

Research and Trends in the Studies of Homeschooling Practices: A Review on Selected Journals

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ABSTRACT

The practice of homeschooling still receives contrasting responses on its relevancy and effectiveness. The current study is aimed to map the trends in the selected eleven studies from various educational journals. The analysis focuses on mapping the trends on: a) research settings, b) target sample, c) method or instrument used, d) common focus or issues covered, and e) pattern in the findings of all selected studies. It is found that majority of the current studies were more focusing in evaluating the effectiveness and relevancy of homeschooling as an alternative to traditional schooling, especially on the area of effective learning experiences and healthy social development. Despite the strengths of homeschooling practice, this paper has also discovered the discrepancies in the findings of the current studies and provided recommendations for an effective homeschooling practice.

Keywords: homeschooling, home education, teaching and learning, curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Crucial to academic success, homeschooling has become a growing education phenomenon across the globe. It appears that, in the teaching and learning of homeschooling, the academic inputs and outcomes are ‘tangible’ for parents in tailoring their children’s needs in learning. A structured homeschooling has proven to be effective in improving academic success (Cogan, 2010; Harding, 2013; Rudner, 1999). However, many researchers argued the basis of this claim. The current body of literature seems to suffer from poor empirical knowledge base and evidences in justifying the effectiveness of homeschooling. Murphy (2014) summarizes that studies on overall impacts of homeschooling are still lacking.

To further investigate the above argument, the current paper explored 11 recent studies (from 2011 to 2014) in understanding and mapping the trends and patterns of the selected studies.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

It is hoped that current paper would enlighten readers on the trends of the research and their findings in justifying the effectiveness of homeschooling in improving academic performance. Eleven recent articles published in 2011 to 2014 were selected from the Web Of Science under the keywords of ‘homeschooling’, ‘home school’ and ‘home education’. Only the studies that investigate the practice of homeschooling were selected for the analysis. It is our attention to provide an analysis of the selected studies as it is believed to serve as a relevant reference to understand the homeschooling practices.

In doing so, this study explored the research questions below:

1. Which research setting had high frequency in the selected studies?
2. What was the frequent target sample used in the selected studies?
3. What was the frequent method/instrument used in the selected studies?
4. What was the current focus or issue explored in the selected studies?
5. What was the pattern of the findings in the selected studies?

METHOD

The selected articles were retrieved from the Web Of Science, and were from various educational journals published in 2011 to 2014. The articles were from a) Journal of Adolescence, b) Sociological Spectrum, c) Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences, d) Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, e) Gifted

Child Quarterly, f) Journal of Black Studies, g) Education and Urban Society, h) Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, i) European Journal of Education, and j) Education as Change.

In finding the trends, all selected articles were cross analyzed to their journal details, research objectives, participants, data collection and analysis method, research findings, and focus or issues discovered. The variables, such as participants and settings, research design, and research focus were further analyzed statistically in mapping the trends of the current studies. In addition, a content analysis was conducted in exploring the common issues and patterns of findings by analyzing the research questions and focus of the selected studies. The frequency and percentage counts were used to visually represent and describe the trend and patterns of the selected current studies. Table 1 below summarizes the analysis of variables of all studies according to selected participants, research design, data collection method, data analysis, research setting, findings and focus or issue explored.

Table 1: Content analysis of selected eleven articles.

| Study (Author/Year) | Participants | Data Collection | Data Analysis | Research Findings | Focus/Issues Discussed |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Green-Hennessy, S. (2014). | 182 351, 12 to 17 year-old adolescents from the National Survey and Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) participants in the United States. | Interviews and the Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale test. | Interview analysis based on: a) demographic and religion, b) delinquencies, c) substance misuse and prevention service, and d) schooling. | Religious homeschoolers and public schoolers were less likely to involve in juvenile delinquency. Homeschoolers are more likely to fall behind expected grade. | Comparing traditional-schooled and homeschooled adolescents with either lower or stronger religious in their achievements in academic, extracurricular participation and the misuse of substance and delinquencies. |
| Vigilant, L. G., Anderson, T. C., & Trefethren, L. W. (2014). | 21 Euro-American, Christian males (fathers) in the upper midwestern states of North Dakota and Minnesota. | In-depth, face-to-face interviews (using structured questionnaire) and ethnographic observations. | Interview analysis based on the role of the father in homeschooling environment. | The roles of the father in homeschooling include: being a 'helpmate' and 'spiritual leader', manager of interpersonal emotion and disciplinarian. | Analysing the role of father in homeschooling settings. |
| Korkmaz, H., & Duman, G. (2014). | 130 respondents in a metropolitan area in Turkey. | Survey. | Analysis based on five domains: a) demographic characteristics, b) religious reason, c) lack of trust in public education, d) control over curriculum, and e) types of education and financial | Homeschooling can develop better character and morality, and provide supportive learning settings. | Exploring the public understanding of homeschooling. |

| | | | support. | | |
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| Kraftl, P. (2013). | 30 homeschooling families in United Kingdom. | Interviews and observational visits. | The analysis of the interviews covered: a) life-history structure, b)spaces of learning, c)interactions between learning and everyday life, and d)ambitions held for homeschooling. | Meaningful learning happens on the move and in everyday spaces. | Exploring the homeschooling practices and to map the 'geographies' of space, motivation and experiences of homeschooling. |
| Jolly, J. L., Matthews, M. S., & Nester, J. (2012). | 13 parents from four different regions of the United States. | Homeschooled gifted children survey (initially conducted in 2009), and interviews. | The analysis of the interviews covered: a) children's abilities, b) experiences with public school, c)perceptions of challenges. | The sense of 'order and empowerment' is the main reason for homeschooling. | Exploring the parents' perspectives to homeshool their gifted children. |
| Mazama, A., & Lundy, G. (2012). | 74 Black homeschooling parents from Mid- and South Atlantic and the Midwest. | Interviews (semi-structured and open-ended), survey (demographic background) and observations. | The analysis of data covered: a)demographic background – ethnicity, origin, children characteristics and education level of parents. b)reasons for homeschooling, | Racism interfered and affected their children's learning in normal school. | Unveiling the issue of racism as one of the main reason to homeschooling. |
| Hanna, L. G. (2012). | 250 homeschooling families from urban, suburban and rural areas within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. | Interviews (open-ended questions on the phone and computer), questionnaire. | The analysis of data explored: a) demographic information of instructors and children, b) methods, materials and curriculum used, and c) motivation. | Parents from different areas have different philosophy and practice of teaching. | Exploring the trends of homeschooling practices by critically considering the types of methods, materials and curricula used by parents. |
| Hurlbutt, K. S. (2011). | Ten parents from nine families who homeschool their ASD children in Mid-Western U.S. | Interviews with parents. | The data were analyzed using open-coding procedure that covers: a) parental responsibilities and education, b) conflicts with school, | Parents who chose homeschooling viewed their commitment as mutual decision in providing effective learning settings to their | Exploring parents' perceptions and experiences of homeschooling ASD children. |

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|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | and c) monitoring, and curriculum. | ASD children. | |
| Ice, C. L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2011). | 64 parent-child dyads (30 public and 34 homeschooler parents) in the U.S. | Questionnaire on parent involvement and parent's motivation for involvement. | The data were analyzed by correlations and hierarchical regressions analysis. | Homeschooling parents have stronger efficacy, role activity beliefs and social network beliefs in teaching their children. | Focusing on comparing the parents' motivations in homeschooling and public schools. |
| Blok, H., & Karsten, S. (2011). | 14 European countries (excluding Eastern and Southern Europe). | Self-reporting, home-visits and contacts with parents or children. | Compiling the national cases and fabricated and compared case-descriptions. | The general function of inspection is to accommodate children's learning environment and to monitor their progress. | Investigating the home-education inspection practices in European countries. |
| van Schalkwyk, L., & Bouwer, C. (2011). | Four homeschooling families (two Afrikaans-speaking, one English-speaking and one Asian family) in South Africa. | Case study method, which includes unstructured interviews, reflective interviews, field notes and reflective journals. | The data were analyzed using verbatim transcriptions and discourse analysis. | In a unique case, homeschooling practice was more oriented to the mother's discourse and goals. | Exploring the homeschooling practices from different angles: parents and children. |

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research settings

Out of 11 studies, most studies were conducted in United States of America (63.64%). Other countries share the same frequency (1) and percentage (9.09%), as represented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of research settings of selected eleven articles.

| Research setting | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| United States | 7 | 63.64 |
| Turkey | 1 | 9.09 |
| United Kingdom | 1 | 9.09 |
| European countries | 1 | 9.09 |
| South Africa | 1 | 9.09 |

The development of homeschooling in United States of America started since 17th to 18th century as an alternative to cater the needs of children's learning and religious practices (Ray, 2002; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009). It is undeniable that homeschooling in U.S. has undergone numerous changes in its structure and visions. The diversity of ethnicities and cultures in U.S. has shaped homeschooling education as one of the medium to unite and strengthen the bond through education, under the Compulsory Attendance Law 1918 (Bellini, 2005). With the rapid changes in homeschooling practices in U.S, ongoing dilemmas and concerns have shaped the possible forms of the homeschooling practices in the recent years. For instance, Mazama and Landy's (2012) study has explored the issue of racism that occurred in public school and how homeschooling is viewed as an alternative to restore children's self-confidence and healthy learning environment. On the other hand, Green-Hennesy (2014) and Vigilant, Anderson and Trefethren (2014) have explored the religious practices of homeschooling and its contribution to academic success. The depth of the literature in the U.S. has provided a clearer developmental phase of homeschooling, which started from a medium of unity and Christianity to academic achievements from different angles.

On the other hand, the other studies focus on gathering an overall overview of homeschooling practices at national level. Kraftl’s (2013) study focuses on mapping the geographies of homeschooling in United Kingdom by generally investigating the space of learning at national level. Similarly, Blok and Karsten (2011) focuses on investigating the practices of homeschooling from the inspectorate practices at international level, in almost all European countries excluding Eastern and Southern Europe. Only one study was conducted in Turkey in gathering public views of homeschooling because it was yet to be legally practiced in Turkey (Korkmaz & Duman, 2014).

Sample selection.

From selected eleven articles, the sample selections are categorized as in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of sample selection of selected eleven articles.

| Sample selection | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Homeschooling parent(s)/families | 7 | 63.64 |
| Homeschooling parents with special/gifted children | 2 | 18.18 |
| Adolescents (homeschoolers and public schoolers) | 1 | 9.09 |
| Parents with no homeschooling experience | 1 | 9.09 |

Most researchers (63.64%) have selected homeschooling parent(s) or families as their sample. These parents and families are the agent of homeschooling practices and thus, their insights about homeschooling practices and its effectiveness are highly relevant to these studies. As defined by Korkmaz and Duman (2014), homeschooling parents play an important role in educating and structuring their children’s learning at home. Lois (2013) claims that one of the role that most parents play is mother-teachers. However, out of seven articles, a study by Vigilant et al. (2014) has explored Christian fathers’ role in homeschooling settings. This study has expanded the perspective of homeschooling practices, which were typically being associated with mothers. The fathers function as helpmate, spiritual leader, disciplinarian and manager of learning and relationship quality (Vigilant et al., 2014).

The other studies have explored the role of parents and family in different home-education settings. For instance, Hanna (2012) explored the differences of homeschooling practices in urban, suburban and rural areas. Similarly, van Schalkwyk & Bouwer (2011) explored racial and language backgrounds as the focus in describing the differences of homeschooling practices. Two studies were conducted to focus on homeschooling practices at a larger scale: homeschooling families in United Kingdom (Kraftl, 2013) and the role of homeschooling inspections in most European countries (Blok & Karsten, 2011).

On the other hand, there are two studies that focus on homeschooling parents with special (Hurlbutt, 2011) and gifted children (Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2012). These studies have investigated the parents’ decision to homeschool a and discovered the drawbacks of public schooling in catering their children’s learning needs. Very differently, a study by Korkmaz and Duman (2014) focuses on parents with no homeschooling experience because this alternative education was not legally practiced in Turkey. Lastly, Green-Hennessy’s (2014) study directly compared homeschooling and traditional school adolescents in their involvement with substance misuse and academic performances.

Data collection method

Three different types of methods or instruments were used across all eleven studies, as represented in Table 4. Some of the studies combined more than one instrument.

Table 4: Summary of method/instrument used in selected eleven studies.

| Method/instrument | Frequency (n/11) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Interviews | 9 | 81.82 |
| Survey/Questionnaire | 6 | 54.55 |
| Observations | 5 | 45.45 |

Majority of the studies (81.82%) employed interviews as the main source of data collection, followed by survey or questionnaire (54.55%) and observations (36.36%). Most of the interviews were conducted using thematic prompts in gathering the insights of homeschooling practices (Hanna, 2012; Jolly et al., 2012; Kraftl, 2012; Mazama & Lundy, 2012).

On the other hand, the surveys or questionnaires used in all six studies have different focus and can be categorized into five themes: a) substance misuse (Green-Hennessy, 2014), b) preliminary insights of

homeschooling (Korkmaz & Duman, 2014) c) gifted and special-needs survey (Jolly et al., 2012), d) demographic and cultural background (Mazama & Lundy, 2012), and e) homeschooling practices (Hanna, 2012; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011).

Lastly, observations were conducted on both parents and children during homeschooling teaching and learning. From all four studies, there are five different focal points in the observations: a) the role of father (Vigilant, Anderson & Trefethren, 2014), b) teaching and learning spaces and materials (Kraftl, 2013), c) racial protectionism in learning settings (Mazama & Lundy, 2012), d) the role of inspections in homeschooling (Blok & Karsten, 2011), and e) parent-child homeschooling discourses and participations (van Schalkwyk & Bouwer, 2011).

Interestingly, Murphy (2014) argues that most studies in 1980's and early 2000's have contributed little empirical evidences on the effectiveness of homeschooling. Typically, the past studies only explored and described the practice of homeschooling and have overlooked its effects on children's learning and development. However, the above findings have added flesh in describing the trend of the current studies in the area of homeschooling development and practices. It is apparent that the recent studies have explored and gathered empirical-based evidences in describing homeschooling development and practices. For instance, Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) have discovered the correlation between parental motivation and students' achievement in homeschooling using hierarchical regression and correlation analysis. Other studies (Green-Hennessy, 2014; Hanna, 2012; Korkmaz & Duman, 2014;) have similarly explored the relevance of homeschooling from different angles, and proposed a strong foundation of empirical evidences to support homeschooling practices.

Focus and issue covered.

The studies in the area of homeschooling have explored various angles and perspectives in describing and justifying the relevancy of homeschooling as an alternative education. Table 5 represents the focus or issue explored in all eleven articles.

Table 5: Focus or issue covered in selected eleven studies.

| Focus/Issue | Frequency | Percentage(%) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Homeschooling as an effective and healthy learning alternative. | 5 | 45.45 |
| Homeschooling practices. | 4 | 36.36 |
| Role of inspections in homeschooling settings. | 1 | 9.09 |
| Public views and understanding of homeschooling. | 1 | 9.09 |

Majority of these studies (45.45%) examined the homeschooling as an effective and healthy learning alternative. From all five studies, there are two studies uncovered the importance of homeschooling for gifted and special-needs children (Hurlbutt, 2011; Jolly et al., 2014). These studies illustrated that public schools are incapable to cater to their children's needs of learning. A study by Mazama and Lundy (2012) similarly noted that traditional schooling in the Mid and South Atlantic and the Midwest of America, was not a healthy environment for the children due to racism and racial prejudices. The other two studies were focusing on comparing homeschooling with traditional schooling based on delinquency rate (Green-Hennessy, 2014), academic achievement and motivational level of parents (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011).

On the other hand, there are four studies explored on mapping the homeschooling practices. It is apparent that the homeschooling practices might vary geographically. The cultural background (van Schalkwyk & Bouwer, 2011), locations (Hanna, 2012) and personal beliefs (Kraftl, 2013) are among influential factor to the designated homeschooling practices. In another study, Blok and Karsten (2011) have investigated the role of inspections in homeschooling settings. This study provides a different angle on how educational inspections might help to accommodate and shape a 'standardized' homeschooling learning experiences.

Lastly, there is only one study (Korkmaz & Duman, 2014) that focuses on gathering public view on what is needed for an effective homeschooling practice in Turkey. This study has contributed in representing the 'ideal' structure and implementation to suit the localized context of homeschooling in Turkey. In short, the above studies have contributed to the lacuna of literature by exploring the homeschooling practices in different angles and the findings might serve as a relevant point of reference to improve the current practices.

Themes of the findings across all studies.

a) The potential of homeschooling as an effective alternative to traditional education. The present study has indicated the trends of the current literature of homeschooling practices. Positive outcomes to support homeschooling were witnessed in the majority of the selected studies. The parental involvement in

children's learning has been associated as a catalyst to success. One of the reasons of homeschooling is the inability of traditional schooling to support the learners' needs (Kraftl, 2012; Jolly, et al., 2012; Vigilant et al., 2014). There were three dimensions on how homeschooling works in improving learning; a) to provide one-to-one support to learning, b) to create a safe and healthy learning environment, and c) to provide adequate and appropriate learning supports for special-needs and gifted children. Primarily, the researchers agreed that space and learning experiences at home have fabricated meaningful learning experiences. For instance, Kraftl (2013) found that learning at home does not restrict to textbook learning and standardized curriculum. Learning happens inside and outside the house and thus, the dimension of learning in homeschooling covers academic and practical knowledge (Kraftl, 2013). Similarly, Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) elucidated that homeschooling parents have stronger efficacy in designing and fabricating effective learning. This may attribute to the academic success of the children. Secondly, a safe and healthy learning environment seems to be neglected in public schooling (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). The issues such as racism and racial prejudices in the public school have affected the African-American children, even with the racial protectionism being practiced in the public schools (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Hence, homeschooling is an alternative to provide a safer and healthy learning environment for the affected children. Also, Vigilant et al. (2014) has mapped how the role of father is important to structure and balance the learning at home. The elements of spiritual beliefs and discipline in learning have been given a strong emphasis in achieving a well-balanced education, which also agrees with Charlotte Mason's ideal learning belief (Simply Charlotte Mason.com, 2011). Lastly, the incompetency of traditional schools in catering the needs for the gifted and special-needs children has also shifted the space of learning to be conducted at home (Hurlbutt, 2011; Jolly et al., 2012). The parents believe that a sense of order and empowerment in deciding their children's learning pace and experiences has made them to de-school their children (Jolly et al., 2012) and to provide better learning opportunities for their children.

Very differently, Green-Hennessy (2014) and van Schalkwyk and Bower (2011) have discovered that homeschooling practices have several drawbacks. In a larger study, it is found that, the homeschooling adolescents were reported to fall behind in academic performance and faced more social difficulties compared to traditional schoolers (Green-Hennessy, 2014). In addition, van Schalkwyk and Bower (2011) have appointed that the homeschooling children might face difficulties in social interactions due to the strong attachment to parental supervision. Also, they noted that many homeschoolers suffer as their development and interest have to compromise with their parents' established visions and goals. In short, there are several limitations that should be considered when conducting the home-education, especially the one concerning on the direction of homeschooling practices and its structure. Nevertheless, the previous studies have proven that structured and flexible homeschooling learning was effective to overcome the above conditions (Cogan, 2010; Harding, 2013; Rudner, 1999).

b) The considerations for an effective homeschooling practice.

The selected articles for this study have appointed considerations and recommendations for an effective homeschooling practice. Mainly, the practice should consider an ample attention to children-parents goals and learning structure. Most of the studies have highlighted the importance of establishing teaching approach to suit children's learning needs (Hanna; 2012; Hurlbutt, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Kraftl, 2013). Even though the practice of homeschooling is to overcome the drawbacks of traditional schooling, there are a number of cases that reflected that the incompetency of parents in conducting the homeschooling. Green-Hennessy (2014) reported that even though the ideological homeschoolers were less likely to indulge in juvenile delinquency, their academic performances were still behind compared to traditional schoolers. Also, the pedagogical homeschoolers were found to be more likely to involve in substance misuse. Green-Hennessy (2014) claims that the parents' lax attitude in inculcating awareness and preventions is the contributing factor to above condition.

In Kormaz and Duman's (2014) study, the parents addressed that limited knowledge on curricula, theoretical, and practical scientific knowledge were among the challenges in conducting homeschooling. In dealing with this concern, some parents approached this using multiple resources, such as purchased curricula and district materials in preparing the teaching and learning lessons (Hanna, 2012). The findings of Hanna's (2012) study also suggested that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) might assist learning in equipping them to be 21st century learners (Norlidah Alias, Mohd Nazri Abdul Rahman & Saedah Siraj, 2014). Secondly, the support from the government is found to be helpful for homeschooling practices. Kormaz and Duman (2014) highlighted that the parents who wish to homeschool their children still require support from the government in term of materials, financial and chances to attend some classes in public school. In addition, Blok and Karsten (2011) claims that homeschooling inspections are needed to accommodate and monitor children's learning. The monitoring and mentoring by the government is relevant in maximizing the 'quality' of homeschooling learning and to avoid them to be left behind from public schooling (Blok & Karsten, 2011).

In the case of home education, the above recommendations can be considered into its implementation. The drawbacks in its practice still can be reconditioned. The flexibility of homeschooling teaching (Blok, 2004) is one of the important characteristics that can help to constantly improvise its practice. The above suggestions are derived from the current body of literature, reviewed in this paper, and are relevant to be considered in enhancing homeschooling implementation.

CONCLUSION

The overall aim of this paper was to map the trends of the current studies in the area of homeschooling development and practices, through the analysis of the research settings, sample selection, methods and instruments, focus and issue covered as well as the similarities and differences in the selected studies. Overall, it is apparent that most studies were conducted in United States of America. These studies have discovered numerous issues from effectiveness of homeschooling to racial protectionism in teaching and learning environment. It is also found that most studies were focusing on gathering insights from the parents in reviewing the practices of homeschooling. This is most resonant to the focus of the most studies, which was to evaluate the effectiveness of homeschooling in providing an effective and conducive learning setting.

Interestingly, the current studies have also tried to add flesh to literature by providing ample empirical evidences in justifying the importance of homeschooling. Previous studies, such as in 1980's and early 2000's were suffering from poor empirical-based evidences (Murphy, 2014) as they sought to only describe the practice without majorly investigating the effects of homeschooling practices on children's development and learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the finding of this paper has indicated the opposite. There are a number of studies that have further explored this matter from various angles, such as the effect of homeschooling on involvement in juvenile delinquency, parents' motivation and students' achievements, and homeschooling teaching practices and academic achievements.

In short, homeschooling has offered a flexible learning for children who might face difficulties in traditional schooling. Issues such as racism, special needs in learning, and incompetency of traditional learning were able to be resolved through homeschooling implementation. However, there are still areas that can be improved such as in maximizing the support material and other educational supports from the government. Also, informational and communication technology has a brighter potential to further develop a strong learning community and access to relevant materials to homeschooling learning.

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