

A Study of Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Senior Secondary School Students Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North, Sri Lanka.

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Abstract

This study examines the information needs, information-seeking behaviour, and library usage of senior secondary school students in the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North. A quantitative research approach with a descriptive survey design was employed to investigate how students' access and use information for academic and personal purposes. The study population consisted of 487 students from four schools, representing different grades and academic streams. Using Krejcie and Morgan's sampling method, a stratified random sample of 214 students was selected. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and the responses were analyzed using SPSS. Ethical standards, including voluntary participation and confidentiality, were maintained throughout the study. The findings reveal that students primarily seek information related to academic activities, entertainment, general knowledge, current affairs, and daily life. Websites, social media, and noticeboards were identified as the most frequently used information sources due to their accessibility and convenience. Although school libraries are mainly used for reading and studying, their usage remains limited. Several barriers affecting effective information seeking were identified, including outdated library systems, limited borrowing facilities, slow internet connectivity, and inadequate ICT skills among students. The study highlights the important role of school libraries in supporting students' learning and information needs. It recommends improvements such as implementing digital cataloguing systems, enhancing internet access, providing information literacy and ICT training, and increasing awareness of available library resources. These measures would improve students' access to information and promote more effective information-seeking behaviour.

Keywords: Information needs, Information Seeking Behaviours, Information Sources and Services, Senior Secondary School Students, Zonal Education Office Vavuniya North.

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Introduction

School libraries play a vital role in supporting teaching and learning processes by fulfilling the information needs of students and other users within educational institutions. As an essential component of instructional activities, school libraries contribute significantly to academic achievement, intellectual development, and social transformation. Education and libraries are closely interconnected, and the quality of education largely depends on the effective functioning of school libraries. With rapid technological advancements, schools and libraries continue to adapt to modern developments to meet the evolving needs of learners. The concept of “information-seeking behaviour” has been widely discussed in professional literature since the mid-twentieth century (Manjunath & Babu, 2018), emphasizing the importance of understanding how individuals search for, access, and use information. Recent studies have shown significant changes in young people’s information-seeking habits, particularly the growing use of social media, mobile devices, websites, and digital platforms for educational purposes (Eden Dahlstrom & Kashif Warraich, 2012).

In the digital era, school libraries are expected not only to provide printed materials but also to promote information literacy skills, support independent learning, and facilitate access to electronic resources and digital learning tools. Academic school libraries remain one of the most reliable and widely used sources of information in literate societies. However, information-seeking behaviour varies among individuals depending on their needs, interests, educational background, and search contexts. Therefore, librarians must understand students’ information requirements and provide appropriate resources and services accordingly.

Although several studies have examined information-seeking behaviour in universities and higher educational institutions, limited research has focused on senior secondary school students, particularly in the context of Vavuniya North. There is insufficient evidence regarding students’ information needs, preferred information sources, library usage patterns, and the challenges they face in accessing information within school environments. This research gap highlights the need for a focused study on secondary school students in the region. Therefore, the present study investigates the information needs, information-seeking behaviour, and library usage of senior secondary school students in Vavuniya North, while also identifying the barriers they encounter in accessing essential information in the contemporary information environment.

Objective

1. To determine the information requirements of the senior secondary school students of the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North.
2. To examine how senior secondary school students of the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North, satisfy their information needs
3. To determine which sources students in Senior secondary school of the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North, like for their educational pursuits
4. To explore the issues the senior secondary school students, have when obtaining their needed information in the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North.

Literature Review

There is a variety of material for this review, as it is a current area of interest for educational policy-makers to enhance students' reading results. A thorough analysis of linked literature summarizes, contrasts, and links different academic works that are relevant to the field of research. The school library may be able to plan for the future by analysing the present based on solving a certain issue. In the present era, individuals seek knowledge for personal consumption, professional growth, and social survival. The experts feel that information needs are not homogeneous for everyone they differ from person to person. Information is a fundamental component of contemporary culture that almost everyone depends on, according to (Kalbande, 2019). Every individual uses the information according to his or her requirement (Silva & Chandrawamsa, 2016). According to (Manjunath & Babu, 2018), until knowledge is made available to those in need, no country can advance. They claim that in their everyday, professional, and personal lives, policymakers, planners, economists, farmers, educators, researchers, physicians, engineers, librarians, and others all require information.

Catalano (2013) has reviewed studies published from 1997 until now to draw out patterns of information seeking behaviour of graduate students. He endeavoured to find if graduate students begin their research through the internet. (Gordon et al., 2020) state that "information-seeking behaviour is a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally use this information to satisfy his or her information needs." As a result, academics worldwide take the phrase "information-seeking

behaviour" seriously. They spoke extensively about the viewpoints of academics, researchers, scientists, mathematicians, graduate students, undergraduates, and postgraduates. (Gyesi, 2020) state that a library must offer effective information resources and services in order to satisfy its readers' information needs. (Sugihartati & Harisanty, 2014) investigated information-seeking models among senior high school students in Indonesia and found that the students' information demands were mostly focused with entertainment and further learning. Most of the students also reported that their teacher's recommendations of information sources performed an essential role in their information search activities, and that the majority prioritized accessing the internet. In a survey of senior high school students in Ghana, (Yeboah, 2016) discovered that students searched for academic material primarily for assignments and relied heavily on their course books and notes for end-of-term tests. He emphasized that, while the schools where the study was conducted had libraries, they had unprofessional staff who lacked the expertise and abilities to educate students' information literacy. As a result, students did not grasp how to analyze information from both print and internet sources. Students' usage of the Internet as a source of information was low, owing to the inaccessibility of campus Internet services. (Gyesi, 2016) carried out research on the content and sources of information searches among university students in Ghana. He sampled 121 graduate students from the University of Professional Studies and presented a self-reported questionnaire to them. (Ndiku, 2016) analysed an additional study that looked at the information needed by schoolchildren living in urban slums in Kenya. The study's conclusions showed that while schoolchildren in Nairobi's slums utilize a range of information sources, they mostly rely on their instructors, parents, the media, and their classmates for knowledge. She went on to say that the majority of Nairobi's slum schools lack libraries, and the handful that do exist are kept in staff quarters and classrooms. According to (Nwobasi et al., 2013) information demands of the information searchers are like variables that change over time. In a similar way, an information need is described as a knowledge gap that has to be filled in order to solve a problem or decide. (Catalano, 2013) has reviewed studies published from 1997 until now to draw out patterns of information seeking behaviour of graduate students. He endeavoured to find if graduate students begin their research through the internet.

Sin & Kim (2013) posit that social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, may play an important role in students' everyday life information seeking (ELIS). (Lacović, 2015) found that students' knowledge searching is complicated and multidimensional. The study aimed to investigate the information needs, sources, and types of library usage among university

students from diverse disciplinary domains. He discovered that the majority of responders required academic knowledge, such as writing, assignments, and completing semester examinations. The most widely used information sources are books, newspaper articles, websites, and so on. The internet, however, was regarded as the most important source of scholarly content. In addition, most kids were encouraged to seek critical information from their instructors, peers, and libraries.

Methodology

The study focused on senior secondary school students in the Zonal Education Office, Vavuniya North. A descriptive survey design was employed for the study, as it was considered suitable for collecting quantitative data from a large number of respondents and systematically examining their information needs, information sources, information-seeking behaviour, and library usage patterns. The study population consisted of 487 senior secondary school students from selected schools within the Vavuniya North educational zone. Using Krejcie and Morgan's sampling method, a sample size of 214 students was determined. The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of different grades and academic streams.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed based on the objectives of the study and relevant literature related to information-seeking behaviour and library usage. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions covering demographic information, students' information needs, preferred information sources, library usage patterns, information-seeking methods, and barriers faced in accessing information. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with a small group of students outside the selected sample to ensure clarity, reliability, and relevance of the questions. Necessary modifications were made based on the pilot study feedback.

The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data. For certain questions, respondents were allowed to select more than one option; therefore, the total frequencies and percentages in those tables were calculated based on the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents. This approach was adopted to accurately represent multiple-response data.

Before data collection, permission was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and school principals. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The purpose of the research was clearly explained to the respondents, and their informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were strictly maintained, and the information collected was used solely for academic research purposes.

Population

Table 4.1 Students Population

School Name	G.C.E.A/Level 12							G.C.E.A/Level 13							No of Students
	Science	Maths	Commer	Arts	Bio -	Eng.	Tech	Science	Maths	Commer	Arts	Bio -	Eng-	Tech	
Kanagarayankulam Maha Viddiyalayam	5	2	5	17	7	8	15	6	4	10	21	3	4	7	114
Nedunkeny Maha Viddiyalayam	3	1	11	32	0	-	-	4	2	12	20	0	0	0	85
Omanthai Central College	4	4	13	42	0	-	-	3	5	11	49	0	0	0	131
Puthukkulam Maha Viddiyalayam	5	6	15	47	0	-	-	6	6	22	50	0	0	0	157
Total	17	13	44	138	7	8	15	19	17	55	140	3	4	7	487

Sample

Table 4.2 Sample of students

School Name	G.C.E.A/Level 12							G.C.E.A/Level 13							No of Students
	Science	Maths	Commerce	Arts	Bio - Tech	Eng- Tech	Tech	Science	Maths	Commerce	Arts	Bio - Tech	Eng- Tech	Tech	
Kanagarayankulam Maha Viddiyalayam	2	1	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	8	2	2	3	43
Nedunkeny Maha Viddiyalayam	1	1	6	14	0	-	-	2	1	6	10	0	0	0	41

Omanthai Central College	2	2	6	18	0	-	-	1	2	7	21	0	0	0	59
Puthukkulam Maha Viddiyalayam	2	2	6	22	0	-	-	3	3	11	22	0	0	0	71
Total	7	6	20	57	3	4	3	9	9	28	61	2	2	3	214

Results

The findings of the research, which were based on information gathered from 214 senior secondary school students at the Zonal Education Office in Vavuniya North, are presented in this part. Demographic characteristics, information needs, information-seeking behavior, information sources, library usage, and challenges faced in accessing information are the categories under which the data are displayed.

5.1 Demographic Data

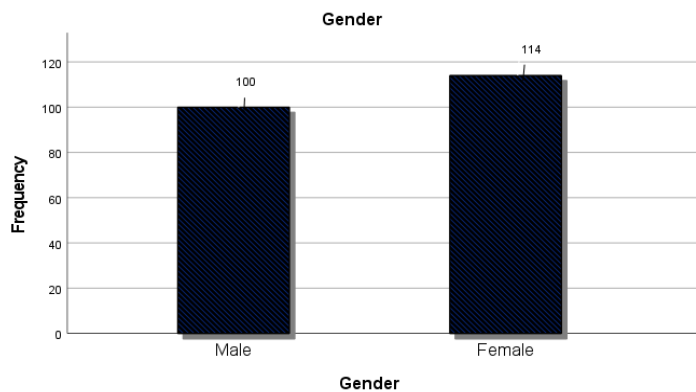


Figure 5.1.1 Gender

Figure 5.1.1 shows that there were 53.3% (n = 114) females and 46.7% (n = 100) males in the entire sample.

Table 5.1.1 School Name

School name	Population	Sample	Percentage
Kanagarayankulam Maha Viddiyalayam	114	41	19%
Nedunkeny Maha Viddiyalayam	85	42	19.5%
Omanthai Central College	131	60	27.5%
Puthukkulam Maha Viddiyalayam	157	71	33%
Total	487	214	100%

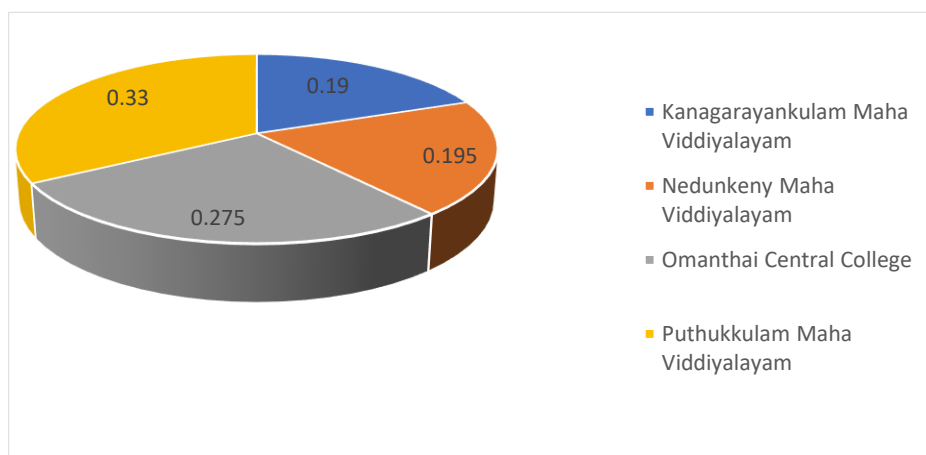


Figure 5.1.2 School Name

Figure 5.1.2 shows 214 students from four schools contributed to the sample, accounting for 48.7% of the 487 total students. With 71 students (33%), Puthukkulam Maha Vidyalayam supplied the most, followed by Omanthai Central College with 60 students (27.5%). Kanagarayankulam Maha Vidyalayam contributed 41 students (19%), while Nedunkeny Maha Vidyalayam contributed 42 (19.5%). Students from each school are proportionately represented in this distribution according to the size of their respective populations.

Stream

Table 5.1.2 Stream

Stream	Frequency	Percent
Bio	16	8%

Maths	15	7%
Arts	118	55%
Commerce	48	22%
Eng. Tech	6	3%
Tech	6	3%
Bio-Technology	5	2%
Total	214	100%

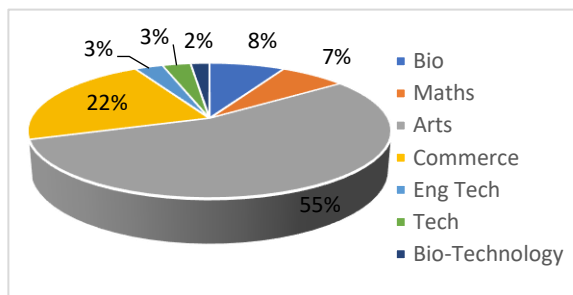


Figure 5.1.3 Stream

The Figure 5.1.3 shows that 55% of the 214 students are enrolled in the arts, with commerce coming in second at 22%. Eng. Tech (3%), Tech (3%), and Bio-Technology (2%) have the fewest students, indicating a definite preference for Arts and Commerce streams, while Bio (8%) and Math (7%) have moderate enrolment.

5.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 5.2.1 Information Needs

Information Needs	Frequency	Percentage
News	172	11.9%
Sports	92	6.3%
Entertainment	189	13.0%
Health	45	3.1%
Higher education	107	7.4%
Politics	47	3.2%
Literature	108	7.5%
Science and Technology	121	8.4%
Arts and Literature	82	5.7%

Economics	125	8.6%
Daily life	185	12.8%
General knowledge	176	12.1%

The above table 5.2.1 shows the respondents' information needs. Entertainment (13.0%), daily life (12.8%), general knowledge (12.1%), and news (11.9%) have the most demand, demonstrating a concentration on useful and up-to-date information. Economics (8.6%), science and technology (8.4%), literature (7.5%), and higher education (7.4%) all show moderate interest, underscoring the significance of academic subjects. Sports (6.3%), arts and literature (5.7%), politics (3.2%), and health (3.1%) are ranked lower, indicating that these subjects are less important to students. Overall, the results show that general knowledge, entertainment, and everyday living information are strongly preferred over specialised or political content.

Table 5.2.2 Information Sources used by the students

Information Sources use	Frequency	Percentage
Library	114	9.8%
Social media	172	14.7%
Discuss with friends	129	11.0%
Noticeboard	189	16.2%
Website	164	14.0%
Group discussion	94	8.0%
Newspaper	89	7.6%
Discuss with family	44	3.8%
Radio	66	5.6%
TV	108	9.2%

The Table 5.2.2 Shows the results, students primarily use websites (14.0%), social media (14.7%), and noticeboards (16.2%) for information, indicating a preference for easily accessible and up-to-date platforms. Reliance on friends (11.0%), libraries (9.8%), and television (9.2%) is moderate. Conversely, less common sources include family conversations

(3.8%), radio (5.6%), newspapers (7.6%), and group talks (8.0%), indicating that conventional media are less preferred.

Table 5.2.3 Frequency to visit the library

Frequency (Library visit)	Frequency	Percentage
Almost daily	104	11.3%
Once in a week	164	17.8%
Several times in a week	189	20.5%
Once in a month	163	17.7%
Several times in a month	172	18.7%
Never	129	14.0%

The Table 5.2.3 shows that Students use the library at different frequencies, according to the statistics, with the largest percentage indicating visits several times a week (20.5%), several times a month (18.7%), and once a week (17.8%). A comparable percentage of students (17.7%) visit the library once a month, showing moderate involvement among a significant number of students. In contrast, 14.0% of students never visit the library, and nearly daily visits (11.3%) are less frequent, indicating that a significant minority does not use library services at all. Overall, the trend shows that students use the library in an active but variable way.

Table 5.2.4 Reason for Visit Library

Reason for Visit Library	Frequency	Percentage
To study	134	17.8%
To borrow books	112	14.9%
A quiet place to read	189	25.2%
Reprography service	108	14.4%
To read newspapers	140	18.6%
Browsing shelves Reference	68	9.1%

The Table 5.2.4 shows most frequent reason students visit the library is to locate a quiet spot to read (25.2%). Additionally, a significant percentage come to study (17.8%) and read newspapers (18.6%). Other explanations involve using reprography services (14.4%), looking through shelves for reference materials (9.1%), and borrowing books (14.9%). Overall, the

research indicates that reading, studying, and gaining access to educational materials are the primary uses of the library.

Table 5.2.5 Satisfaction with library services

Satisfaction with library services	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly dissatisfied	28	13.08%
Dissatisfied	37	17.29%
Neutral	42	19.63%
Satisfied	49	27.57%
Strongly Satisfied	48	22.43%

The Table 5.2.5 results indicate that overall satisfaction levels are positive, with a majority of students reporting being **satisfied (27.57%)** or **strongly satisfied (22.43%)**, together accounting for nearly half of all responses. A smaller proportion remains **neutral (19.63%)**, suggesting some ambivalence toward the service. However, levels of dissatisfaction are still notable, with **17.29% dissatisfied** and **13.08% strongly dissatisfied**, indicating that over one-third of students experience some degree of dissatisfaction. Overall, the findings show that while most students express satisfaction, a considerable minority report negative experiences, highlighting areas for potential improvement.

Table 5.2.6 Difficulties faced by students while seeking information

Difficulties of information seeking	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of knowledge to use OPAC	134	9.6%
Limited borrowing facilities in library	174	12.4%
Insufficient information resources	139	9.9%
Manual system in libraries	189	13.5%
Lack of time	167	11.9%
Poor organization of materials	108	7.7%
No special study room	89	6.4%
Lack of ICT knowledge	114	8.1%
Slow internet speed	169	12.1%
Inability to seek to obtain and to evaluate information	118	8.4%

The Table 5.2.6 show most commonly mentioned issues that students have when trying to get information are the manual system in libraries (13.5%), limited borrowing options (12.4%), and slow internet speed (12.1%). Lack of time (11.9%), inadequate information resources (9.9%), and lack of knowledge of how to use OPAC (9.6%) are other major challenges. Though to a lesser degree, problems including disorganized materials, a lack of a dedicated study space, a lack of ICT expertise, and trouble assessing information also contribute to students' difficulties. Overall, the results show that problems with technology and resources have an impact on students' capacity to efficiently find information.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the information-seeking behaviour and library use patterns of senior secondary school students in Vavuniya North. The results revealed that Arts and Commerce streams had the highest student representation, while Science and Technology streams had lower enrolment. This finding is consistent with previous Sri Lankan educational studies which reported that rural schools often face limitations in science facilities, laboratory resources, and qualified teachers (Perera, 2016). The study found that students mainly sought information related to entertainment, daily life, general knowledge, and news. Similar findings were identified in earlier literature, where students preferred practical and personally relevant information over academic or specialized content (Kurbanoglu, 2016). Moderate interest in higher education and science-related information also reflects students' awareness of future educational opportunities. The findings further revealed that students mainly depended on social media, websites, and noticeboards as information sources. This supports previous studies on youth information behaviour which found that digital platforms and peer communication are increasingly replacing traditional information sources such as newspapers and radio (Head & Eisenberg, 2010). The regular use of libraries by many students also agrees with earlier Sri Lankan LIS studies that identified school libraries as important learning and reading environments (Wijetunge, 2015).

Although most students were satisfied with library services, several difficulties were identified, including manual library systems, slow internet speed, limited borrowing facilities, and lack of OPAC knowledge. These findings are consistent with previous Sri Lankan LIS literature that highlighted inadequate ICT infrastructure, lack of automation, and insufficient user education in rural school libraries (Rasiah & Peiris, 2018). This study contributes to Sri Lankan Library and Information Science (LIS) knowledge by providing recent evidence on the information-

seeking behaviour of rural secondary school students, an area that has received limited research attention. The findings have important implications for school librarians, educational administrators, and policy makers. Improving ICT facilities, introducing automated library systems, conducting information literacy programmes, and expanding access to digital resources may help students access information more effectively and improve library usage in rural schools. However, the study was limited to four schools in the Vavuniya North zone and mainly used quantitative questionnaire data. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Sri Lankan secondary school students. Future studies could include more schools and qualitative methods such as interviews to gain deeper understanding of students' information-seeking experiences. Overall, the study highlights that students actively use both digital information sources and school libraries, but improvements in library infrastructure, ICT facilities, and information literacy education are necessary to support effective information access in rural Sri Lankan schools.

Conclusion

This study examined the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of senior secondary school students in Vavuniya North. The findings show that students look for information mainly related to entertainment, daily life, general knowledge, and current news. They also need academic information for their studies. Most students prefer using websites, social media, and noticeboards because these sources are easy to access and provide quick information. The study found that many students use the library, mainly to read, study, and find a quiet place. However, some students rarely visit the library. Several problems affect students when they try to find information, such as manual library systems, limited borrowing facilities, slow internet speed, and lack of ICT and OPAC knowledge. In conclusion, school libraries play an important role in supporting students' learning. Improving library facilities, internet access, and providing basic information literacy training will help students find and use information more effectively.

Future research could adopt mixed-methods approaches to gain a deeper understanding of students' information-seeking behaviour and challenges. Similar studies may also be extended to other districts in Sri Lanka to enable comparative analysis. In addition, future research could include teachers and school librarians as informants to provide broader perspectives on students' information needs, library usage, and information literacy development.

Limitations

There are a few problems with this study. First, the study focused exclusively on senior secondary school students within the Vavuniya North Zonal Education Office; consequently, the results are not applicable to all students in different regions. Second, the study exclusively involved students, omitting teachers, librarians, and junior students. Third, the study employed a quantitative survey methodology utilising exclusively structured questionnaires, thereby constraining the ability to gather comprehensive opinions and experiences. The data were derived from self-reported responses, which may contain bias or inaccuracies.

Recommendations

The study's conclusions suggest that Vavuniya North school libraries enhance its services to better serve students' information requirements. In addition to providing more frequent and reliable internet access, libraries should implement digital catalogues and automated systems to facilitate book searches and loans. To teach students how to locate, assess, and use information efficiently, information literacy training ought to be provided. To promote frequent library use, peaceful, orderly study spaces should be made available and borrowing possibilities should be increased. Additionally, students should be encouraged to use both traditional and digital sources and informed about the range of resources accessible, such as journals, e-resources, and reference books. These upgrades will facilitate students' academic learning and improve their access to information.

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