

# Student Physical Education Teachers' Well-Being: Contribution of Basic Psychological Needs

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## Abstract

This study adopted Self-Determination Theory tenets and aimed to explore whether student physical education (PE) teachers' satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs independently predicts well-being. 267 Turkish student PE teachers were recruited for the study. Two stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed in which each outcome was regressed on the three psychological need measures. The results confirmed SDT's universality; satisfactions of all three needs were positively correlated with subjective well-being and negatively correlated with loneliness. Relatedness was the strongest predictor of student teachers' well-being whereas autonomy was the strongest predictor of their loneliness. Results are consistent with the SDT tenets which claims satisfactions of autonomy, competence and relatedness contribute to individuals' well-being. The practical implications of this study concerns teacher education programs which should be regulated to inform student teachers about their own psychological needs and well-being and their students' psychological needs and well-being in the future.

**Keywords:** basic psychological needs, well-being, student teachers

## 1. Introduction

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) assumes that all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop sense of self. There are social-contextual factors that support this innate tendency and there are others that thwart or hinder this fundamental process of human nature. SDT posits that there are universal psychological needs which interact with social contexts to produce variations, cultural style, and well-being (Deci & Ryan 2002).

Deci and Ryan (2000) defined the needs as "innate psychological nutriment that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity and well-being" (p.229). Human nature strives for these nutriment and when possible orients to the situations provide them. There are three primary or basic psychological needs underlying psychological health, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Autonomy refers to desire for the self-endorsed behaviour, competence is feeling capable and effective in actions and relatedness refers to sense of belongings with significant others and community. Satisfying these needs is essential for well-being, on the other hand when these needs are not satisfied ill-being and maladaptive outcomes emerge (Deci & Ryan 2000, 2002). Sheldon, Ryan, and Reis (1996) confirmed that university students' basic psychological need satisfaction contributed to their well-being and daily need satisfaction explained daily fluctuations in well-being over time.

Deci et al (2001) indicated that a desire or a goal represents a basic need only if its satisfaction level depends on people's well-being level. Well-being refers to "optimal psychological functioning and experience" (Ryan & Deci 2001, p. 142). In the present study, subjective well-being and loneliness variables were used to tap student teachers' well-being. Student teachers' well-being is worth to examine because teaching practice is perceived as a particularly stressful and demanding period for them and this stress level thwarts their well-being (Boz 2008; Caires, Almeida & Vieira 2012).

SDT has been widely used in physical education (PE) context because student-teacher interactions in PE trigger both teachers' and students' motivational process. For instance, Taylor and Ntoumanis (2007) showed that PE teachers support students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness is positively linked with students' adaptive self-determined motivation. Standage, Duda, and Ntoumanis (2005) suggested that teacher education strategies should be designed to promote students' basic psychological needs facilitation in order to provide students' positive PE engagement.

Considerable research has issued the link between teachers' basic psychological needs satisfaction and its consequences in PE setting. For instance, Taylor, Ntoumanis, and Standage (2008) manifested that PE teachers' psychological need satisfaction had positive effects on their teaching strategies, which can be interpreted as factors that influence teacher motivation in PE may also indirectly affect their motivational strategies toward students. On the other hand Taylor, Ntoumanis, and Smith (2009) found that various aspects of the PE context served to imperil teachers' need for autonomy, competence and relatedness. These kinds of environments often resulted in teachers using motivational strategies that prevented the satisfaction of students' psychological needs.

Although many studies have proved the importance of teachers' basic psychological needs in students' motivation, student teachers, as prospective teachers, were rarely taken into consideration. Evelein (2005) proved that when student teachers' autonomy need is satisfied while teaching, they have a strong sense of personal and professional development, when their relatedness need is fulfilled during teaching, their positive connection to the students increase. Similarly, Evelein, Korthagen, and Brekelmans (2008) showed that student teachers' need satisfaction scores during teaching were above the midpoint but lower than experienced teachers' scores. That is, student teachers' psychological needs are some extent thwarted during their first teaching experience. For the reason that these studies examined the student teachers' psychological need satisfaction during teaching, examining general need satisfaction has come into question. Also examining Turkish student PE teacher's psychological needs in a PE setting is a completely unknown area. Therefore, understanding Turkish student PE teachers' psychological needs and well-being is warranted.

Basic psychological needs are theorized to be universal to all cultures for all age periods and all contexts (Deci & Ryan 2000), so it was hypothesized to be shown the same structure in Turkish prospective teachers' sample. Specifically the aim of this study was to examine whether three basic psychological needs were the determinants of student PE teachers' well-being. Past research results (Leon & Nunez 2013; Chirkov, Ryan & Willness 2005; Kasser & Ryan 1999) in different age and culture groups revealed a positive relationship between psychological needs and positive indicators of well-being and negative relationship with negative indicators of well-being. It was hypothesized that basic needs would positively predict well-being, namely, autonomy, competence, and relatedness would positively predict subjective well-being and negatively predict loneliness.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1 Participants*

Participants were 267 student PE teachers (128 women, 139 men), who were 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (131 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 136 4<sup>th</sup> grade) attending the teacher education undergraduate programs in six different universities. Applied sports pedagogy lessons take part only in 3<sup>rd</sup> and last year of national teacher education undergraduate programs, therefore only 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade student teachers were recruited as candidate teachers. All six universities were state universities which are located in six different cities in four different regions in Turkey.

### *2.2 Data Collection*

Ethical approval was obtained from an ethics committee of Pamukkale University in Turkey. Formal permissions were requested from executive boards of both universities and PE departments' via mail. An academic staff from each university was contacted in advance and the aim of the research was explained. Principle academic staff from each university administered the questionnaire pack in students' routine lecture times in classrooms. Students were explained that participation was voluntarily and confidential. No students declined to participate. The questionnaire pack took 20 minutes to complete.

### *2.3 Variables*

#### *2.3.1 Well-being*

Student teachers' well-being was assessed with two previously validated scales; Subjective Well-Being Scale (Tuzg l-Dost 2005) and UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau & Ferguson 1978).

2.3.1.1 Subjective Well-Being Scale was developed by Tuzg l-Dost (2005). It consists of 46 items and employs a Likert scale anchored by 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (Very Much true). "Generally I feel happy" and "I find my life monotonous

and boring” are positive and negative item examples. High total score obtained from scale equates to high level of well-being.

2.3.1.2 UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed by Russell, Peplau and Ferguson (1978) and translated into Turkish by Demir (1989). It was designed to detect variations in loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation in everyday life. High score obtained from a total of 20 items (9 items positive-non-lonely and 11 items negative-lonely) means high loneliness level. Students were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 1 (I have never experienced this) to 4 (I have often experienced this) how often they feel as described in each item. Previous studies have supported the reliability and validity of the original version (Russel 1996; Hughes et al 2004) and Turkish version of the scale (Demir 1989).

### 2.3.2 Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

Satisfaction of three basic needs was assessed with Need Satisfaction Scale (Deci & Ryan 1991). Scale was translated into Turkish by Bacanlı and Cihangir-Çankaya (2003). Scale consisted of 21 items (12 items positive, 9 items negative) and three sub-scales, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy sub-scale consists of six items (e.g., “I feel that I have freedom to decide how I live my life”), competence sub-scale consists of six items (e.g., “Recently I have learnt new and interesting skills”) and relatedness sub-scale consists of nine items (e.g., “I get on well with the people around me”). Likert type scale is ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 7 (Very true). Turkish version of the scale has shown that the three factor scale is valid and reliable (Bacanlı & Cihangir-Çankaya 2003).

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data cleaning was carried out to check for missing data and outliers. Descriptive statistics for all variables and Cronbach’s alpha values for assessing internal reliability of all subscales were calculated.

Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used for the data analysis. Prior to analysis data was screened for the normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity and all the assumptions were found to fully meet for the multiple stepwise regression analysis. Two stepwise multiple regression analysis were calculated to determine the variables that best predict well-being in student PE teachers. The independent variables in the regression model included the three basic psychological needs.

## 3. Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations among all the variables of the study. As seen in table 1, alpha coefficients ranged from .72 to .92 which can be interpreted as all the subscales are internally reliable considering .70 criterion for the psychological domain (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994).

Student PE teachers reported both their well-being and loneliness level as higher than the mid-point of the scales (2.5 and 2 respectively). The highest need satisfaction is autonomy satisfaction and competence satisfaction is the lowest. Student teachers’ satisfaction of need for autonomy, competence and relatedness were higher than mid-point of the scales (3.5). Significant positive correlations among well-being and all three needs, significant negative correlations among loneliness and well-being and all three needs can also be observed from Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive data and intercorrelations among the variables of the study.

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Well-Being (1-5)</b>	3.755	.529	0.92	1	-	-	-
<b>2. Autonomy (1-7)</b>	5.013	.993	0.79	.668**	1	-	-
<b>3. Competence (1-7)</b>	3.567	.696	0.78	.758**	.445**	1	-
<b>4. Relatedness (1-7)</b>	3.890	.537	0.76	.874**	.607**	.618**	1
<b>5. Loneliness (1-4)</b>	2.107	.384	0.72	-.589**	-.611**	-.461**	-.513**

N = 267, \*\* p < 0.01, two-tailed

The stepwise regression analysis was constructed to investigate which basic psychological needs contributed the most to the variation of student teachers’ well-being. As shown in Table 2 student teachers’ relatedness satisfaction level explained 76.3% of their well-being level. When competence and autonomy were added to the model respectively, student PE teachers’ well-being was explained 86.1%.

Table 2. Stepwise regression analysis predicting subjective well-being.

Model	Predictors	Standardized $\beta$	t	p	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
1	Relatedness	.874	29.216	.000**	853.588	.763	.763
2	Relatedness	.655	20.967	.000**	696.333	.841	.078
	Competence	.354	11.335	.000**			
3	Relatedness	.557	16.817	.000**	543.918	.861	.021
	Competence	.334	11.352	.000**			
	Autonomy	.182	6.240	.000**			

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

Second stepwise regression analysis was applied to analyse the determinants of loneliness level, as negative variable of well-being. The R<sup>2</sup> change on Table 3 shows that the most important variable is autonomy satisfaction, which accounted 37.3% of the loneliness level. If the competence satisfaction was put in the model, 41.8% of the loneliness was predicted.

Table 3. Stepwise regression analysis predicting loneliness.

Model	Predictors	Standardized $\beta$	t	p	F	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
1	Autonomy	-.611	-12.557	.000**	157.673	.373	.373
2	Autonomy	-.506	-9.649	.000**	94.677	.418	.045
	Competence	-.236	-4.498	.000**			

\*\*p<0.01

#### 4. Discussion

This study examined the prediction effect of three basic psychological needs on Turkish student PE teachers' well-being.

Consistent with the findings of student teachers' all three need satisfaction scores were at moderate level in the Netherlands (Evelein, Korthagen, & Brekelmans 2008), Turkish student teachers' all three psychological needs levels were found to be at moderate level. The stepwise regression analysis results showed that the strongest predictor (76.3%) of student Turkish PE teachers' well-being was their relatedness satisfaction while autonomy satisfaction was the strongest predictor (37.3%) of their feeling lonely. While relatedness predicted well-being in the first place, it was not one of the predictors of loneliness. Consistent with our results, Qusted and Duda (2010) reported that dancers' relatedness was the strongest predictor of their well-being.

Results of the study are consistent with the SDT tenets which claim satisfactions of autonomy, competence and relatedness contribute to individuals' well-being. Turkish student PE teachers' sample confirmed the same assertion.

The practical implications of this study concerns teacher education programs. On the grounds that change in teachers' classroom practices begins in student teacher education and continues thereafter (Dever & Hobbs 1998), teacher education programs should be regulated to inform student teachers about their psychological needs and well-being. Curriculums of all the PE teacher education programs in all universities are prepared and regulated by the Turkish Higher Education Institution in Turkey. The Turkish universities do not have much autonomy to regulate their PE teacher education curriculum according to their needs. Higher Education Institution is recommended to revise the PE teacher education curriculum and add a lecture to the curriculum to inform about the psychological needs and how to create a psychological needs supportive environment. By teaching student teachers how to create an autonomous PE environment, support students' personal improvement, feelings of talent and improve student-teacher interactions during undergraduate education, it can be accomplished that they can nourish their own psychological needs and well-being. Student teachers' teaching may also be affected positively due to the progress of their well-being. This recommendation has several reasons; first, student teachers are expected to be able to consider students' basic psychological needs effectively (Vermeulen et al., 2012). The degree to which PE teachers' perceive their students to be self-determined towards PE has been shown to be positively linked with autonomy supportive, emotionally involved and structured teaching environments (Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Standage 2008). There is also much evidence that showed the link between teachers' need satisfaction and student motivation outcomes in PE setting (Taylor & Ntoumanis 2007; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Smith 2009), it is important for prospective teachers to be aware of their own basic psychological needs in order to be able to balance their students' psychological need satisfaction.

Second, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) stated that when the teachers' autonomy need satisfaction is undermined, they lose their enthusiasm and creative energy that they can bring to their teaching effort. To become more effective teachers,

they need to be aware of their own psychological needs.

Third, teacher-student interactions in class were reported to affect the well-being of teachers. When teachers experienced negative feelings during teaching, their overall well-being decreased (i.e. Dzuka & Dalbert 2007). Correspondingly, Evelein, Korthagen, and Brekelmans (2008) suggested making student teachers aware of satisfaction of their own basic psychological needs so they can understand their entry into the profession and well-being. To improve student-teacher interactions teachers may engage a positive communication style and use constructive language instead of criticism while giving feedback after or during the tasks and drills.

There are a few limitations of this study. Although the data were collected from six universities in six different cities (located in four different regions) in Turkey, generalizability of the results is still in question. Future studies are recommended to be conducted with more participants. Another limitation is related to assessing well-being. Subjective well-being and loneliness variables were included to the study as positive and negative parameters of well-being. Different variables could be added to understand well-being in detail such as life and/or job satisfaction, depression, vitality, happiness, positive- negative affect. Future studies may combine more well-being elements in order to enlarge the understanding positive and negative aspects of well-being.

As claimed by Deci and Ryan (2000) basic psychological needs are universal regardless of culture, context and age, more research is needed with prospective PE teachers regarding their psychological needs and well-being in different cultures.

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**Appendix****Need Satisfaction Scale**

	Hiç Doğru	Değil	Kararsız	m	Tamamen	Doğru
1. Hayatımı nasıl yaşayacağıma karar verme özgürlüğümün olduğunu hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
2. Etkileşimde bulunduğum insanlardan gerçekten hoşlanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
3. Kendimi çoğu zaman çok yeterli hissetmem.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
4. Hayatımda kendimi baskı altında hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
5. Tanıdığım insanlar yaptığım şeylerde iyi olduğumu söylerler.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
6. Etkileşimde bulunduğum insanlarla iyi geçinirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

7. Daha çok kendi başımayımdır ve çok fazla sosyal etkileşime girmem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Görüş ve düşüncelerimi ifade etmede genellikle kendimi özgür hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Düzenli olarak etkileşimde bulunduğum insanları arkadaşım olarak görürüm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Son zamanlarda yeni ve ilginç beceriler öğrendim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Günlük yaşamımda bana söylenenleri sıklıkla yapmak zorunda kalırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Hayatımdaki insanlar benimle ilgilenirler.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Çoğu zaman, yaptıklarımın dolayısı başarı duygusunu hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Günlük yaşamımda etkileşimde bulunduğum insanlar duygularımı dikkate alırlar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Hayatımda ne kadar yetenekli olduğumu gösterme şansını bulamıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Yakın olduğum çok fazla insan yok.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Günlük yaşamımda kendi benliğimi ortaya koyabildiğimi hissedyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Düzenli olarak etkileşimde bulunduğum insanlar benden hoşlanmıyor gibi gözüküyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Kendimi çoğu zaman becerikli hissetmem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Günlük yaşamımda kendi kararlarımı vermek için çok fazla imkanım yoktur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Genellikle insanlar bana karşı oldukça dostane davranır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Subjective Well-being Scale

	HİÇ UYGUN DEĞİL	BİRAZ UYGUN	KISMEN UYGUN	ÇOĞUNLUKLA UYGUN	TAMAMEN UYGUN
1. Geleceğe yönelik planlar yapmaktan hoşlanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Yaşamımda zevk alarak yaptığım etkinlik sayısı azdır.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Genel olarak kendimi neşeli hissedyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Geriye dönüp baktığımda istediklerimin çoğunu elde edemediğimi görüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Kişilik özelliklerimden genel olarak memnunum.	1	2	3	4	5
6. İstedğim nitelikte ve sayıda arkadaşım olmamasına üzülüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Günlük yaşamımdaki sorumluluklarımı başarıyla yerine getiririm.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ulaşmak istediğim ideallerim var.	1	2	3	4	5
9. İlgi ve yeteneklerime uygun etkinliklerin yaşamımdaki yeri istediğim ölçüdedir.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Küçük sorunları bile büyütürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Kendimi genel olarak canlı ve enerjik hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Yakın gelecekte yaşamımda güzel gelişmeler olacağına inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Kişilerarası ilişkilerde sıklıkla hayal kırıklığı yaşıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Yaşamıma beni ona bağlayacak anlamlar katmakta zorlanmam.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Beni eğlendiren faaliyetlere yeterince katılmıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Umutlarımın gerçekleşeceğine inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Mümkün olsa geçmiş hayatımı değiştirim	1	2	3	4	5
18. Ailemle olan ilişkilerimden memnunum.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Genelde hüzünlü ve düşünceliyim.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Yaşamımda yapmam gerekenleri düşünmek hoşuma gider.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Kendimi yalnız hissedyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Amaçlarıma ulaşmak için çevremdeki olanakları etkili bir şekilde kullanabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Genel olarak kendimi huzurlu hissedyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Başkalarının mutlu görüldüğü kadar mutlu olmayı isterdim.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Sorunları yaşamın öğretici ve doğal bir parçası olarak görürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Çevremdeki insanların yaşamlarına imreniyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Amaçlarıma ulaşmak için yeterince kararlı davranabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Yaşamımı genel olarak monoton ve sıkıcı buluyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

29. Sosyal ilişkilerimdeki girişkenlik yanımdan hoşnutum.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Kendime hedefler koymakta zorlanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
31. İç dünyamın zaman geçtikçe zenginleştiğini hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Tanıdığım insanların çoğundan daha fazla sıkıntım var.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Yaşamın zorluklarıyla başetme gücüne güveniyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Sevilen ve güvenilen biri olduğumu hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Geçmişte yaptığım hatalardan dolayı yoğun suçluluk duygusu yaşıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Serbest zamanlarımda zevkle vakit geçirecek bir uğraşı bulurum.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Yaşamım başarısızlıklarla dolu.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Güçlükler karşısında çabuk pes ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Çevremde ihtiyaç duyduğumda destek alabileceğim insanlar var.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Sıklıkla ümitsiz ve çökkün hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Okumak ve çalışmak benim için zevkli uğraşlardır.	1	2	3	4	5
42. İsteklerime ve değerlerime uygun bir hayat sürüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Ailemle olan ilişkilerimde sorunlar yaşıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Yaşama iyimser bir açıyla bakabilme yönümden memnunum.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Arkadaşlarıma kendimi istediğim gibi ifade edemiyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Başkalarına yardım edebilme ve onlara destek olma becerimden hoşnutum.	1	2	3	4	5

### UCLA Loneliness Scale

	HİÇ	NADİREN	BAZEN	SIK SIK
1. Kendimi çevremdeki insanlarla uyum içinde hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4
2. Arkadaşım yok.	1	2	3	4
3. Başvurabileceğim hiç kimse yok.	1	2	3	4
4. Kendimi tek başıyımışım gibi hissetmiyorum.	1	2	3	4
5. Kendimi bir arkadaş grubunun bir parçası olarak hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4
6. Çevremdeki insanlarla bir ortak yönüm var.	1	2	3	4
7. Artık hiç kimseyle samimi değilim.	1	2	3	4
8. İlgilerim ve fikirlerim çevremdekilerce paylaşılıyor.	1	2	3	4
9. Dışa dönük bir insanım.	1	2	3	4
10. Kendime yakın hissettiğim insanlar var.	1	2	3	4
11. Kendimi grubun dışına itilmiş hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4
12. Sosyal ilişkilerim.	1	2	3	4
13. Hiç kimse beni gerçekten iyi tanımıyor.	1	2	3	4
14. Kendimi diğer insanlardan soyutlanmış hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4
15. İstediyim zaman arkadaş bulabilirim.	1	2	3	4
16. Beni gerçekten anlayan insanlar var.	1	2	3	4
17. Bu derece içime kapanmış olmaktan dolayı mutsuzum.	1	2	3	4
18. Çevremde insanlar var ama benimle değiller.	1	2	3	4
19. Konuşabileceğim insanlar var.	1	2	3	4
20. Derdimi anlatabileceğim insanlar var.	1	2	3	4



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