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ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE OF YOUTHS INVOLVEMENT IN CYBERCRIME FROM AUGUST 2021- JULY 2022

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has served a good purpose in different area of human lives and also created a challenge in the society as it has been converted into a platform for the perpetration of crimes. The increase in youths' involvement in cybercrime has attracted media attention. This study sought to analyse Nigerian newspapers' coverage of youth involvement in cybercrime using framing theory as the theoretical framework. The content analysis design was employed for the study with code sheet and coding guide used to generate data from *The Guardian, Vanguard, The Nation* and *Punch* Newspapers. Findings from the study revealed that *Vanguard* among other newspapers reported more stories on cybercrime and only 16.6% stories were reported in the months of October, March and May. This implies that the newspapers studied have not given adequate attention to issues on cybercrime though the stories reported at 57.6% was favourable as the report condemned youths' involvement in cybercrime. Further analysis revealed that economic frame followed by criminalization and regulation frames were the most dominant frame in the newspapers. Also the tone of reporting stories on cybercrime at 80.7% was found to be calm. The researchers recommends that Nigerian newspapers should come up with

frames to enlighten the masses especially Internet users on the precautionary measures to take to avoid being victims of cybercrime.

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet, since it emergence, has served a good purpose in different areas of human lives as it aids people to acquire knowledge and source for relevant information. Onwukwalonye, Umeora & Odoh (2019) note that before the advent of social media people depended on the conventional mass media for most of their communication and information needs. However, the situation has changed as most people now turn to social media platforms to communicate and obtain information. This new entrant into the communication arena has created a challenge in the society, as some people use the opportunity to perpetuate crimes.

Vanguard (2021) affirmed that the Internet is embedded with a multitude of vulnerabilities which pose a major security threats to users and has equally led to the emergence of cybercrime. Apart from the issue of fake news; cybercrime is another aspect of the Internet that is identified as worrisome (Obiakor 2016; Guanah 2018). Cybercrime thus is an activity done using computers with connection to the Internet which are often bloodless and non-violent types of crimes (Fathma 2011; Ibikunle & Eweniyi 2013).

On the growth of cybercrime in Nigeria, Usaini & Funmilola (2012), Hassan, Lass & Makinde (2012) and Olarewaju (2020) affirmed that cyber cafes aided the growth alongside unemployment, lack of adequate social amenities, poverty, quest for wealth, bad governance and lack of strong cybercrime laws in Nigeria. Chawki et al. (2015) pointed out that the technology for cybercrime has become accessible as software tools can be purchased online allowing the user to locate open ports or overcome password protection. According to Olarewaju (2020) the rate at which Nigerian youths get involved in cybercrime is alarming. Hassan et al. (2012) disclosed that 39.6% African users of Internet are actually Nigerians resulting to the high increase in the rate of Internet crime in Nigeria.

Elaborating further, Ogunlere (2013) affirmed that Nigeria ranked first in the African region as the origin of malicious cyber activities as at 2007. In 2017 as mentioned by Olarewaju (2020) Nigerians were rated 37% users of online transactions within African countries which 7% of the transactions was found to be fraudulent in nature. Okogba (2019) reports that in 2018 about 89% of all financial services fraud in Nigeria happened through electronic channels, while only 11% were non-electronic. Estimates of #250 billion and #288 billion naira financial losses were recorded in 2017 and 2018 respectively due to cyber-attack on business, banks and government infrastructure in Nigeria (Olarewaju 2020). The year 2020 came with the arrest of an Instagram Influencer, Ramon Olorunwa Abbas (aka Hushpuppi) alongside few Nigerians in Dubai. Ayeni (2021) affirmed that Hushpuppi was arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, money laundering, computer intrusion and business email compromise (BEC) scheme.

Vangaurd (2019) in a report by National Information Technology Development Agency disclosed that Nigeria loses about #3.133 trillion naira to cybercrime yearly. *Punch* (2019) revealed that Nigeria lost #250 billion naira to cybercrime activities in 2017 while 37,817 fraud cases were reported in 2018 out of which 59.2% were done through

Internet and technological base. On their part, *The Nation* (2019) estimated that 60 percent of businesses in Nigeria suffer at least one cyber-attack annually and has resulted in the annual loss of #127 billion naira.

Since the emergence of the Internet, acquiring of knowledge and sourcing for relevant information has become easier and faster. Aromolaran (2007) points out that one major advantages of the Internet is the ability to bring the world together, facilitate global village communication, and aid buying and selling of product and services. Despite the advantages, it has led to online crimes where people scam, steal and commit all sorts of atrocities.

The act has not only affected the image of Nigeria negatively; it has also taken a toll on the economic development of the country as some foreign investors are scared of coming to the country to do business or are skeptical about dealing with Nigerians when it comes to investment. The above has denied Nigeria of the much needed foreign investments that would have contributed to the nation's development (Guanah, et al.2020).

Newspaper, through news, editorials, opinion, features and advertisements have served as an important tool for informing and educating the public on the various manifestations of cybercrime. It has equally reported stories on the growing trend of youths in cybercrime. However, one cannot tell the depth and direction of the reports on cybercrime, and the frames used in these reports. Could it be that the nature of the reports on cybercrime is not sufficient to discourage the rapid involvement of youth in such crime?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to analysis newspaper framing of youth involvement in cybercrime in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Ascertain the frequency of coverage of youth involvement in cybercrime;
- Ascertain the direction of newspaper report on youth involvement in cybercrime
- Find out the tone used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime and
- Identify the dominant frames used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the frequency of coverage on youth involvement in cybercrime?
- What is the direction of newspaper report on youth involvement in cybercrime?
- What kind of tone was used on the report of cybercrime?
- What dominants frame was used in reporting of youth involvement in cybercrime?

NEWSPAPER AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CYBERCRIME

Newspapers have been identified as a means of communication because of its unique characteristics of wide readership, exposure and permanence. Awe (2004) opined that it provides information about the society and serve as a market place of ideas to trade and coun-

ter views as well as a meeting point where contending opinions can be discussed and promoted. In the area of cybercrime, the newspapers have played a significant role in reporting cybercrime activities in Nigeria thereby keeping the audience informed on recent development.

The Guardian (2019) reported on the arrest of 19 suspected Internet fraudsters between 21 and 35 years of age in Ibadan who claimed to be undergraduates and self-employed youth. In the same vein, *Vanguard* (2021) disclosed that some of the suspect uses POS machine to steal from their customers and when charged to court were made to pay the sum of #300,000 alongside submission of their phones, laptops, cars and any other material in their possession. While calling on parents to monitor and advice their children against involving themselves in crimes; the South East Zonal Head of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Mr. Usman Imam expressed his dismal as he revealed that some parents are not only aware of their children's involvements but also assist them in carrying out the crime (*Punch* 2019).

Explaining about the precautionary measures to avoid being victims of cybercrime, Victor Etuokwu, Executive Director, Retail Banking, Access Bank Plc. advised customers to be cautious of any message demanding for their bank details through phone calls, text message or email (*The Guardian,* 2020). The result of this crime as opined by *Vangaurd* (2019) on the report by National Information Technology Development Agency is that Nigeria loses #3.133 trillion naira yearly. *The Nation* (2019) estimated that 60 per cent of businesses in Nigeria suffer at least one cyber-attack annually and has resulted in the annual loss of #127 billion naira.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Several studies have been carried out on the coverage and framing of cybercrime; one of such studies was carried out by Senam, Blessing & Ekong (2018) on the coverage of cybercrimes in Nigeria by Nigerian newspapers from January 1 and December 31, 2015. The study undertook a critical look on the frequency, prominence, direction and genre of cybercrime stories using the content analysis research technique. Result of the study disclosed that cybercrime beat was not given attention which made stories on the crime less important though the reports were objective. Only news and features were given attention when compared to the attention on editorials and opinions.

Guanah, Nwammuo & Obi (2020) in their study sought to analyse how *The Guardian and Vanguard* newspapers framed Yahoo Yahoo business in Nigeria. Using the content analysis, the study found out that stories on cybercrime were sparsely while the dominant frames were name calling, ritual and fight against yahoo business. Usaini & Funmilola (2012) also analysed and reviewed how Nigerian print media report Internet related crimes from January to December 2010. The researchers adopted the content analysis for the study. The findings of the study pointed out the failure of the print media towards covering beat on Internet related crime making it least important however the existing report were favourable as it was channeled towards eradicating the crime.

Moving on, Chukwuebuni et al. (2022) sought to examine the framing of Internet fraud in Nigerian newspapers for a period of one year. The study which was anchored on framing theory employed the use of content analysis approach to ascertain the frames in Internet fraud reports. Result obtained disclosed that little attention was given to victims by report on yahoo boys. The dominant frame for the study was identified to be the use of

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subtle sensationalism frame. Meanwhile Igba et al. (2018) conducted a study the implication of cybercrime on the academic achievement of university undergraduates with focus on Ebonyi State University. The researchers used cross-sectional survey to distribute an online questionnaire to students in the Faculty of Education. The study disclosed that the students perceive cybercrime as a tool for personal development which calls for the need to imbibe value re-orientation in their lives.

Dugle (2013) examined the nature of coverage the Ghanaian newspapers, *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* gave to cybercrime issues through a content analysis. The study revealed that the Ghanaian newspapers gave low coverage and prominence of cybercrime. Almrezeqa, Alserhania & Humayuna (2021) in their study assessed the pattern of cybersecurity awareness in Saudi Arabia with focus on Jouf University students using survey research design. From the findings, there is an increase in cybersecurity awareness among the students because the media sufficiently report stories on the need to be cyber conscious.

On the part of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Oluwadamilare & Ekwueme (2020) study sought to examine Nigeria newspaper framing of the activities of the EFCC under President Buhari using a content analysis and critical discourse. The result disclosed that combating of corruption and criminalisation frame was the most prominent used frame by the newspapers. This was displayed in the reporters' choice of language as some presented EFCC as victimisers while others appraised its activities at mitigating graft in Nigeria. On the effect of crime, Omodunbi et al. (2018) in their study on the analysis, detection and prevention of cybercrime revealed that the impact of the crime can be felt on the lives, economy and international reputation of a nation. This is proven as student in Ekiti State affirmed that students' participate in cybercrimes.

Olarewaju (2020) study on the impacts of cybercrime on the youths of Nigeria using a secondary data disclosed that cybercrimes in Nigeria are perpetrated by youths within the age range of 18 to 45. Their involvement was identified to be of negative impact to the society as it has created a bad image for the country. Onyebuchi et al. (2019) revealed that tweets on xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa were favourable, most of the tweets were neutral and the tone used was friendly to Nigerians. The dominant frame for the analysis was disclosed to be frames of clamor for peace and incompetence of the Nigerian government.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the framing theory which was first propounded by Goffman in 1974 (Hassan, Mathiassen & Lowry, 2019). The theory is a theory of media effects which according to Olarewaju (2020) is a plan that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or experiences. To Ekwueme (2013), the theory which is an extension of agenda-setting theory takes a look at not just how an issue is characterized but how it is understood by audiences. Onyebuchi et al. (2019) explained that arranging themes and ideas as well as linking them up to get stories and building a particular narrative forms the tenet of framing.

The theory is relevant to the study as it set to ascertain the frames used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime and thus focus on how the knowledge of cybercrime is understood by media audience as well as how it influences them. This connects to the assertion of Guanah et al.(2020) that the way newspapers frame stories on cybercrime will determine how people understand the issue, and it has a lot of influence on how readers

of newspapers perceive the crime and its perpetrators.

METHODS

The study used the content analysis to purposively investigate *The Guardian, Vanguard, The Nation* and *Punch* newspapers based on their wide circulation and readership. The population of this study was all the publications within the months of August 2021-July 2022 which was 1,460. The researchers decided to study all the days of the month because crimes are committed and reported every day of the week. The population was gotten by multiplying the days in the year by the number of newspaper (365 X 4 = 1,460 dailies).

The composite week/month sampling techniques was used to achieve the sample size whereby the days of the week in a month are constructed to make up a week for each month. Two editions were picked for a month to make up 12 months which amounted to 24 editions. Since the study was on four newspapers; the sample size was finalized to be 96 issues. The dates selected for the first newspaper using composite sampling were applied in the other three newspapers. The code sheet and coding guide were used as instrument for data collection, while the data were analysed and presented in tables, numbers and percentage. The inter-coder reliability was tested on 29 coded contents using Pearson's r formula. The results on the content were 0.4, 0.8, 1.0 and 0.8.

UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis for the study were news, editorial, features and interviews that indicated the angle of report, language and kinds of frame used by the four dallies under consideration.

CONTENT CATEGORY

The content category aided the researchers to find out the number of times stories and the angle at which news stories on cybercrime were reported. The study equally analyzed the manner in which the selected newspaper reported the stories and the dominant frame in the content.

Frequency: This is the number of times news stories on cybercrime was published from August 2021 to July 2022 on the four national dailies.

Direction of Report: This sought to find out the direction that newspaper reports on cybercrime took. It looked at whether the stories condemned the act (favourable), tried to make excuses (unfavourable) and whether the report neither condemned nor supported the acts (neutral).

Tone: This refers to the manner at which report on cybercrime were presented on the national dailies. The study analyzed how calm and harsh these reports on youth involvement in cybercrime were. It also analyzed the expression of grief in these reports.

Frame: The dominant frames on youth involvement in cybercrime were determined based on the newspaper report pattern and contents as well as the area they laid emphasis on their report. The dominant frames used are the following below:

Economic: This focuses on the implication of cybercrime towards the economic and financial conditions of people and the nation.

Warning: This includes news reports that have a warning tone alerting people on the increase of cybercrime and how to protect one's self from being victims.

Action: This frame reveals the urgent call to action or steps that are already taken to address and avert cybercrime in the country.

Criminalization: This frame identifies the arrest, interrogation, remand, prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators of cybercrime.

Attribution of Responsibility: This frame reveal how the newspaper report identifies, credit or tie blame and responsibility as it relates to cybercrimes involvement and control.

Human Interest: This refers to stories that laid emphasis on the effect cybercrime has on people which could be the loss of lives, properties, money and businesses.

Regulation: This frame contains newspaper report on specific rules, bill and guideline as means of controlling the involvement of youth in cybercrime.

RESULTS

Table 1: Analysing the frequency of coverage on youth involvement in cybercrime

Fre-quency	News					Editorial					Feature				Interview					F	%
	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	G	V	N	P	F		
August	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	4
September	-	2	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	11.5
October	1	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	15.3
November	-	1	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	11.5
December	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	8
January	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
March	-	2	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	15.3
April	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	4
May	1	1	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	15.3
June	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7.6
July	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7.6
Total	2	9	4	6		1	1				1				2					26	100

Communicating the analysis on the table above, it can be seen that only *Vanguard* newspaper reported more stories on cybercrime. However, the total edition covered for the period of one year of the four newspapers was 26 out of the 96 issues. The results revealed that at 15.3%, stories on cybercrime was only reported in the month of October 2021, March 2022 and May 2022.

Table 2: Analysing the direction of newspaper report on youth involvement in cybercrime

Direction	News					Editorial					Feature				Interview					F	%
	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	G	V	N	P	F		
Favourable	1	6	2	4	13	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	15	57.6
Unfavourable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Neutral	1	3	2	2	8	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	11	42.3
Total	2	9	4	6		1	1	-	-		-	1			-	2	-	-		26	100

The analysis on the direction in which the newspapers reported stories on cybercrime disclosed that 57.6% of the reports were favourable. This implies that the newspapers condemned youth involvement in cybercrime.

Table 3: Analysing the Tone used in the report of youth involvement in cybercrime

Tone	News					Editorial					Feature				Interview					F	%
	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	G	V	N	P	F		
Calm	2	8	4	3	17	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	21	80.7
Harsh	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7.6
Grief	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	11.5
Total	2	9	4	6		1	1	-	-		-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-		26	100

Result from the table revealed that at 80.7% the tone used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime was calm. This implies that the Nigerian newspaper adopt a good choice of words so as not to instigate fear in the mind of people or rain abuses on perpetrators of the crime.

Table 4: Analysing the dominant frames present in the report of youth involvement in cybercrime

Direction	News					Editorial					Feature				Interview					F	%
	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	F	G	V	N	P	G	V	N	P	F		
Economic	.	5	2	4	11	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	13	25
Warning	.	3	.	1	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	7.6
Action	2	.	2	.	4	1	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	7	13.4
Criminalization	.	5	3	2	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	10	19.2
Attribution of Responsibility	1	3	2	2	8	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9	17.3
Human Interest	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1.9
Regulation	1	3	1	2	7	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	15.3
Total	4	20	10	11		2	2	.	.		.	1	.	.	.	2	.	.		52	100

Analysis from the table above disclosed that at 25% economic frame was the most dominant frame followed by criminalization and regulation frame with 19.2% and 15.3% respectively. The implication of this is that cybercrime has eaten deep in the lives of people as individuals and businesses loses huge amount of money.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Frequency of coverage on youth involvement in cybercrime

Communicating the analysis on the table above, it can be seen that only *Vanguard* newspaper reported more stories on cybercrime however the total edition covered for the period of one year of the four newspapers was 26 editions out of the 96 editions. The results revealed that at 15.3% stories on cybercrime was only reported in the month of October 2021, March 2022 and May 2022. This implies that the newspapers studied have not given adequate attention to issues on cybercrime or any related matter associated with it.

This is consonance with the findings of Senam et al. (2018) and Guanah et al.(2020) who disclosed that report on cybercrime have not been given much attention. Also Dugle (2013) revealed on the low coverage of cybercrime by Ghanaian newspapers. The reason for the low reportage was traced to the failure of the print media towards covering and reporting beat on Internet related crime (Usaini & Funmilola 2012).

On the contrary, Almrezeqa et al. (2021) disclosed that the constant report by the media in Saudia Arabia on cybercrime led to the sufficient awareness of cyber security among Arabians.

The direction of report on youth involvement in cybercrime

The analysis on the direction in which the newspapers reported stories on cybercrime disclosed that 57.6% of the report was favourable. This indicates that the newspapers condemned youth involvement in cybercrime. The reports stressed on the negative effect it has on people, business and education among others. This finds it relation to the study of Usaini & Funmilola (2012) who affirmed that existing report on the newspapers on Internet related crimes were favourable as it was channeled towards eradicating the crime. Onyebuchi et al. (2019) revealed that tweets on xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa were favourable as it condemns the act.

This differs in the study of Senam et al. (2018) who disclosed that cybercrime reports were neutral which shows that newspapers were objective in their report. To youth there is no wrong in getting involved with cybercrime as it is a tool for personal development (Igba et al. 2018).

The tone of used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime in the Newspaper

Result from the table revealed that at 80.7% the tone used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime was calm. This implies that the newspapers used a calm tone while reporting stories and addressing the issue of cybercrime. This is line with Onyebuchi et al.(2019) study on the use of friendly words while tweeting on xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa however Oluwadamilare & Ekwueme (2020) disclosed that newspaper choice of words on Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) activities under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration was on two angles as some newspapers presented EFCC as victimisers while others appraised its activities at mitigating graft in Nigeria.

The dominant frames used in reporting youth involvement in cybercrime

Analysis from the table above disclosed that at 25% economic frame was the most dominant frame followed by criminalization and regulation frame with 19.2% and 15.3% respectively. The implication of this is that cybercrime has eaten deep in the lives of people as individuals and businesses lose huge amount of money and their lives. Also the rate at which youth involve in crime is alarming which brings about the need for government to regulate the Internet usage and enact strict laws to put the crime to a stop.

The result agrees with the assertion of Oluwadamilare & Ekwueme (2020) who disclosed that combating of corruption and criminalisation frame was the most prominent used frame by the newspaper on the framing of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) activities. Similarly, Omodunbi et al. (2016) and Olarewaju (2020) noted that crime affects lives, economy and future of a nation and often creates bad image for a country.

Contrary to the above findings, Guanah et al.(2020) disclosed on the constant use of name calling, ritual and fight against yahoo business frames in their study while subtle sensationalism frame was used mostly in the study of Chukwuebuni et al.(2022).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Newspapers have been a great source of information through the news, articles, opinion, features and advertisements; it has serves an important tool as it informs, educate and entertain the publics. Based on the findings, this study concludes that the newspapers studied did not give adequate attention to issues of cybercrime; this means that they have failed in providing necessary information about cybercrime to the readers though they were against youth involvement in cybercrime in the analyzed report. The researchers based on the above findings recommends that:

- The Nigerian newspapers must rise in their responsibility of adequately providing information on cybercrime so as to keep the readers informed and enlighten.

- They should continue to condemn the act and discourage youth from getting involved with cybercrime by informing them on the implication of the crime through their report.

- Also the newspapers should come up with frames that will enlighten the masses especially Internet users on the precautionary measures to take to avoid being scammed as well as solution frame to curb the crime.

- Government should engage in massive value re-orientation aimed at discouraging youths from getting involved in cybercrime. It is also imperative to lessen the burden of individuals by providing good paying jobs and other basic amenities.

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