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FAMILY REINTEGRATION ON THE STREET CHILDREN OF IVORY COAST: A CASE STUDY OF ABIDJAN'S CENTER HOPE

Kouassi Joseph Tano

Corresponding Author: Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China
E-mail: tanok75@yahoo.fr

Qiu Yun Sun

Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China. E-mail: sunqiuyun@hust.edu.cn

Teya Kouame

University of Cocody-Abidjan, Ivory Coast. E-mail: teyakouame@yahoo.fr

Abstract

Street children are among the most physically visible of all children, live and work on roads and public squares of cities all over the world. Yet, paradoxically, they are also among the most 'invisible' and therefore hardest children to reach with vital services such as education and health-care, and the most difficult to protect. Today, it seems forming integral part of the daily newspapers of any company. The phenomenon of street children is becoming a huge problem, which presents much diversity of a country to another and of a city to another. In all the countries including the Ivory Coast, the child occupies an important place. On the level of the system family for example, it represents the social security. It is by the child that the line remains from generation to generation. The main goal of this study is not only to show the scale of this phenomenon in the cities and the factors being attached to it, but also to present the obstacles related to the policy of reintegration like a credible alternative with the problem of children on the street. The assumption of research, which emerges is the following: The family reintegration of children on the street. The International Catholic office of Childhood function is not a conciliation of family realities to those of the rescue project.

Keywords: Insertion, Family, Social Reintegration, Child on the Street

1. Introduction

Over last years, while the worldwide economy posted a rapid growth, the number of people living in poverty rose considerably. One counts more than 1.2 billion inhabitants, more than 600 million of which are children. They set up the most exposed group with abuses and violations of the basic human rights. In West Africa, mainly in Ivory Coast, the strong population added to the continual economic crisis and social problem, supported the phenomenon of the children on the street. They recognize that it is necessary to renew their engagement towards the children problem to implement more adequate and more concrete actions (Semiti, 1979).

The International Catholic office of Childhood is one of the non-governmental organizations, which is also leaning on this phenomenon on the level of the town of Abidjan. The

International Catholic office of Childhood has been present in Ivory Coast since 1987. To answer the problems of the children of the street, the International Catholic office of Childhood initiates actions of street in order to identify, to sensitize and direct a greater number of children and to foresee possibilities of family insertion. It also fits in a prospect for rupture. Indeed, the changes, which the society knows today, register in the disciples of human social sciences and in general and those of sociology in particular. That is why, the sociologists see the phenomenon on the children of the street as being at the same time “endemic” (phenomenon produced by a socio-economic crisis; for example, poverty) and “anomic” (due to the social-cultural changes, in particular the disorganization of the family and loss of the traditional values in urban environment).

In Ivory Coast, it was real problem and at the same time the partners of development need a sensitization. However, 10.47% of the children do not have a determined social-economic activity; this report mention especially the girls from 13 to 15 years (UNICEF, 1992). Moreover, the study carried out jointly by the ENSEA provides us statistical data on the children problems in the big cities of Ivory Coast namely: Abidjan, Man, Bouaké, Korhogo, Abengourou and Yamoussoukro (Fabio, 1990).

The total of the children on the street in the cities of the Ivory Coast amounted at that time to 15.330%, including 859 boys and 7071 girls. There are 66.40 % children on street in Ivory coast; 38.5% of the children are of foreign origin with 25% of Burkinabe; 13.4% of Guineans; 4.9% of Ghanaian and 6.2% Nigerians (Tessier, 1998). Consequently, these statistical data show the strong representativeness of the children of the Ivory Coast among all the children living in Ivory Coast in difficult circumstances. Since September 2002, the war, which the Ivory Coast saw, amplified the suffering of the children working in the refuse tip, of the children hired as killers, the children carrying goods, the children as salespersons. Among these children on the street, there are children who work in plantations and children slaves. Certain children on the street attend in private schools and other children do not have the same chance. The social-political crisis after the presidential elections of 2010 is one of the factors. Indeed, the children victims of exclusion, given up or orphans are taken responsibility to facilitate, which are the social centers, (orphanages, the center of pilot listening of Adjamé, the center of Hope for rescue, etc.). The International Catholic office of Childhood, the non-governmental organizations of relay is the typical example from the actions discrete and targeted in the direction on the children of the street in the town of Abidjan. What are the obstacles met in the process of social integration, of family reintegration and how is this Catholic International office of Childhood able to surmount them?

The family reintegration of the children on the street by the Catholic International office of Childhood can be effective and efficient only through the identification of the origin of the problem of children on the street, their follow-up after reintegration and by really taking into account of their aspirations.

2. Review of the literature and theoretical framework

A major analysis of the question of NGO and process of insertion and reintegration of the problem child require taking into account of various determinants, which intervene in the company.

2.1. Typology of children problems

In their research, Marguerat and Poitou (1994) propose a typology in which they hold the urban fact like the factors responsible for the emergence of the phenomenon “problem child”. For them, the NGO of the third world knows fast changes because of urbanization. Indeed, the accelerated rate/rhythm of the urbanization in the developing countries generates imbalances that the intelligence and the will of survival of the populations compensate daily. The urban and industrial explosion are combined together to worsen the process of restructuring the demographic fabric evil controlled in the African cities which seem to be according to these authors, the primary education indicator with the blossoming and the extent of the phenomenon of the children in difficult situation. It is also ascribable with the disorganization of the family unit.

With the analysis, these two factors interact in the sense that one explains the other. This categorization all judging of the explanation of the cause of this phenomenon appears more

restricted in as far as other aspects such as ideological and psychological cultural dimension are also important. Moreover, the causal explanation of the social phenomenon is as well related to exogenous or environmental factors as the endogenous factors, which determinants are internal with the social system itself.

2.2. Political reasons and socioeconomic

This concern seems to be divided by (Ouizan-Bi, 1998). According to him, the political and economic reasons created by the historical conditions would explain the phenomenon of children in difficult situations, if one wants to apprehend the phenomenon and his values in the field of causality. Thus, the variables related to unemployment, wars, increasing impoverishment, the race for power, accelerated demographic challenge are the dominant indicators. For him, the social evolution generates a change of the cultural practices, just as the economic situation marked by the socioeconomic crisis a major change of the values involves.

2.3. The role of the social actor

From the general point of view for the sociology of the action as conceived by Touraine (1965) analysis of the phenomenon of the youthful marginal rests on two complementary concepts: that of the social report/ratio and that of the social factor. The individual who is excluded from the total company develops attitudes via this exclusion. The delinquency is regarded there as the factor of one's reaction other than the child. Through this behavior, the delinquent tries to reconstitute with others, a social universe in which he is admitted, recognized, accepted and in which he can have an image satisfactory itself because he plays a part there. In the universe of the band, the deviating acts that it poses there and the part which it plays confer an identity indeed to him, reconstitute it as a developed active social actor, being able to be expressed and be made hear. By what precedes, who is included/understood easily the marginalized children forge of the models of behaviors other than the social norms.

The rupture of the social reports/ratios gives birth to a counter-culture in answer to a claim from the role of the social actor. This is why, while denouncing the solitary existence of the individual, Touraine (1965) insists especially on the importance of sociability and the social system, because according to him, "the individual is identified with a group, on a collective subject, exceeds his individuality thus by sharing feelings, standards, intentions. Moreover, it enriches his personality while being affirmed in the relation with others, like a personal subject" (Touraine, 1965, p. 59). This is essential in the sense that in a social environment, confrontation with the others is the source of progress. Social ability of the individual thus perpetuates the cultural heritage of the community and on the basis of the statutory values themselves.

2.4. Educational theories

The educational theories of Bourdieu and Passeron (1965) insist on their part on the social reproduction by the school. According to them, the social institution far from supporting the equal opportunity between the individuals perpetuates the cultural injustice by its selective character. Moreover, the inequalities cannot be only the fact of the school insofar as these inequalities existed on the level of the social classes before even the schooling of the children, as testifies the Marxist theories to them. According to Erny (1977, p. 75), "the study of the black child must be inside its culture, of its particular universe where such form of thought prevails such type of language. It is thus necessary to give up studying according to the child of another continent and in constant reference to this one". Thus, this study on the social rehabilitation of the African child on the street in his singularity proves it more effective to avoid the educational losses, which are difficult living conditions on the children of the street of Black Africa. The noted educational losses and massive school failures undoubtedly contribute to increase the manpower of the alive children in difficult circumstances. These consequences are importable with the structural organization, therefore an incompatibility between economic development and human development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection method

The methodology used is qualitative and quantitative. A structured group-administered questionnaire using 7-point Likert scale was used in assessing the children' self-reported experiences and feedbacks. The population of study is consisted of the whole of the children (girls and boys) who reside at the Catholic International office of Childhood precisely in the center hope located opposite the judicial police of the commune of the plate. They are the children whose age varies between 8 and 18 years. The population also takes into account the personnel of the center of hope. Our choice with regard to the technique of sampling is the quota. Our target population is consisted of the children on the Catholic International office of Childhood especially those of the center of hope.

The children inserted or not constitute our mother population. For manpower of 114 children, 85 fill this criterion, that is to say 97%. 2 children were isolated afterwards because not being able to be express themselves well. One made a selection compared to those who are able to put forward ideas correctly; because we want to study the obstacles related to the family reintegration of the children of streets of the Catholic International office of Childhood (center hope). The base of survey is of 85 children left again according to the following variables: the gender, age, educational level, ethnicity, religion and social status. Because, for the quantitative collection, one has recourse to the questionnaires and the qualitative data with the guides of semi-directing maintenance.

3.2. Instrumentation

The instruments of research, which we used for the data-gathering are: the information retrieval, the guide of maintenance and the questionnaire. The children were gathered and asked to respond to the questionnaire in a group administered living in the center hope. The historical method and the systemic method are the two (2) methods, which we used during the data analysis collected on the ground. Table 1 shows the summary of the sample.

Table 1. Summary of the sample

Variables	Characteristics	Children	Total
Gender	Masculine	53	80
	Female	27	
Age	9 to 14 years	66	80
	15 years and more	14	
Educational level	Illiterate	28	80
	Primary education	52	
Ethnicity	Akan	48	80
	Kru	20	
	North Mande	14	
	South Mande	18	
	Gur	6	
Nationality	Ivorians	56	80
	Others	24	
Religion	Animist	8	80
	Christian	56	
	Muslim	16	

4. Finding & Discussion

Table 2 shows the manpower of the children having remained in the center hope and those which could be reintegrated in family. It is important to stress that results, which were analyzed, came from documentation on the phenomenon of the children of the street and the center hope, on insertion and its mechanisms, and from the direct semi talks with the agents of the known as center and some children in authority of insertion.

Table 2. Manpower of the children having remained in the center hope

Years	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Children accommodated in the center	77 (45.50%)	171 (41.7%)	202 (50.25%)	215 (45.74%)	220 (44.44%)	230 (44.66%)
Children having resided at the center	60 (33.90%)	120 (34.19%)	100 (24.88%)	170 (36.17%)	182 (36.77%)	184 (35.73%)
Children reinstated in family	40 (23.60%)	60 (17.09%)	100 (24.88%)	85 (18.06%)	93 (18.79%)	101 (19.61%)
Total	177 (100%)	351 (100%)	402 (100%)	470 (100%)	495 (100%)	515 (100%)

Source: BICE (2015)

With the reading of the data of the investigation, one notes that the majority is 58.75% their parents are married. Discussion with the picture framers, those affirmed to us that the majority of the parents contract a second marriage. Let us recall that, the children in difficult situation are aged (4-15 years). The lack of emotional cover predisposes the child with serious effective disorders. Indeed, the majority of our surveyed children result from mediums where the parental affection constitutes a very rare meat.

The emotional disorders are more serious as the maternal love is stronger than the paternal love. They are the mothers who follow the divorce and are repudiated of their hearth leaving children in an emotional need, which is most of times not satisfied. Besides these various aspects, which is the other criteria of admission in the reception center? That takes us back to analyze the social status of the children. The International Catholic office of Childhood collects several categories of children: they are the maltreated children, and in difficulty. There are children whose parents are imprisoned or died, handicapped physically or mentally, etc. One distinguishes 3 cases which lost their mother (3.75%), six (6) social cases (7.50%), fourteen (14) cases of complete orphan (17.50%), twenty five (25) orphan of a father with a percentage of 31.25% and finally thirty two (32) cases of maltreated children or 40% taking into consideration data of the investigation. The report emerges that the maltreated children are numerous, and then come the orphans of father. The high percentage of the maltreated children is justified by the fact that our companies today do not manage any more to make the distinction between a child and an adult; they are all the two objects of the same treatment from where the phenomenon of the work of the children and sexual abuses. However, we know that the child represents a vulnerable being, which needs much affection.

In addition, when the father is alive, he is regarded as the family pillar: it is him who is thus in charge of the material safety of the household. Then when he dies, then an upheaval or a disorganization in the family starts. It becomes difficult for the widow to take over as far as this role is not assigned to her socially. The death of the mother, on the other hand, does not affect much the hearth. One counts only 3.75% of orphan of mother. The place of a child is at the school and not in the streets or a plantation. It is necessary thus to specify that one finds at the International Catholic office of Childhood, the two categories of children: those who are nourished in sufficient quantity and those who are not. So where is the problem? It is surely due to another factor. It is in this logic that we sought to know how the home environment was.

The data of the investigations reveal that the majority of our surveyed people (47) affirmed to live in a "bad environment" at the house; that is to say 58.75%. These results come to confirm that the majority of surveyed people live in a home environment, which is not favorable to their

physical, intellectual and moral glooming. However, which they gain cannot be sufficient. Thus, some have recourse to these institutions. That can be also explained by the fact why they have many loads. The parents having eleven family members and more with load account for 57.14% of manpower and are as a majority of liberal profession and civil servant, those having six to ten people with load 30.95% and the parents having 1 to 5 people is 11.91%. The report emerges that the number of people with load is on average more than 10. This explains the disengagement of the parents of their child. According to this situation, it poses the problem of their education.

From these data, we retain that in 2009, 23% of children were reintegrated while in 2012, 24.60% who were reintegrated. That is explained by these two crisis periods in Ivory dimension. On the other hand, other years are not very stable in Ivory dimension; the rate of family reintegration of the children of the street is weak.

The children are perceived here through the framing of the children by teachers and role of the parents in the process of socialization. Education is to empower the young generation by the elder action, that of the socialization of the young people by the elder ones. It is for this purpose, that (Durkheim, 1973, p. 88) defines education as “the action exerted by the adult generations on those which are not yet ripe for the social life. It has the aim of causing and to develop in the child a certain number of physical statuses, intellectuals and moral whom claims of him and the political company as a whole and the medium for which he is particularly intended.”

This definition underlines the social character of education. By education, the child will be able to fit in the total organization. To have the opinion of the children to those who are supposed to educate them, so how will you find your mentors? Let us retain that the children have positive ratios with their mentors. The teachers play their part fully for them since they lavish councils with the children and help those who are provided education for their school works. In addition to the school, they profit from civic education and morals. Education with the International Catholic office of Childhood (hope center), is also to teach the children the know-how, the knowledge of being good mannered, the direction of morals, the rules of the life to facilitate their social integration. Thus, they are educated to break away from the delinquency, the drugs and gradually one removes any desire to them for integrating the streets again. The children are also initiated with the professional life by the organization of manual work.

It is in this logic that we put the following question: Does the idea to leave the hope center delight you? One notices in the conclusion of the answers that the manpower of those which are for the departure is lower than that of those which wish to remain is illustrated in Figure1.

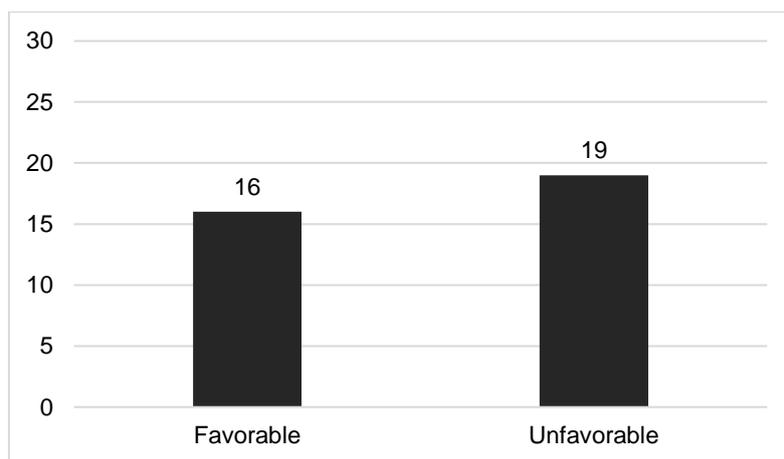


Figure 1. Opinion of the children on the departure of the Catholic International office of Childhood

Questioned on the fact of knowing if the International Catholic office of Childhood prepares them to face life, one could note the same result as that which precedes. It is of 100%, which represents the totality of the 80 surveyed children. The advanced fundamental reason is the fact that in the hope center, they receive sufficient councils on all realities of life, which was

not the case in family. According to them, these councils will be able to galvanize them and teach them how to have another vision of seeing life.

Finally, the children in difficult situation are not entrusted more to a family member as it was done formerly. One has more recourse to the public assistance like substitute for the guard of the children. Thus, the question of knowing how the children arrived at the International Catholic office of Childhood, 70% of the children answer that they were brought by a member of their family, 19.2% by the juvenile bureau, 6.8% by a member of the personnel and 4% by an NGO, as can be seen from Figure 2.

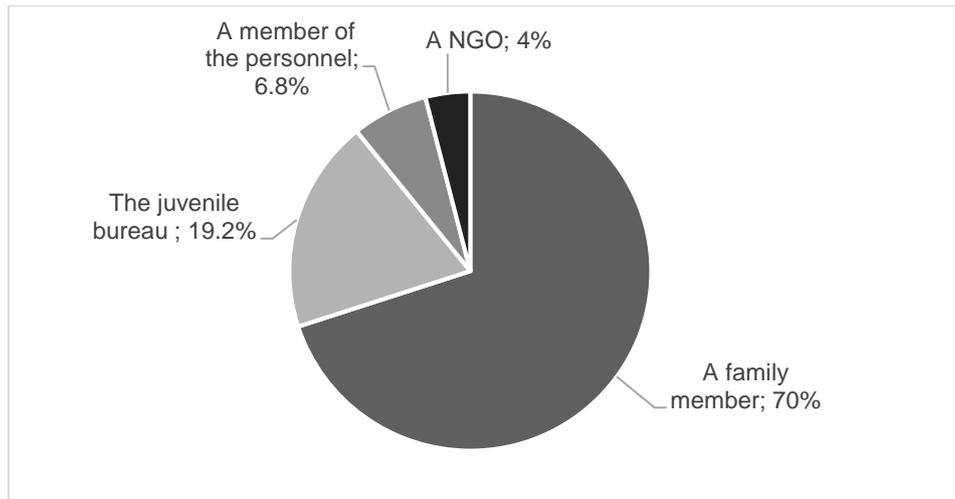


Figure 2. The arrival of the children in the center hope

Which once more justifies the crumbling and the loss of the traditional values, since there exists family ties between the children and the people who lead them to it. What amounts saying that no family member assumes the parental responsibility? It is once admitted in the center that research is made to find their family of origin.

The majority of the surveyed children state to live either with an uncle, or with an aunt. Only a few answered that they live with their own parents. Indeed, these substitute parental does not regard these children as theirs. There are sometimes victims of ill-treatment, abuse, negligence. All these causes contribute to the presence of children on the streets. These tutors were supposed to bring to them moral emotional and material support, which is thus not the case. But what is parental responsibility or legal guardians? Other children, on the other hand, do not want to return to their family since they fear to be maltreated there. Those who wish to return evoke that they could be accepted by their parents and friends.

Finally, it should be retained that the International Catholic office of Childhood contributes to the education of the children in difficult situation through their various actions. This reintegration consists of on the one hand seeking the families and meeting them and on the other hand accommodating them in the center. Reintegrate children in their origin family. Thus, from 1990 to 2001, they are 828 children among 1.406, which is 58.9% who could regain their respective families. From 2002 to 2005, they are 285 children among 665, which is 42.86% who could regain their family. From 2006 to 2007, they are 194 children among 450, which is 43.11% who could join their family. The reintegration takes place only when the child has provisions of stabilization (physical health and morals) and that the two entities (families and children) are ready to be accommodated. The stage of the research of the parents in the process of reintegration often raises difficulties due to the removal of certain parents or the not-collaboration of the child. In the center of hope, we noted that very few children are in liaison with their family. The reasons that the children mentioned to explain this separation from the family are misery, death of a relative, ill-treatment, etc.

However, when the child arrive at the center, the organizers try to find the traces of the family with the assistance of the child. It can happen that the family refuses to join again the old contacts. In the center, there are children who have not any contacted with their family. On this subject, one inquired by the following speech of an 11 year old child, which appears strongly significant to us: *“After the death of my father, I could not continue with school because my mother did not have any more means. The life had become very difficult at home. To eat, it was necessary “to manage”. I left the village to find my brother in Abidjan. I had to spend a few days on the streets before arriving at the center. It is with this/ his phone number, which had been given to me, that my uncles could join me. One sees oneself very little. I never went to him, because it shown me his house forever. All my weekends, I spent them at the center.*

What is the impact of the social reports/ratios in the social re-conversion of the child? What enables us to explain how the social relations can support the social re-conversion of the child? They are the relations between individuals and social group more particularly, between children of the street and family or children of the street and institution. This social re-conversion is a considerable factor in the effective family reintegration of these children. The family represents the base of any institution. She is the first structure in which any individual evolves/moves. The analysis on the relationships of the children with their family enabled us to understand that in the center of hope, several children are not in liaison with their family.

However, the fact for the family of not joining again the contacts with the child makes it difficult for his re-conversion and thus weakens his/her reintegration. Moreover, it should be recognized that adolescence is one delicate period for several children.

The analysis previously made relating to the attitude of the organization enabled us to identify the attitude of the institution in the process of re-conversion of the child. The children do not feel accepted. On this subject, a 13 year-old child of the center said this: *“It is difficult to find me out of my house the day when I am not at the market where I sell clothing from time to time. I spend all my days here. Sometimes, I will return to visit my friend... with whom I was in the center. It is besides my only true friend whom I had in the center”*. What we can retain in this part is that the social reports/ratios facilitate the social re-conversion of the child when the family and the company are implied actively in the process of rehabilitation or socialization of the child. These implications are translated on the level of the family by contacting and visiting the child. With the International Catholic office of Childhood, the most important is the departure of the child off the streets for a framework, which best apart him from the streets. However, according to the person in charge of this center, the family reintegration respects three stages: One needs initially the stability of the child; this stability is checked as from the moment when the child expresses the desire to set out again in family and presents all the criteria of stability; the second phase relates to the renewal and the consolidation of the bonds (parent-children), the third stage intervenes reintegration itself and the follow-up.

5. Conclusion and Future Recommendation

Indeed, the general objective that we aimed through this study is to show the importance of the phenomenon of the children of the streets in Abidjan, the factors and to present the obstacles related to the policy of reintegration like a credible alternative with the problem of these children on the street. As per the objectives specifically assigned to our study; we had shown the strategies worked out by the International Catholic office of Childhood to help with an effective reintegration of the children on the streets; to analyze the effectiveness of the policy of integration and if possible determine the obstacles related to the implementation of this policy; to become aware of the extent of the phenomenon of the children of the street. In spite of the actions, I analyze the difficulties, which block the return of children on the streets to their families.

To achieve these goals, we formulated an assumption of research, which is confirmed or refuted after the presentation of the results. Like working hypothesis, we noted that no conciliation of the parents for the reintegration of the children on the street in their respective families makes the actions of the center hope difficult. In spite of their good intentions of a return to a “normal” life, the children go through psycho-sociological disturbances, which do not support the identification of the true cause of their departure on the streets. The staff shortage or the

insufficiency formed, justified and especially equipped in the center of hope. We noted that “the actions of street” and those of the family reintegration are the possibilities of accommodating and of reintegrating a great number of children on the streets. The variables according to the incomes intended for the center of the International Catholic office of Childhood. However, the family reintegration is function of the relation parent-children; the total lack of implication of the children in the actions of the institutions constitutes a blocking in their family reintegration. That consequently makes ineffective this reintegration and causes hostile attitude of the company towards the children supports their return to the streets.

From the results obtained, which confirm our assumptions besides, it arises that the weak results obtained by the institutions are not justified only from what is above-mentioned. Another explanation that we can give to the current location is that the institutions of assumption of responsibility of the children on the street do not associate with the community in the project of fight against the phenomenon of the children on the street; it is what explains their failure until now.

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