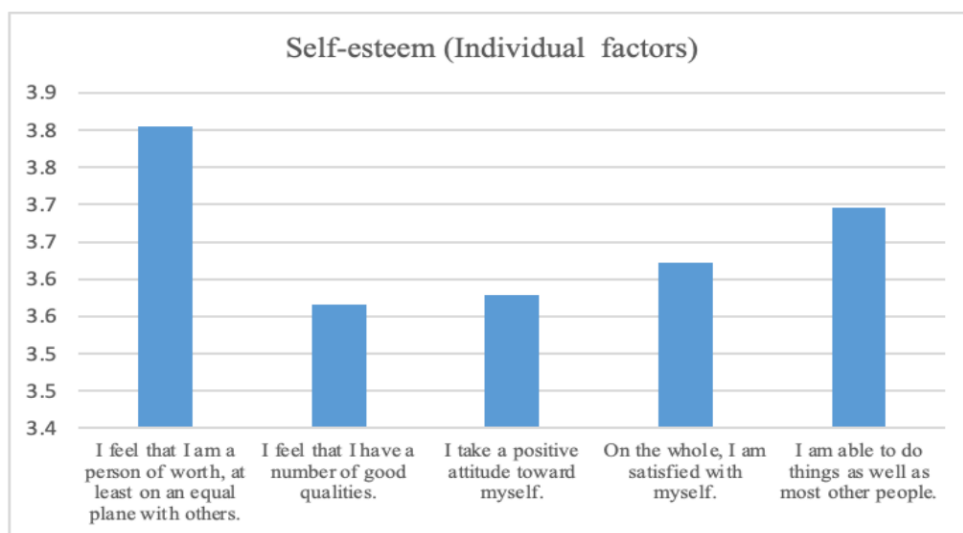


Figure 2 Self-esteem

The finding shows that most of the students saw their own worth, seeing oneself as valuable as others and able to do the same things as everyone else. The mean values were 3.8 and 3.7, respectively, indicating that the students had high self-esteem.

Self-discipline (individual factor)

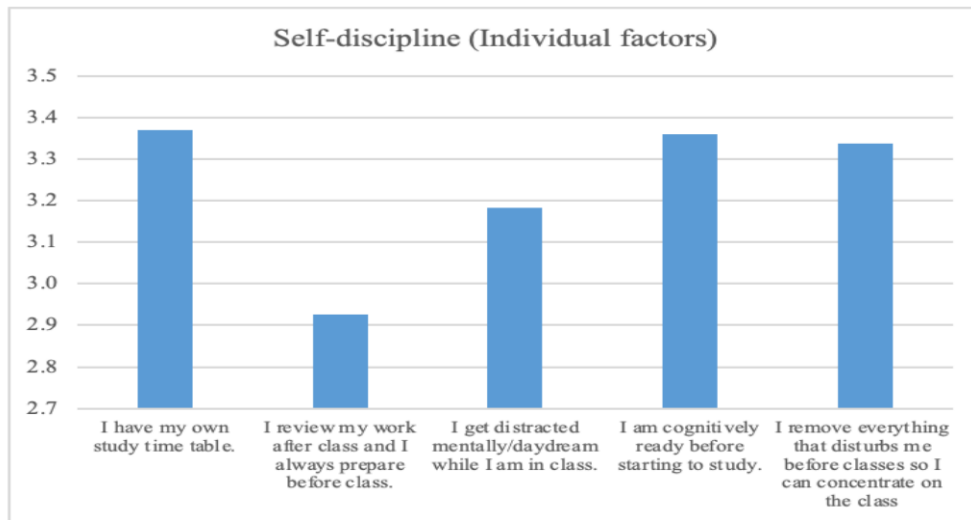


Figure 3 Self-discipline (individual factor)

The finding shows students having moderate level of self-discipline. While students reported keeping their own study time tables, being cognitively ready before study and removing distraction before study which suggest having high self-discipline, students also reported lower discipline when it came to maintaining their attention span and self-study time. Having lower self-discipline can reduce self-control in learning process which lead to learning burnout in students.

Education (individual factor)

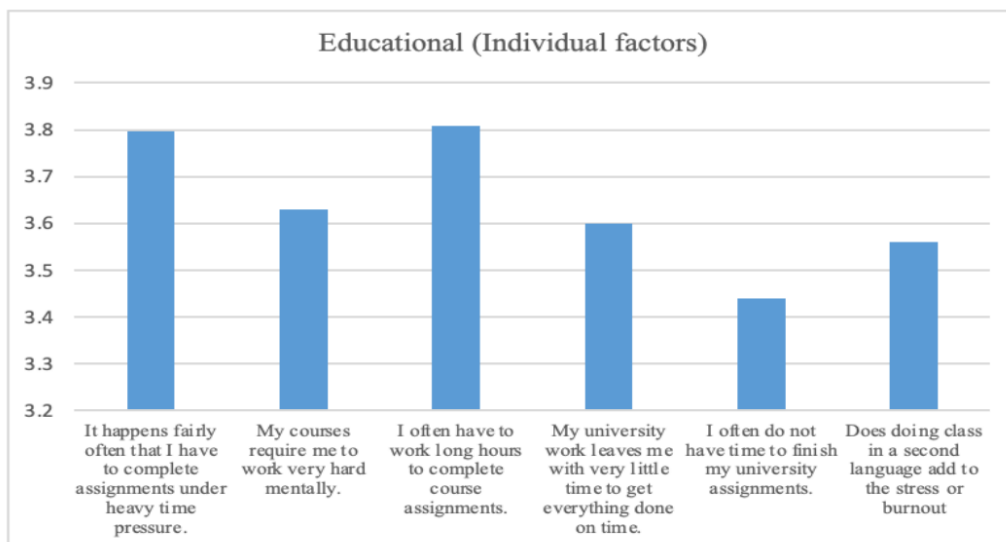


Figure 4 Education (individual factor)

The finding shows that most students felt overwhelmed by the amount of workload during the lockdown period. Students often had to complete assignments under heavy time pressure and worked long hours to complete assignments. They also reported difficulty in keeping up with the workload within limited time. Students who studied in second language (such as English-medium program) reported additional stress or burnout due to additional language challenge. The more the challenge university study become, the more burnout is likely to be experienced by students.

School or University (environmental factor)

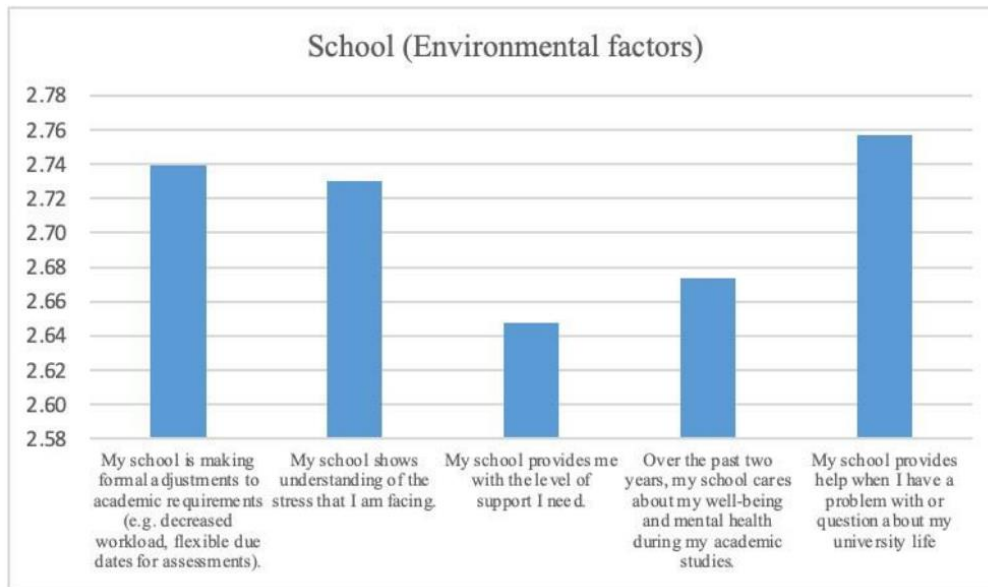


Figure 5 School or University (environmental factor)

The finding shows that the level of university support for students was moderate. This may indicate that students perceive insufficient support from the school or did not aware of available support.

Friends or peers (environmental factor)

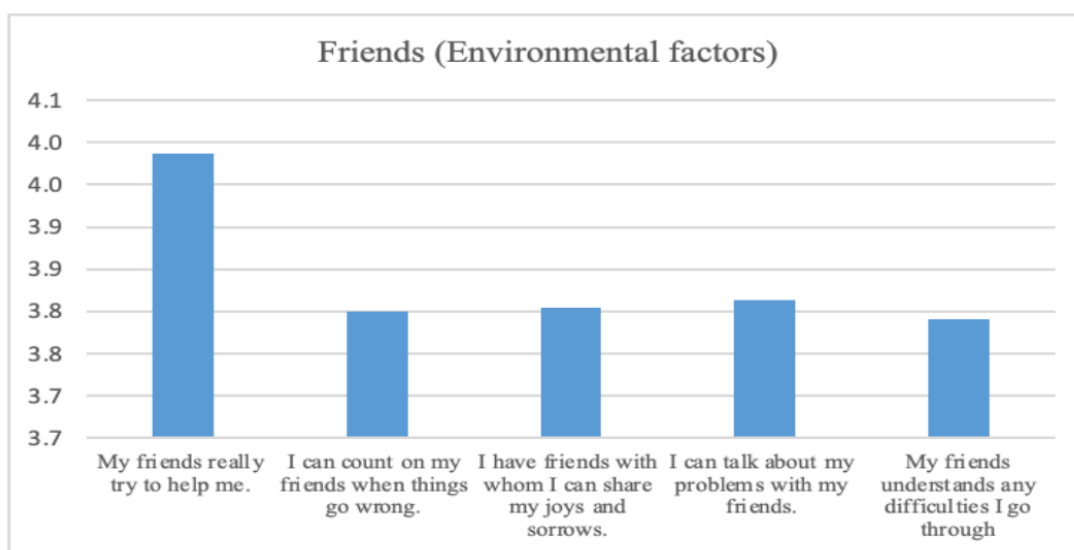


Figure 6 Friends or peers (environmental factor)

The finding shows the average of sub-factors "Friends" in individual factors. According to the average, students "agree" that friends have an influence on burnout and play an important role in their lives. Most students believe that they can trust and rely on their friends in difficult times, and they can share their sorrows and joys with them.

Family (environmental factor)

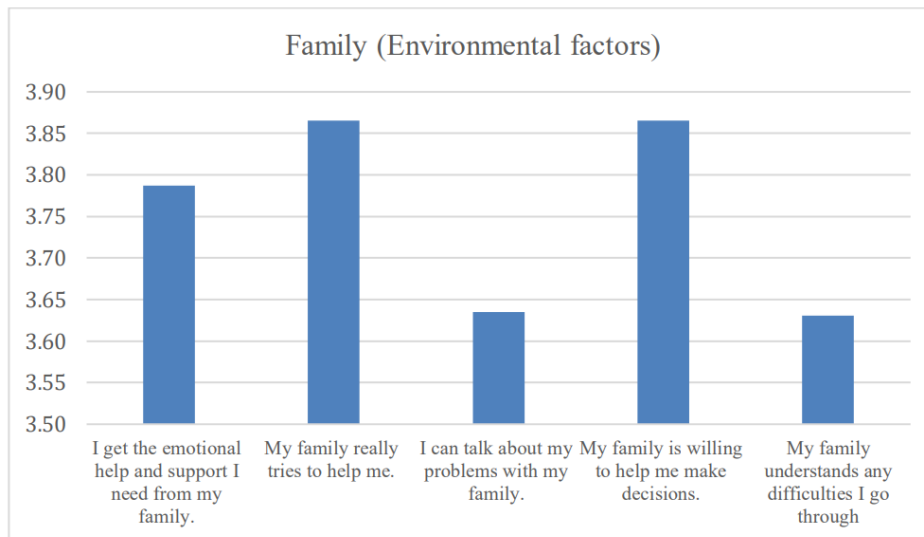


Figure 7 Family (environmental factor)

The finding shows that students have a "high" level of support and good relationships with their families. As the family is one of the main places where they can get comfort and help when things are hard to cope with.

Result Summary

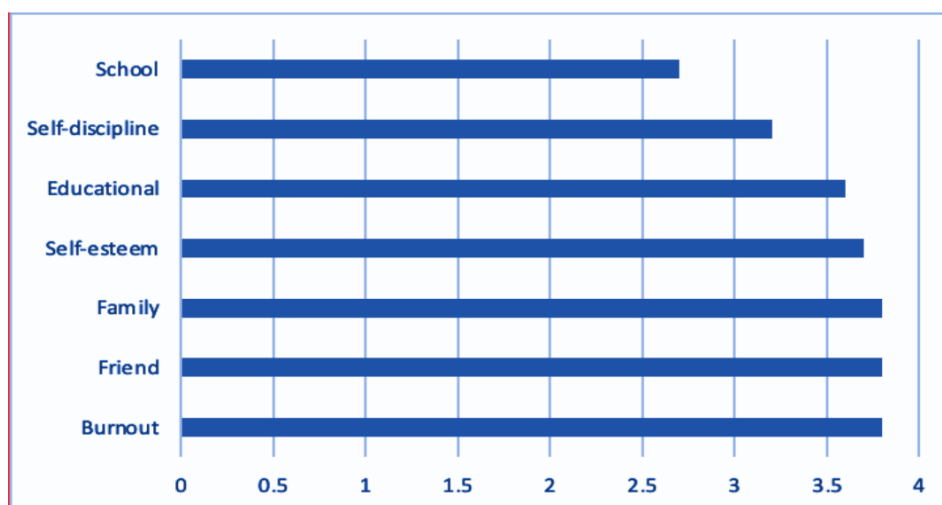


Figure 8 Summary of the results

The results show that most of the students experienced burnout in their studies and family and friends factors have the highest weight in affecting burnout. A mean score of 3.8 greatly influenced students' feelings of burnout. School and self-discipline factors do not seem to help students much. They were moderately weighted with average scores of 2.7 and 3.2. Students felt that the school did not understand what they were facing. And, self-discipline shows preparation and awareness in learning at a moderate level. In addition, other factors also have an influence at different levels. They can be rated as self-esteem and education weighted at 3.7 and 3.6, respectively, which were the components describing the relationship of students with learning burnout.

Online learning under lockdown protocol had significant impact on university's mental health. Participants reported experiencing burnout stemming from the feeling of isolation, lack of social life, and exhaustion caused by heavy workload.

The researchers found the factors that influence students in order of importance are; friends, family, self-esteem, education, self-discipline, and school. This contradicts the past literatures in some ways. Students have social support from family and friends (3.8/5 average) yet still say they experience burnout, whereas previous research suggested that having social support would reduce the chance of experiencing burnout (Ye, Huang & Lin, 2021). University support was suggested by previous research (Lin and Yang, 2021); however, the physical separation might limit support they could receive from universities, as reflected in the moderate level of finding.

Self-esteem influences burnout at a high level (3.7/5 average), students had high levels of self-esteem, which Redenbach (1991) and Asghari, A. & Saadati, S., (2016) suggested that low self-esteem could lead to negative feelings and lead to higher burnout. As suggested in Ye, Huang & Liu (2021), social support is critical to lessen the chance of burnout. Curiously, Thai undergraduates, appear to have everything that would not cause burnout.

As the world is recovering in the aftermath of the global pandemic, it is important to pay attention to the study of psychological trauma in learners as previous research into student burnout did not include the global lockdown. Students might also feel burnout though they have the support of family and friends, as well as high self-esteem. The isolation is likely to be the culprit that cause burnout as it disrupt their normal activity and routine in both personal and academic life. The researchers highly recommend further research into student's post-pandemic trauma and reconciliation with life after lockdown. Further research into university organized support and communication during crisis and disaster is also necessary in anticipation of similar global disruption.

Conclusion

Burnout in university student is a consequence of over two years of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. The physical isolation disrupted personal and academic life pattern leading to exhaustion, cynicism, and increasing academic withdrawal. This research aims to identify the level individual and environmental factors that contribute to the experience of burnout in university students residing in Bangkok. The result reveal friends (peers) and family are the most important factor in student burnout. Students were well-supported by family and friends and had a healthy sense of self-worth. Nonetheless, they experienced burnout. This has a different effect than the previous researcher's findings. This is likely due to the fact that the previous study did not include the COVID-19 situation. When students faced this situation for two years, their self-discipline decreased moderately, and the

school did not help students as it should have, resulting in a moderate effect. Education is both physically and mentally demanding for students, and learning a second language increases student exhaustion.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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