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Abstract

During the last decade, the issue of teacher's immunity and their relation with other affective factors has attracted the attention of some educators, and consequently, the researchers. Moreover, teachers teaching in different public and language centers may feel different degrees of self-immunity due to the impact of various factors. Therefore, the present study was carried out to determine the impact of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on teachers' immunity in the Iranian EFL context considering language centers and public schools. In order to achieve this objective, one hundred English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher teaching in public schools (N = 50) and language centers (N = 50), in Isfahan, were selected to participate in this study through convenience sampling. The selected participants were proposed to three questionnaires on Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence and Teachers' Immunity. Then, the scores obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed statistically using SPSS 21 software. The obtained results revealed that in language institutes, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence could not predict the teachers' immunity; however, there was a significant relationship between the scores obtained for the three variables by the teachers working in the public schools and the correlational rate was high. These results can have some implications for the decision makers in the ministry of education to provide the facilities to improve teacher's immunity. Moreover, researchers can also work on the effect of teacher's immunity and the related variables on the quality of instruction.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Language Centers, Public Schools, Self-Efficacy, Teachers' Immunity

1. Introduction

Different factors can affect the quality of what is taught in an educational context (Dornyei, 2007). Research about the characteristics of good teachers and the variables affecting the teaching process have a long tradition (Armstrong, 2009; Carmeli, 2003; and Katyal & Awasthi, 2005). However, during the last few years, some new factors and variables have been introduced. In the recent decades, emotional intelligence (EI) has become one of the major topics of interest in scientific circles as well as the academic ones (Mortana, Ripolla, Carvalhop, Bernala, 2014). This concept refers to the individual's ability to recognize and manage not only his/her own emotions, but also the feelings of other people in a positive way in order to reduce stress, communicate effectively, have better team-works, and empathize with each other in a way that it can result in getting rid of the challenges and enhancing thoughts and feelings (Abdolrezapour & Tavakoli, 2012). In fact, EI can play a significant role in the formation, improvement, and continuation of the interaction between the individuals. EI was first introduced and analyzed by a number of authors, including Gardner (1993), Goleman (1995), and Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1997). At first, the study on this factor was done as a marginal concept in the primary research on social intelligence and intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences (Fahim & Zaker, 2014). However, later on, this term was observed as an independent component in different research works conducted by the scholars (Armstrong, 2009; Carmeli, 2003; and Katyal & Awasthi, 2005). According to Goleman (1998), the notion of EI consists of five components. Self-awareness refers to the individual's ability to understand his own and other people's emotions, actions, and moods which can help him have a sense of his own strengths and limitations as well as the challenges and capabilities of others. Self-regulation, as one of the dimensions of emotional intelligence, enables the person to be flexible, cope with changes, regulate his emotions, and manage his conflicts. Social skills enable the individual to interact effectively with other people. In fact, true emotional understanding involves understanding ones' own emotions and be able to put this information in day- to- day interactions and communications. Empathy refers to the ability to understand how other people feel and allows them to respond appropriately to other people based on recognizing their emotions and understand power dynamics that often influence social relationships especially in workplace relations. Motivation, as the fifth component of emotional intelligence, refers to the person's passion to fulfill his own needs and goals. (Scholars Armstrong, 2009; Carmeli, 2003; Fahim & Pishghadam, 2007; Fahim & Zaker, 2014) believe in the potential effect of EI and its component on the individuals' performance and affective characteristics.

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Self-efficacy is considered to be another important factor affecting the improvement of an individual's performance (Bai, 2015). It was first mentioned and surveyed by the research work conducted by Bandura (2001). This concept refers to one's beliefs and opinions to become successful in different situations or do a task which can play a significant role in approaching the intended goals (Bandura, 1997). It seems that the individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are able to work harder and stay longer encountering hard situations without giving up than the ones with lower levels of self-efficacy (Aliegro, 2006; Ayoobiyan & Soleimani, 2015; Duman, 2007).

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Recently, there is also another factor that has been recently introduced in the field of language teaching research. Human immunity can be defined as the protecting systems, responsible for guarding an individual from the biological and psychological damages (Farrell, 2015). 3
Language teacher immunity is a recent metaphor borrowed from the field of medicine to describe the protective role developed by language teachers to protect them against the effects of contextual constraints and professional tensions (Hiver, 2015; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Teachers' immunity can be considered as an effective factor in determining teachers' behavior and performance, while they encounter different sources of stress in their profession context (Skinner & Beers, 2016). Teachers' immunity can play two major roles: productive (positive) and maladaptive (negative). In its productive sense, immunity will provide the teachers with hope, enthusiasm, commitment, resilience, and motivation. On the other hand, maladaptive form of immunity ends in callousness, conservatism, cynicism, and emotional and even physical exhaustion (Hiver, 2015; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). In other words, teacher immunity can be taken as a defense mechanism against the internal and external language teaching environments (Hiver, 2017). It is worth mentioning that this concept may vary among the teachers teaching in different educational contexts, for instance, the ones teaching in large cities and the ones teaching in villages, or the ones teaching in primary and secondary schools, or even the instructors working in public or language centers. On the other hand, there are some teachers who have been educated in universities specified for training teachers and they have started their career as soon as their studies have finished. Moreover, there are some other teachers teaching in language centers who have come from different fields of study passing short-time periods on teaching. However, since this concept is a newly proposed idea, there is a need to work on the variables that can predict its existence in different contexts and individuals.

Therefore, it seems to be a good idea to conduct a research work to identify the relationship between these variables and find out their potential difference in different contexts of teaching such as public schools and language centers. Since its introduction to the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), a number of researchers have sought to determine different aspects of teacher immunity and find its relationship with various intervening variables (Hiver, 2017; Skinner & Beers, 2016). Teacher immunity has also been examined in Iranian EFL context as well (Rahmati, Sadeghi & Ghaderi, 2019; Songhori, Ghonsooly & Afraz, 2018). However, few researchers have been able to draw on any systematic research into the relationship of language teachers' immunity and their emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in Iranian TEFL context. Even though there are a large number of research studies related to emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and teacher immunity, little is known about the existence of any implied connection between them and also about the existence of conducted researches on their relationship. Chan (2007) and Mikolaczak and Luminet (2007), in their previous studies, found that individuals, who exhibited high emotional intelligence, also had high self-efficacy and could overcome lots of academic barriers. However, the relationship between these variables in the work of teachers was not taken into account as it was searched by the researcher. Besides, teacher immunity seems to be a new concept (Hiver, 2017) and the relationship between this factor and other variables needs to be worked out in the future studies. Here, some of the studies conducted in this area are reviewed to pave the way for obtaining effective conclusions.

2. Review of the Literature

In one of the most pioneering works on teacher immunity, Hiver (2015) conducted a case study among Korean EFL teachers. Semi-structured interviews were used as the instruments of the study. The findings showed that discouraging evaluations and the rejection of teacher initiatives triggered instability among the participants. To cope with the resulting disturbances, the teachers tried to make sense of what they experienced and continuously modified their reactions in response to contextual tension. The interviewed teachers believed that this experience shaped part of their identity as a teacher, helping them feel less vulnerable in their future exposure to environmental disturbances.

Moreover, Panda (2015), in his study, explored the extent to which emotional intelligence of the teachers correlated with their self-actualization. It proposed to determine whether a statistically significant correlation exists between the various factors of emotional

intelligence, including self-awareness and self-actualization among teachers of training college at secondary level. The study was conducted on a sample of the teachers of various training colleges in Kolkata. The results of the data analysis revealed sufficient evidence to establish a significant correlation between different elements of emotional intelligence and self-actualization. This study was one of the prominent studies in this area which was numerously referred by other recent researchers.

Hen and Goroshit (2016) conducted a study to examine the relationship between social emotional abilities, self-efficacies, and empathy among teachers, hypothesizing that teachers' self-efficacy belief mediates the relationship between other two variables. The researchers found a strong positive association between the three social-emotional competencies, and direct and indirect (via teachers' self-efficacy) effects of emotional self-efficacy on empathy. In other words, these three variables were positively correlated.

In another demonstrative study, Hiver (2017) worked on the typical outcomes of language teacher immunity. Forty-four language teachers and teacher educators were selected as the participants of the study. The researcher found that language teacher immunity is connected to seven constructs of self-efficacy, attitudes to teaching, coping, classroom affectivity, burnout, resilience, and openness to change in common.

Songhori, Ghonsooly and Afraz, (2018) tried to find out the type of language teacher immunity dominant among Iranian English teachers. The findings indicated that maladaptive immunity was a dominant type of immunity among Iranian English teachers since their mean scores on six out of seven questionnaire scales were low. Also, the results of the directed content analysis of the interviews revealed that Iranian English teachers followed the four stages of self-organization, namely, triggering, coupling, realignment, and stabilization in forming their immunity.

In a more recent study, Rahmati, Sadeghi, and Ghaderi (2019) explored the development of immunity among Iranian language teachers working at public high schools. Semi-structured interview was used in this study in order to gather the intended data. According to this study, low self-confidence, students' demotivation, low income, limited facilities, lack of enough time to teach English, parental expectations, and negative attitudes toward English were the main triggers of language teacher immunity among the participants.

As it was observed in the review of the literature, the predictive effect of teacher's self-⁵⁸ efficacy and emotional intelligence on teacher's immunity has not been explored yet. Moreover, teachers, teaching in different public and language centers, may feel different degrees of self-immunity due to the impact of various factors. Teachers working in public schools are normally educated in universities specified for training teachers, while the ones teaching in language centers may come from different fields of study passing short-time periods on teaching. Considering the issues with another dimension, teachers' salary and job-duration guarantee can be mentioned. Teachers in public schools seem to be less worried about these issues compared to the ones involved in private language institutes. On the other hand, public school teachers may get to be fossilized in one level and teaching situation, while teachers in language centers may put themselves into challenge in order to improve and get into higher ranks. Therefore, the general objective of this study is to determine the impact of emotional intelligence and self-¹⁵ efficacy on teachers' immunity in the Iranian EFL context considering language centers and public schools. The specific objectives are designed to identify:

1. If self-efficacy and emotional intelligence predict teacher immunity of EFL teachers in language institutes.
2. If self-efficacy and emotional intelligence cannot predict teacher immunity of EFL teachers in public schools.

² 3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Participants

The participants, in the present explanatory study, were selected through convenience sampling technique. First of all, one hundred English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers¹⁹ teaching in public schools and language centers, in Isfahan, were selected to participate in this study. It must be noted that fifty teachers of the public schools were selected from the ones teaching in Navab-Safavi, Safura, and Saeeb high schools. The two former ones were female schools, while the later was male school. The other half of the participants were teaching English in Donyaye Zaban and Zaban Pooyesh language institutes. The selected teachers were teaching at different⁵² levels of proficiency (elementary, intermediate, and advanced). The selected participants, in both groups, were from both male and female genders. In addition, all the intended teachers were selected among the ones having B.A. degree of English teaching, literature, or translation. It is worth mentioning that the participants ranged in their age from 24 to 35.

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3.2 Instruments

In order to conduct the present study, three measurement instruments were utilized:

3.2.1 Teacher Immunity Questionnaire

The data needed for the quantitative section of the current study were gathered through the administration of a teacher immunity questionnaire developed by Hiver (2017). This questionnaire was composed of 39 Likert-scale items (see Appendix A). In order to elicit participants' views, seven points, six points, five points, four points, three points, two points, and one point were designed for the options *Strongly agree*, *rather agree*, *agree*, *neutral disagree*, *rather disagree*, and *strongly disagree*, respectively. The items of the questionnaire were developed based on 7 scales. Teachers' perceived self-efficacy was measured by means of 7 items. These items included items such as "I have enough training and experience to deal with almost any learning problem in the classroom". It is worth noting that the internal consistency of the items in each scale were approved by Hiver (2017). Moreover, this instrument is a widely used questionnaire and reliability and validity of the items have been approved by other researchers (Rahmati, et al., 2019; Saydam, 2019; Songhori, et al., 2018) working in this area. However, the researcher replicated the Cronbach's alpha analysis to get sure about the reliability of the questionnaire.

3.2.2 Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009), which is called SSEIT, was used, in this study, to measure the emotional intelligence of the selected participants. The SSEIT was structured of the EI model developed by Mayer and Salovey (1990). This questionnaire was composed of 33 items and included four scales: emotion perception (10 items), utilizing emotions (9 items), managing self-relevant emotions (8 items), and managing others' emotions (6 items). The items of the questionnaire were responded and scored based on a five-point Likert-scale style (1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither disagree nor agree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly agree). Schutte reported that the reliability of this questionnaire for emotional intelligence was $\alpha = 0.90$ for adults and adolescents. However, in this study, the researcher estimated Cronbach's alpha for each sub-scale of this variable. Cronbach's alpha results for emotion perception, utilizing emotions, managing self-relevant emotions, and managing others' emotions were 0.77, 0.87, 0.83, and 0.80, respectively. It is worth noting that the mentioned questionnaire was internationally accepted

and minor modification were used in the items or format to be adapted to the present research context.

3.2.4 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

The last questionnaire, to be used in this study, was a measurement device designed to work on general self-Efficacy of the educators. The mentioned questionnaire was developed by Tschannen-Moran, and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and included three subscales: Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management. This questionnaire was designed in a nine-point Likert-scale format, ranging from nothing to a great deal of influence. Tschannen-Moran, and Woolfolk Hoy developed two versions of the questionnaire. The long form was composed of 24 items, while the short form was a summarized version of the long form and included 12 items. In the current study, the long version of the test was used. The reliability of this questionnaire was approved by Tschannen-Moran, and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). Considering validity, the items were provided to the instructors and colleagues, and they all approved the efficacy of the questionnaire.

3.3 Procedure

As stated previously, the study was conducted in three different public high schools and two private language centers in Isfahan. In order to keep the ethical norms, the researcher, first, explained all aspects of the questionnaires and interview as well as the objectives of the research to the participants.

At the initial stages of the study, 100 teachers teaching in language centers and public schools of Isfahan were selected through convenience sampling to participate in this study. Each participant took about 20 to 35 minutes answering the questionnaires. They were asked to answer all the items according to their own points of view, not by their intuitions about the teaching rules or trends provided by cultural norms.

Then, the scores obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed statistically. The SPSS 21 software was used to analyze the collected data.

4. Results

4.1 Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and Immunity of EFL Teachers in Language Institutes

The first research question, in this study, dealt with the relationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and immunity of EFL teachers in language institutes. Three questionnaires were used in order to come to the intended data. It is worth noting that since the questionnaires varied regarding the number of items and scales of measurement, the final scores could not be measured based on an equal rating system. Therefore, all the obtained scores were equalized and normalized based on the number 100.

In order to identify whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence can predict teachers' immunity multiple regression analysis was run. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that can be used to analyze the relationship between a single dependent variable (teachers' immunity) and several independent variables (self-efficacy and emotional intelligence). The objective of multiple regression analysis is to use the independent variables whose values are known to predict the value of the single dependent value. The descriptive result on participants' performance on the questionnaires is represented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Result on the Performance of Language Institute Teachers on the Questionnaires

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
immunity	63.7500	18.07898	50
Self-efficacy	69.5200	19.20219	50
Emotional intelligence	70.4600	17.89392	50

According to the results represented in Table 4.1, the EFL teachers working in the language institutes had obtained different scores on immunity ($M = 63.75$, $SD = 18.07$), self-efficacy ($M = 69.52$, $SD = 19.20$), and emotional intelligence ($M = 70.46$, $SD = 17.89$).

Since this study was conducted to identify whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence could predict teachers' immunity, there was a need to show the correlation between these mean scores. Table 4.2 can represent the related statistical results.

Table 4.2: Correlational Result on the Performance of Language Institute Teachers on the Questionnaires

		immunity	Self-efficacy	Emotional intelligence
Pearson Correlation	immunity	1.000	.006	.139
	Self-efficacy	.006	1.000	-.023
	Emotional intelligence	.139	-.023	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	immunity	.	.484	.167
	Self-efficacy	.484	.	.436

	Emotional intelligence	.167	.436	.
N	immunity	50	50	50
	Self-efficacy	50	50	50
	Emotional intelligence	50	50	50

As it is represented in Table 4.2, the independent variables could predict the existence of the dependent one. In other words, self-efficacy ($r = 0.00$, $P = 0.484$) and emotional intelligence scores ($r = 0.139$, $P = 0.167$) are not correlated with the teachers' immunity scores.

Table 4.3 provides the regression results on the correlation between the scores of the three variables (self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and teachers' immunity).

Table 4.3: Regression Result on the Performance of Language Institute Teachers on the Questionnaires

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	312.264	2	156.132	.467	.630 ^b
	Residual	15703.361	47	334.114		
2	Total	16015.625	49			

a. Dependent Variable: immunity

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence, self-efficacy

As demonstrated in Table 4.3, in the case of EFL teachers teaching in language institutes, none of the variables could predict the other one and no significant relationship was observed between them ($F(2,47) = 0.46$, $P = 0.63$).

Figure 4.1 deals with the representation of the distribution of self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and teachers' immunity scores on the standard plot of regression.

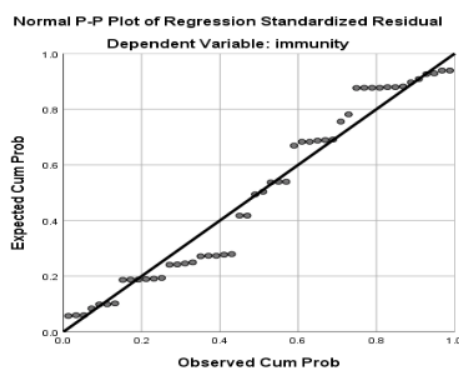


Figure 4.1: Regression Plot on the Performance of Language Institute Teachers on the Questionnaires

As it is illustrated in Figure 4.1, if self- efficacy and emotional intelligence could predict teachers' immunity in language institutes, most of the score circles were supposed to be near the standard expected line. However, as it is observed, few scores could cover the expected line. Therefore, no significant relationship was registered in the case of the scores obtained by the teachers working in the language institutes.

4.2 Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Immunity of EFL Teachers in Public Schools

The second research question of the study was concerned with the relationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and immunity of EFL teachers in public schools. In order to identify whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence can predict teachers' immunity another multiple regression analysis was run. The descriptive result on participants' performance on the questionnaires is represented in Table 4. 4.

Table 4. 4: *Descriptive Result on the Performance of Public-School Teachers on the Questionnaires*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
immunity	75.0000	12.96227	50
Self-efficacy	63.7500	16.20602	50
Emotional intelligence	71.8800	12.66667	50

Based on the numerical findings provided in Table 4. 4, the EFL teachers working in the public schools had obtained different scores on immunity ($M = 75.00$, $SD = 12.96$), self-efficacy ($M = 63.75$, $SD = 16.20$), and emotional intelligence ($M = 71.88$, $SD = 12.66$).

Since this study was conducted to identify whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence could predict teachers' immunity, there was a need to show the correlation between these mean scores. Table 4.5 can represent the related statistical results.

Table 4. 5: *Correlational Result on the Performance of Public-School Teachers on the Questionnaires*

		immunity	Self-efficacy	Emotional intelligence
Pearson Correlation	immunity	1.000	.498	.388
	Self-efficacy	.498	1.000	.199
	Emotional intelligence	.388	.199	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	immunity	.	.000	.003

	Self-efficacy	.000	.	.083
	Emotional intelligence	.003	.083	.
N	immunity	50	50	50
	Self-efficacy	50	50	50
	Emotional intelligence	50	50	50

As it is represented in Table 4.5, self-efficacy ($r = 0.49$, $P = 0.00$) and emotional intelligence scores ($r = 0.38$, $P = 0.00$) are significantly correlated with the teachers' immunity scores. In fact, high self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of the teachers working in public schools could predict their sense of immunity.

Table 4.6 provides the regression results on the correlation between the scores of the three variables (self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and teachers' immunity).

Table 4. 6: Regression Result on the Performance of Public-School Teachers on the Questionnaires

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2756.483	2	1378.241	11.828	.000 ^b
	Residual	5476.517	47	116.522		
2	Total	8233.000	49			

a. Dependent Variable: immunity

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence, self-efficacy

As demonstrated in Table 4.6, in the case of EFL teachers teaching in public schools, the variables could predict the other one and a statistically significant relationship was observed between them ($F(2,47) = 11.82$, $P = 0.00$).

Figure 4.2 deals with the representation of the distribution of self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and teachers' immunity scores of public schools on the standard plot of regression.

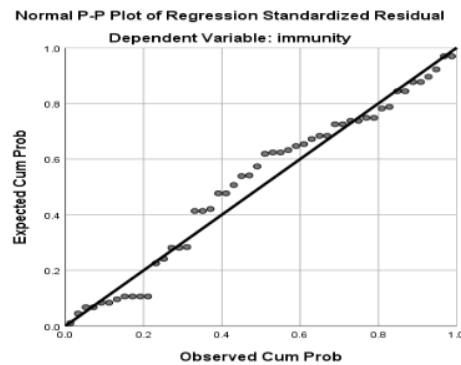


Figure 4.1: Regression Plot on the Performance of Language Institute Teachers on the Questionnaires

As it is illustrated in Figure 4.2, most of the score circles were near the standard expected line. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the scores obtained for the three variables by the teachers working in the public schools.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As mentioned before, the general objective of this study was to determine the impact of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on teachers' immunity in the Iranian EFL context considering language centers and public schools. In order to achieve this objective two research questions were proposed. The obtained results revealed that in language institutes, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence could not predict the teachers' immunity; however, there was a significant relationship between the scores obtained for the three variables by the teachers working in the public schools and the correlational rate was high. Moreover, in this study, it was revealed that teachers working in public schools have higher levels of immunity compared to the ones working in language institutes.

As observed in the literature conducted in this area, Hiver (2017) and Rahmati, et al. (2019) came to the conclusion that self-efficacy could predict the level of teacher immunity; however, in the results obtained in this study, the self-efficacy of the teachers working in language centers did not correlate with the level of immunity. Moreover, most of the studies (Hiver, 2017; Rahmati, et al., 2019; Saydam, 2019; Songhori, et al., 2018), mentioned in the literature, were in line with the positive direct connection between teacher immunity and internal characteristics such as self-efficacy, attitudes to teaching, emotional abilities, etc.; however, based on the findings of the present study, some external factors such as teaching condition, salary, and insurance may also affect the immunity of the teachers. Therefore, this study may have some implications with the stakeholders in education and it calls for further research on the external factors and economic variables that can affect the level of immunity in teachers working in different fields including language teaching.

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