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Personality Traits, Emotional Intelligence, And Workplace Arrogance Among Corporate Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to examine the relationship between personality traits, emotional intelligence, and workplace arrogance among corporate managers. A sample of 130 corporate sector employees, (63.1% males, 36.9% females) aged between 27 to 49 years (M=38.72, SD=5.98) was recruited using a purposive sampling strategy based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Reliability analysis demonstrated high Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the research instruments: NEO-five-factor inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992) (α =.80), workplace arrogance (Silverman et al., 2012) (α = .70), and emotional intelligence (Cherniss et al., 1998) (α = .85) within the corporate employees. Correlation analysis revealed that workplace arrogance was negatively correlated with positive personality traits and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that the overall personality, emotional intelligence, and employees' job experience significantly (p<.05) negatively predicted workplace arrogance. However, personality traits such as neuroticism and extroversion positively predicted workplace arrogance among corporate sector employees. A standardized mediation model showed that workplace arrogance significantly mediated the relationship between positive personality traits and neuroticism. The model also demonstrated well-fitted indices. Findings suggest that employees who exhibit workplace arrogance tend to have lower job performance and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Workplace arrogance, Neuroticism, Psychopathology, Positive Personality

INTRODUCTION

At one point or another, all of us have faced arrogance in at least one aspect of life. Arrogance involves behaviors utilized to establish an individual's superiority over other people. Arrogance in the workplace is damaging in the sense that it gives way to tense social interactions, low morale, subpar job performance, and ultimately organizational failure (Silverman et al., 2012). For these reasons, arrogance in the workplace should be a desired topic of research for many researchers.

Commonly, arrogance is "a stable belief of superiority and exaggerated self-importance that is manifested through excessive and audacious claims" (Kowalski et al, 2003; Silverman et al., 2007). Arrogance displays an individual's exaggerated sense of grandiosity through behaviors that work to disparage others and make the individual out to be an invincible being (Ma & Karri, 2005). People usually come off as arrogant when they attribute their successes to internal causes, irrespective of the extent of their actual success (Hareli & Weiner, 2000). Arrogant people generally have a very high opinion of themselves in that they believe them to be the perfect specimen of human beings and, therefore superior to all the other normal human beings (Whitney, 2012). Arrogant people are generally disliked in a societal context (Schlenker & Leary, 1982) due to their self-centeredness and holier-than-thou attitude, while on the other hand displaying degrading behavior with others. However, in a work setting where avoidance of arrogant people is non-viable, they not only cause distress in interpersonal relationships through their attitude and behavior but also impede the smooth functioning of the organization by portraying themselves as exceptional beings who are always right (Leary et al., 1997; Johnson et al., 2010). Resulting in not only a stifling work environment that leads to occupational stress (Das, 2015) but also, in extreme cases, causing the downfall of entire organizations (Levine, 2005; Ma & Karri, 2005). To understand arrogance and find ways to minimize it in a workplace, it needs to be studied alongside personality.

Personality is "a sum of permanent traits and unique characteristics that provides consistency and individuality in a person's behavior" (Feist & Feist, 2009). Various theories divide it into a multitude of components, however, the most widely used personality theory is the Big Five; consisting of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (McCrae & John, 1992). These facets are fairly constant over time and are mainly an attribute of a person's genetics rather than their environment (Schacter et al., 2011). Openness to experience is a general appreciation of artistic and unusual stimuli. Individuals high on this trait are more curious, receptive towards new experiences, and are more open to emotions. Openness facets consist of openness to values, feelings, actions, and aesthetics. Conscientiousness represents an individual's perseverance, self-control,

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and ambition. A conscientious individual is vigilant, thorough, careful, and organized (McCrae & Costa, 1987). The various factors of "conscientiousness" include; (i) "competence", (ii) "order", (iii) "dutifulness", (iv) "achievement striving", (v) "self-discipline", and (vi) "deliberation" (Costa et al., 1991). Extraversion is a distinct relation with the outside world. Extraverts enjoy their interaction with people and are more motivated to have connections with people (McCrae & John, 1992). Features of extraversion include; sociability, talkativeness, warmth, assertiveness, positive emotions, excitement seeking, and gregariousness. Agreeable individuals place a great value on social harmony. To them, getting along with others, and being generally considerate, kind, trustworthy, and compromising is very important. They have a very optimistic view regarding human nature. Agreeableness includes six facets, which are; trust, modesty, compassion, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, and tender-mindedness. Lastly, neuroticism is a predisposition towards negative emotions, like anger, depression, anxiety, etc. Individuals with high scores on neuroticism are emotionally volatile and prone to stress. They are more inclined to interpret unassuming situations as threatening or life-ruining Facets of neuroticism include anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability (McCrae & John, 1992).

Besides personality, emotional intelligence can also help in understanding arrogance, its causes, and remedies. Emotional intelligence is the capacity or skill to identify, assess, and manage the emotions experienced by one's self as well as others. Emotional intelligence is becoming more and more relevant to work-related outcomes because it's providing behaviorists with a new way to assess and understand behaviors and interpersonal interactions in the workplace, and finding new ways to improve them (Goleman, 1995). A widely used framework of emotional intelligence developed by Goleman (1998) covers five domains of emotional intelligence divided into two categories i.e. personal and social. These domains are; (i) Self-Awareness – recognizing and accurately assessing one's emotions, and strengths and weaknesses, (ii) Self-Regulation – maintaining and managing one's emotions, (iii) Self-Motivation – encouraging self to meet a standard of excellence, (iv) Social Awareness – recognizing and accurately assessing other's emotions, and (v) Social Skills – managing relationships. First three i.e. self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation fall in personal competence, whereas, social awareness and social skills fall in social competencies. By developing emotional intelligence, a person can moderate conflicts, and understand relationships thus reducing stress and becoming more productive and successful, both personally and professionally. Moreover, they can help others improve as well (Goleman, 2006).

To the best of the researcher's ability, no researches were found that deals with arrogance, personality, and emotional intelligence at once. However, the correlation between these variables was explored in a few researches. When the big five and arrogance were studied, agreeableness was found to be negatively correlated with arrogance i.e. more agreeable a person is, the less arrogant that person will be (Bauer et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2010). Agreeableness is associated with characteristics like trust, honesty, altruism, cooperation, modesty, and compassion (Costa et al., 1991), these factors are opposite to the main traits of arrogance which are superiority and exaggeration. Conscientiousness and arrogance were found to not be correlated to one another depicting that conscientiousness is independent of arrogance (Johnson et al., 2010). Customarily, arrogance is not studied extensively as a separate variable, especially about personality or emotional intelligence. As far as personality and emotional intelligence are concerned, all five personality factors correlate with emotional intelligence. However, the extent of their correlation varies from research to research. Few studies claim extraversion to be the most correlating factor in personality, followed by agreeableness (Dawda & Hart, 2000; Dehghanan & Rezaei, 2014), whereas, others found neuroticism to be in highest correlated with emotional intelligence (Alegra et al., 2019).

In the corporate sector, arrogance has always been a problem. The corporate sector's fast-paced culture and cutthroat competition made it somewhat necessary to be arrogant. However, arrogance has been one of the main contributors to the fall of successful companies, whether it be Boeing or General Motors whose exceptional past achievements made them arrogant and blind to the present realities; Enron or Worldcom where the arrogance of their leadership brought about their downfall; or Sony, Merck or Motorola where their creative arrogance was the cause of their demise (Sheth, 2007). To grow and prosper, a company needs a culture of learning, adapting, tolerance, and creativity, all the qualities that are rebuffed by arrogance. To ensure the stability and prosperity of an organization, employees need to be trained to be more emotionally aware of themselves and their surroundings, and be more conscientious, open, and agreeable, to foster an environment of open communication, curiosity, and humility.

Objectives of the Study

The current study explores the mutual association between Big-five personality traits and emotional intelligence with workplace arrogance among employees. Additionally, it examines the relationship and impact of demographic variables. Based on a review of the literature, the following research objectives were proposed for the present study;

- To investigate the association of workplace arrogance with personality traits and emotional intelligence among corporate sector employees.
- To assess how the demographic variables of the employees, their personality traits, and emotional intelligence are significant predictors of workplace arrogance.
- To examine the mediational role of workplace arrogance in the relationship between positive personality traits and neuroticism among corporate employees.

METHOD

A correlational research design was implemented to investigate the relationship between the variables.

Sampling. The sample of 130 corporate sector employees (82 males and 48 females), aged 27 to 49 years (M=38.72, SD=5.98), was recruited by using a non-probability purposive sampling strategy through an inbuild online survey system targeting corporate sector employees.

Table 1 Demographic variables

Variables	M (SD)	f	Percentage (%)
Age	38.72 (5.98)		
Gender			
Male		82	63.1
Female		48	36.9
Education			
Bachelors		33	25.4
Masters		61	46.9
Post-Graduation		36	27.7

Note. N = 130.

Individuals working in the corporate sector with the age range from 25 to 50 years were involved in the study. However, individuals with some mental and physical illness were excluded.

Measures. Following measures, having good psychometric properties were administered:

Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Five-factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). This instrument was made by Costa and McCrae in 1992 to assess different human personality traits. This scale takes 10 to 15 minutes of administration. This test is appropriate for normal individuals aged 17 to above. The instrument having sixteen items gives an exact tool for the five domains of personality such as "extraversion", "agreeableness", "conscientiousness", "neuroticism", and "openness to experience". Every facet of this scale has 12 items. It's a five-point Likert-type rating scale. A high score in any domain represents the propensity of a specific type of trait. The overall reported reliability of the scale ranges from $\alpha = .57$ to .86. In the current sample, Chronbach's alpha reliability coefficients varied between .55 and .80.

Workplace Arrogance. Silverman et al. (2012) developed a workplace arrogance scale to measure workplace arrogance in work settings. It is a 26-item scale having 5-point Likert-type ratings. The reliability of the scale is a= .81 indicates that it is a reliable measure for the research. The measure reliability of the scale on the present sample is α = .70.

Emotional Intelligence. The scale comprised 45- items with a 5-ponit Likert-type rating scale, having four sub-components emotionality, self-control, sociability, and wellbeing. The reported validity of the scale is α =.92 (Cherniss et al., 1998). Cronbach's reliability of the emotional intelligence scale in this research was α = .85.

RESULTS

Table 2 Intercorrelation among study variables and reliability coefficients of the scales

Scales	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Workplace Arrogance	.70		13	.27**	.04	02	37**	25**	20**
2. Personality Traits	.80			15	74	.72**	.54**	.72**	.70**
3. Neuroticism	.76				40**	29**	23**	51**	49**
4. Extraversion	.70					.60**	.19*	.56**	.60**
5. Openness	.60						.15	.46**	.56**
6. Agreeableness	.55							.32**	.24**
7. Conscientiousness	.80								.88**
8. Emotional Intelligence	.85								

Note: N = 130, ** p < .01, *p < .05 (two-tailed), N = 130.

The correlation coefficients between workplace arrogance, personality traits, and emotional intelligence of the corporate sector employees. Workplace arrogance was found to be positively correlated with a sub-trait of personality neuroticism (r = .27, p < .05), and negatively associated with agreeableness (r = -.37, p < .05), as well as conscientiousness (r = -.25, p < .05). Furthermore, workplace arrogance was also negatively correlated with emotional intelligence (r = -.20, p < .05) (see Table 2)

Table 3 Regression analysis showing the effects of personality traits and emotional intelligence on employees' workplace arrogance

				95%		
Predictor	B	SE	β	UL	LL	Þ
Constant	53.68	10.06		73.61	33.75	.01
Neuroticism	.34	.09	.41	.52	.16	.00.
Extraversion	.45	0.14	.49	.74	.16	.00.
Openness	.16	.13	.17	.43	09	.21
Agreeableness	11	.12	12	.12	36	.35
R^2	.24**					.00
F	7.93					.00
Constant	60.66	6.30		73.14	48.18	.00
Emotional Int.	18	.07	20	02	33	.02
\mathbb{R}^2	.04**					.02
F	5.43					

Note: $N = 130, **p < .01, *p < .05; \beta = \text{Coefficient of Regression}, LL = \text{Lower Limit}, UL = \text{Upper limit}. 95 CI %$

Results showed a positive predictive relationship between workplace arrogance and neuroticism (β = .41, p < .01) and extraversion (β = .49, p < .01). Whereas, the negative predictive relationship is evident between workplace arrogance and emotional intelligence (β = -.20, p < .05). Moreover, the value of R^2 (.24) for personality traits explains 24% variance in workplace arrogance accounted for by big five traits, and, value of R^2 (.04), 4% variance is accounted for by emotional intelligence (see Table 3).

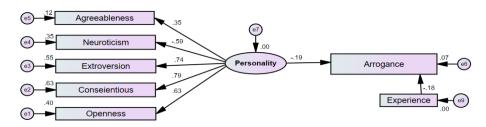
Table 4 Linear regression analysis showing the effects of job experience on employees' workplace arrogance

	95% CI					
Predictor	B	SE	β	UL	LL	Þ
Constant	49.39	1.57		52.51	46.26	.01
Job Exp.	1.15	0.50	19	-0.15	-2.15	.02
R ²	.03*					.02
F	5.23*					.02

Note: N = 130,**p < .01, *p < .05; $\beta = \text{Coefficient of Regression}$, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper limit. 95 CI %

Findings of linear regression analysis indicate that job experience negatively predicts workplace arrogance (β = -.19, p < .05) in corporate sector employees, indicating a 3% variance in arrogance on account of job experience (see Table 4).

Mode 1 Path-Analysis: Personality Predicts the Arrogance

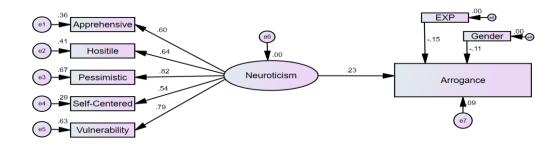


Note. N = 130. All model correlations and path coefficients are significant (p < .05).

Model 1 illustrated the direct path through structural equational modeling between positive personality and workplace arrogance. It indicates that positive personality is the negative significant predictor of arrogance in employees (β = -.19, p < .01). As the positive personality traits increase workplace arrogance will decrease. Additionally, positive personality significantly predicted all its components (p < .01), except neuroticism. It was found to be a negative significant predictor of positive personality (β = -.59, p < .01). Furthermore, the covariate experience has an inverse significant impact on the employees' arrogance (β = -.18, p < .01). The overall model is reasonably well fitted for the parameters of this data CIM/DF = 2.60; GFI=.90; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .09.

Model 2

Path-Analysis: Neuroticism as the Positive Predictor of Arrogance

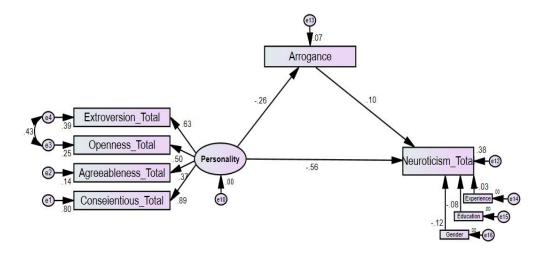


Note. N = 130. All model correlations and path coefficients are significant (p < .05).

Model 2 demonstrated that one of the personality components neuroticisms positively predicted arrogance (β = .23, p < .01) in the employees. Although, experience and gender have an inverse impact on the outcome variable (β = -.15, p < ns), (β = .11, p < ns). These covariates affected the overall properties of the model but the direct effects of the demographics are non-sgnificant. This model is also reasonably well fitted for the data by having adequate model fit indexes CIM/DF = 2.86; GFI=.92; CFI = .85; RMSEA = .09.

Model 3

Mediation Analysis: Arrogance as a Mediator between the Relationship of Positive Personality and Neuroticism



Note. N = 130. All model correlations and path coefficients are significant (p < .05).

Table 6 Standardized mediation effects of arrogance in the relationship between personality traits and neuroticism among employees

X to Y	Moditor	Indirect Effect	0	95% <i>CI</i>	
X 10 1	Meditor	mairect Effect	ρ	LL	UL
Personality Traits → Neuroticism	Arrogance	(26**, .10*)	56**	.37	.48

Note: N = 130, **p < .01.

The standardized mediation model 3 demonstrated significant indirect path coefficients, linking positive personality traits to neuroticism (β = -.56, p < .01), positive personality traits to arrogance (β = -.26, p < .01), and arrogance to neuroticism (β = .10, p < .01). Moreover, the standardized indirect effect, accounted for arrogance as a mediator between positive personality traits and neuroticism, remained significant (β = -.56, p < .01). This finding suggest that arrogance significantly (p<.05) mediated the relationship between positive personality traits and neuroticism (see Table 6 & Model 3). Furthermore, the mediation analysis has partitioned the total effect of the positive personality traits on the neuroticism τ = -.58, into a direct effect τ' = -.56 and a mediated effect (-.26 × .10) = -.02. This indicates that a one-standard-deviation increase in positive personality traits corresponds to a 0.58 standard deviation reduction in employees' neuroticism through the mediation effect of arrogance (Arbuckle, 2008; Cohen, 1988, Baron & Kenny, 1986; Kline, 2023; West et al., 1993) (see Table 6).

Table 7 Standardized mediation effect of arrogance between the relationship of personality and neuroticism

Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	TLI
Model-Fit Indices	45.53	25	.07	.90	.92	.85

Note. N = 130, *p<.05= CIM/DF<3.

The standardized model fit indices suggested a satisfactory fit for the mediation model between positive personality and neuroticism $\chi 2 = 45.53$ (df = 25, N = 130), p < .05, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .90, GFI = .92, and TLI = .85. The value of chi-square is significant because of the greater degree of freedom, therefore by dividing the degree of freedom with chi-square (χ^2 /df) the determined value is 1.82 which acceptable for model fit (Hu, Bentler & Kano, 1992) (see Table 7).

DISCUSSION

The study examined the relationship between workplace arrogance, personality traits, and emotional intelligence. Data was collected online from a sample of 130 corporate employees (82 males and 48 females) aged 25 to 50 years. Among them, 33 employees held a bachelor's degree, 61 had a Master's degree, and 36 possessed a post-graduate qualification. The research instruments used were found to be reliable and valid for this population.

The objectives of the current were achieved through various statistical analyses conducted on the given sample of the employees. Workplace arrogance was expected to be significantly related to personality facets and emotional intelligence. Findings partially supported this hypothesis. Specifically, neuroticism was found to be positively correlated to workplace arrogance. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism are known for frequently using inappropriate coping responses such as hostile reactions to deal with their disruptive emotions (McCrae & Costa, 1987). This susceptibility of neurotic individuals towards unhealthy coping mechanisms makes them receptive to arrogant attitudes. Furthermore, agreeableness and conscientiousness were found to be negatively related to arrogance. Agreeableness, as reflected by the name, represents courteousness and cooperativeness with others, with an optimistic approach to life and a preference for lifelong cordial relationships. Contrarily, arrogant individuals are notorious for preferring self-interest over collective interest, belittling others,

and manipulating others to do their bidding, all factors that resonate with a negative relationship between agreeableness and arrogance. Conscientious individuals are in control of their impulsiveness and are organized, mindful, and rational decision-makers. Arrogant individuals, on the other hand, overestimate their abilities and skills, making them think that they are in charge of the situation and that they will be able to handle whatever the situation will throw at them. This thinking makes them overconfident and underprepared, insinuating a negative relationship between conscientiousness and arrogance. Moreover, emotional intelligence and arrogance were also found to be negatively related to one another. Emotional intelligence is understanding emotions, in one's self or others. However, arrogant individuals are not interested in understanding the emotions of themselves or others, their shallow and superficial attitude makes it impossible for them to look into the emotional states of anyone. Their feelings of superiority and behaviors of attention-seeking, allow them to bypass any hindrance of considering someone else's emotions. All of their relationships are maintained for the sole purpose of feeding their ego and boosting their fragile sense of self.

It was postulated that demographic variables, personality facets, and emotional intelligence predict arrogance. Among demographic variables, only experience was found to be a significant negative predictor of arrogance, declaring a possibility of a decrease in arrogance with an increase in job experience. With more experience comes more opportunities for an individual to fail, in other words, an individual becomes more familiar with reality principles and starts seeing life in reality. Failure humbles people out, thus making them less arrogant. It can also be that with job experience, that comes with age, many traits of youth that can be perceived as arrogance start to mellow out, making a person less apparently arrogant. Neuroticism and extraversion are also found to be a positive predictor of arrogance. Neurotic individuals, as described above, are more prone to negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, anxiety, envy, etc. Due to this susceptibility, they often use unhealthy coping mechanisms to ensure their survival and safeguard in this hostile world, and these mechanisms often include using arrogance as a preventive measure against perceived unwarranted potential attacks on their fragile sense of self. Thus making neurotic individuals more prone to arrogance. Additionally, extraversion, often described as sociable, assertive, and active (John & Srivastava, 1999), at an extreme can also be defined as dominant, pushy, exhibitionist, and superficial (Digman, 1990; Eysenck, 1978), portraying it as shallow and without any substance. On the other hand, an arrogant individual is an exhibitionist, dominant, and pushy person, who is incapable of taking criticism. Arrogance and extraversion overlap in many of these characteristics, thus making extravert individuals more prone to arrogant behaviors. Moreover, results showed a negative predictive relationship between emotional intelligence and arrogance. This can be because emotionally intelligent individuals are aware and understanding of their as well as other's emotions, and they maintain their behavior in the light of their comprehension accordingly, thus avoiding behaviors that are arrogant and hubristic.

Conclusively, it was predicted that neuroticism might predict the relationship between remaining positive personality facets and arrogance. Results showed that is the case, that when neuroticism is added among a relationship between remaining personality facets and arrogance the negative relationship among them turns to positive. This shows that neurotic individuals despite having a conscientious, open, agreeable, and extrovert personality are prone to arrogant behaviors. Neuroticism is defined as a heightened tendency towards negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, sadness, etc. This proneness makes it harder for them to function adequately in the world and to view the world at a safe and friendly pace that non-neurotics do. Viewing the world as an intimidating, and precarious place forces them to adopt certain behaviors and attitudes to shield themselves against it, and these safeguarding mechanisms at times come in the form of arrogance.

Limitations and Suggestions

The sample approached in this research is skewed towards the male population, more female population needs to be included in this research for it to be a more representative study of the indigenous female population. Data collection was done among corporate sector employees only, this research can be broadened to include other occupations as well. The lack of prior research on this topic was also a hindrance in properly understanding the variables and designing the research accordingly, however, this research will be a great addition to the scarce available literature.

Future Implications

Arrogance, especially in the corporate sector, is a massive hindrance to the development of positive relationships and a healthy functional organization. This study, intended to study the phenomenon of arrogance in the corporate sector in light of personality and emotional intelligence, will be a greater addition to the insufficient data available on workplace arrogance. Workplace arrogance is scantly studied throughout the world and less so in Pakistan. Being a country that runs on emotions, workplace arrogance greatly affects the workplace environment and employees' performance, and, to control and eradicate this phenomenon from organizational settings, there is a need to first understand it fully. Once the complex personality structure that combines to form arrogance is fully understood, hiring processes and developmental techniques can be modified to better address this in the workplace setting, and to further improve the workplace setting to enhance productivity and profitability.

Conclusion

Research understudy explored the relationship of arrogance with personality and emotional intelligence. Results showed a positive relationship between neuroticism with arrogance, and a negative relationship between agreeableness, and conscientiousness. No relationship of arrogance was found with extraversion and openness, whereas, emotional intelligence was found to be positively related to arrogance. Moreover, predictive analysis depicted a positive relationship between arrogance with neuroticism, and extraversion, however, a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and job experience. Moreover, a mediatory relationship of arrogance was found with the other four personality traits and neuroticism.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest at any stage of this article.

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