

Academic Stress and Happiness among Students: A Literature Review

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Abstract: This study explores the dynamics of academic stress and happiness among students across various educational levels. Academic stress, arising from factors such as high expectations, heavy workloads, and peer pressure, negatively impacts students' well-being and happiness. Research indicates a consistent negative correlation between academic stress and happiness, emphasizing the urgent need for effective support systems within educational institutions. This study employs a literature review method to explore and analyze relevant studies selected based on the several criteria. Key factors that influencing this relationship, including emotional closeness with family, self-efficacy, and coping mechanisms such as mindfulness and physical activity, are highlighted. Additionally, the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated academic stress and hindered happiness. The findings underscore the importance of creating supportive environments and collaborative efforts among educators, parents, and communities to enhance students' emotional and psychological well-being, enabling them to thrive academically and personally.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Happiness, Students, Literature Review

1 INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a common issue frequently encountered in educational settings. In recent years, attention to academic stress has often been linked to well-being within the framework of positive psychology. Desmita (2010) states that academic stress is caused by academic stressors experienced by students. Academic stressors originate from the learning process or activities related to studying, such as pressure to advance to the next grade, long study hours, cheating, excessive assignments, receiving test scores, decisions regarding major or career choices, as well as exam anxiety and time management (Rahmawati, 2016). Academic stress involves the subjective perception of academic conditions resulting from school demands. This, of course, negatively impacts students' well-being and happiness. On the other hand, positive psychology offers a different perspective by emphasizing the importance of happiness and well-being as crucial factors in coping with academic challenges during the learning process. Nugroho, et al. (2023) further noted that the academic process can influence students' overall happiness and well-being. A key aspect of student life is experiencing well-being and happiness throughout the educational process (Purwaningsih, et al., 2023). Research conducted by Andriani et al. (2022) shows that academic stress has a significant effect on students' happiness. This stress arises from various sources such as academic demands, parental pressure, and peer relationships. Mahmoodi & Nadrian (2019) states that there is a negative relationship between academic stress and happiness, indicating that as academic stress increases, students' reported happiness decreases. Similarly, Sun & Dunne (2012) also observed this inverse relationship. In contrast, Pillai and Lokesh (2024) argue that academic stress and happiness have a positive relationship, meaning that higher levels of perceived academic stress are associated with higher levels of happiness. These inconsistencies highlight the need for further investigation to clarify the conditions under which academic stress impacts happiness and well-being. By integrating insights from positive psychology, this literature review aims to clarify the complex relationship between academic stress and happiness, offering a fresh perspective on how educational environments can foster resilience and overall student satisfaction.

In light of the evidence demonstrating the profound impact of academic stress on students' happiness and well-being, it becomes increasingly important to investigate this relationship further. The recognition that academic processes can significantly influence students' overall quality of life highlights the necessity of addressing this issue within educational settings. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an effective literature review to explore the interplay between academic stress and happiness. By understanding how happiness can help mitigate the negative effects of academic stress, educators and policymakers can develop more effective strategies to support students so that they not only achieve academic success but also experience a happier and healthier adolescence.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a literature review method to explore and analyze the relationship between stress and happiness among students. Data were collected from academic databases such as Google Scholar. In this study, several criteria were employed to select articles. Here's a table outlining the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for selecting articles in the literature review, along with an explanation:

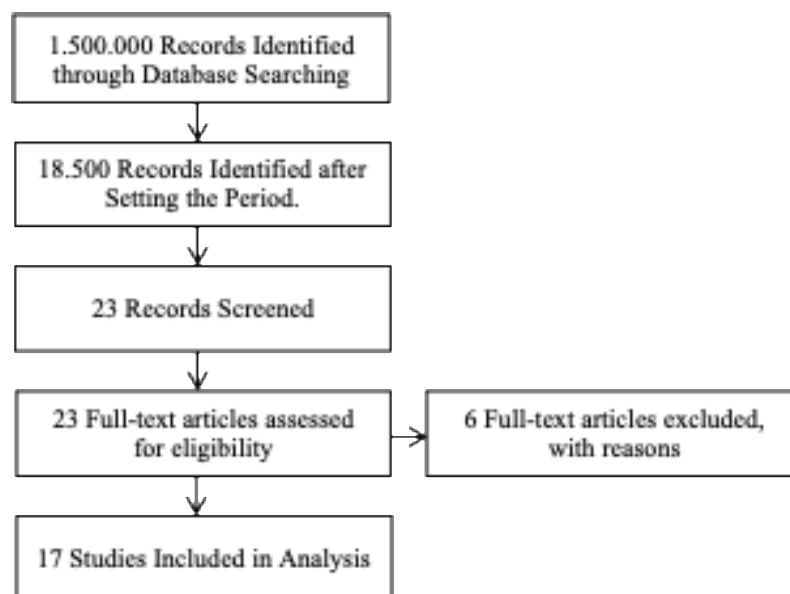
Table 1. Criteria for Article Selection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Relevance	Articles directly addressing the relationship between academic stress and happiness among students.	Articles not related to the topic of stress and happiness in students.
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed articles published between 2012 and 2025.	Non-peer reviewed articles, such as opinion pieces or editorials.
Methodology	Studies with clear methodological frameworks.	Articles lacking a defined methodology or empirical evidence.
Language	Articles published in Bahasa or English.	Any other language articles or those without sufficient English summaries.

From the table above, it summarizes the criteria used to select articles for the literature review method employed in this study. The inclusion criteria focused on articles that are directly relevant to the relationship between academic stress and happiness, ensuring that the literature reviewed would contribute meaningfully to the research question. The requirement for peer-reviewed publications guarantees the quality and credibility of the sources. Additionally, studies with clear methodologies are prioritized to ensure that the findings are based on sound research practices. Lastly, only articles published in Bahasa or English were considered to maintain consistency and comprehensibility in the review process.

The data collection process involved searching with keywords including "academic stress" and "happiness". The search yielded 18,500 article publications within the period from 2010 to 2025. However, only 17 articles were found to be relevant to the topic of this study. Here's a flow chart about data collection methods:

Figure 1. Data Collection Methods



3 RESULTS

Most studies demonstrate consistent results across all educational levels. Each phase of education presents challenges that influence the dynamics of academic stress and the happiness of students. Research by Mahmoodi and Nadrian (2019) indicates that Iranian college students with higher academic stress tend to experience lower levels of happiness. Similar findings were reported by Sun and Dunne (2012), who showed that students in grades 7 to 12 in China experienced low levels of happiness due to high academic stress. Calderon et al. (2019) also reported that college students in Thailand exhibited high stress levels and low happiness. Although many studies suggest that academic stress contributes to a decline in happiness, Pillai and Lokesh (2024) found that students experiencing academic stress can also report greater happiness. These findings underscore that academic stress is an urgent issue in education, significantly impacting mental health, where happiness is recognized as an important indicator of good mental well-being.

Academic stress can originate from various sources present at every educational level, from school to higher education. Morás and Carnona (2020) reported that postgraduate students experience certain levels of stress and happiness. Similarly, Muthohar & Haryanta (2023) found no significant differences in academic stress and happiness levels among students from different academic disciplines.

Academic stress and happiness in education also highlight gender differences. Calderon et al. (2019) noted that female college students tend to be happier than male students, a finding consistent with Pour et al. (2022). Additionally, the transition from face-to-face to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic posed extra challenges for students. Andriani et al. (2021) stated that online learning affected students' academic stress and happiness levels, where high psychological burdens from academic stress hindered happiness. Barbayannis et al. (2022) confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened academic stress and negatively impacted college students' mental health. Calinacion et al. (2022) reported increased stress and decreased happiness among high school students in private schools during the pandemic, underscoring the importance of effective adaptation and support during crises.

The dynamics of academic stress and happiness are also influenced by other factors. Sun and Dunne (2012) demonstrated that students who feel more connected to their school and possess strong self-efficacy tend to be happier. Mahmoodi and Nadrian (2019) emphasized that good self-efficacy can enhance students' happiness. This highlights the importance of educational institutions in creating supportive environments where students can feel connected and develop their potential. Moreover, academic procrastination contributes to increased stress. Fitriani and Harahap (2023) found that college students with high levels of procrastination also experience high academic stress, which ultimately leads to lower happiness. Other factors, such as family conditions, also affect this dynamic. Benjanirat et al. (2021) reported that family education level and income are related to academic stress, which in turn influences students' happiness. However, emotional closeness with family or peers also plays a significant role. King et al. (2014) stated that college students who maintain good emotional relationships tend to experience lower stress and greater happiness.

To address the dynamics of stress and happiness, effective mechanisms are necessary. Judge (2018) demonstrated that college students who engage in regular physical exercise exhibit lower stress levels and higher happiness compared to those who do not exercise. Additionally, factors such as mindfulness, growth mindset, self-esteem, and metacognition also play significant roles in this dynamic. Bajaj et al. (2022) found that college students with higher mindfulness tend to experience lower stress and greater happiness. Hwang and Lee (2018) reported that students with a growth mindset and healthy self-esteem show reduced stress levels, thereby enhancing happiness. Saricam (2015) also noted that metacognition can influence stress and subsequently impact happiness. These findings suggest that these various factors can serve as effective mechanisms to reduce stress responses and promote happiness.

Table 2. Data Analysis

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
1	Fitriani & Harahap (2023)	The Relationship between Academic Procrastination, Academic Stress, and Life Happiness of Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar State Islamic University Students	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 110 college students	The findings of this study indicate a negative relationship between academic procrastination and students' life happiness. This suggests that higher levels of academic procrastination are associated with lower levels of perceived life happiness among students. Academic stress serves as a mediator in the relationship between academic procrastination and life happiness, implying that academic stress can influence how academic procrastination affects students' happiness. Additionally, regression analysis revealed an R^2 value of 0.676, indicating that the

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
				model effectively explains the relationship between the variables studied. Synthesis: Overall, this research demonstrates that increased levels of academic procrastination are linked to decreased levels of happiness experienced by students. Furthermore, academic stress can impact the relationship between procrastination and happiness. Therefore, it is crucial to manage both procrastination and academic stress to enhance student happiness.
2	Muthohar & Haryanta (2023)	Kebahagiaan ditinjau dari Stres Akademik pada Mahasiswa di Universitas Gadjah Mada	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 102 college students from sains major and 100 college students from social major	The findings indicate that academic stress accounts for 29.9% of the variance in students' happiness at Gadjah Mada University. Furthermore, the study shows that there are no significant differences in levels of happiness and academic stress between students from the science and technology fields and those from the social sciences. Synthesis: Overall, this research suggests that academic stress can influence students' happiness. However, there are no significant differences in levels of happiness and academic stress between students in the science and technology fields and those in the social sciences.
3	Andriani, Qomariyah, Salve, & Indriyawati (2021)	Is College Students' Happiness during Online Learning Affected by Academic Stress and Technology-Overload Perception?	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 238 college students, consisting of 163 females and 75 males are currently participating in online learning.	The findings of this study indicate that academic stress and technology overload contribute to students' happiness by 20.3%, with a p-value of < 0.01. Academic stress shows a significant effect on happiness, while technology overload does not have a significant impact. This suggests that students experiencing academic stress feel a substantial psychological burden that negatively affects their happiness. Conversely, although students may use technology excessively, they do not perceive it as a burden; rather, they view technology as a facilitator in the learning process that helps reduce stress. Synthesis: Overall, this research indicates a significant relationship between academic stress and happiness among students.
4	Barbayannis, Bandari, Zheng, Baquerizo, Pecor, & Ming (2022)	Academic Stress and Mental Well-Being in College Students: Correlations, Affected Groups, and Covid-19	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 843 college students	The findings of this study indicate a significant relationship between academic stress and students' mental well-being. Specifically, higher levels of academic stress are associated with lower levels of mental well-being, with an R value of 0.55 and a p-value of <0.001. Female, non-binary, and second-year students experienced increased stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, no significant differences were found in levels of academic stress and mental well-being based on race/ethnicity, possibly due to the

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
				uneven distribution of respondents across racial/ethnic groups.
				Synthesis: Overall, this research demonstrates a significant relationship between academic stress and mental well-being among students. Female, non-binary, and second-year respondents reported increased stress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5	Pillai & Lokesh (2024)	Academic Stress and Happiness Among Young Adults	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 240 college students	The results of this study indicate a significant positive correlation between academic stress and happiness, with an R value of 0.141 and a p-value of < 0.05. This suggests that higher levels of academic stress are associated with higher levels of happiness. However, the impact of happiness on reducing academic stress is relatively small, with an R ² value of 0.020. In other words, this relationship is complex and may be influenced by various factors, such as coping mechanisms and cultural influences. Synthesis: Overall, this research demonstrates a significant positive correlation between academic stress and happiness.
6	Mahmoodi & Nadrian (2019)	Factor Associated with Happiness among College Students: do Academic Self-Efficacy and Stress predict Happiness?	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 290 college from Iranian Medical Science University	The results of this study indicate a positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and happiness. Specifically, higher levels of academic self-efficacy are associated with higher levels of happiness. Additionally, the study found a negative relationship between academic stress and happiness, suggesting that higher academic stress correlates with lower levels of student happiness. The research also reveals that male students tend to report higher levels of happiness compared to female students, students who are interested in their chosen field of study exhibit higher levels of happiness, and first-year students have lower levels of happiness compared to students in higher academic years. Synthesis: Overall, there is a negative relationship between academic stress and happiness, indicating that as academic stress increases, students' reported happiness decreases. The findings of this study also highlight the importance of self-efficacy and interest in one's major in enhancing student happiness.
7	Sun & Dunne (2012)	Association between Academic Stress and Depression and Happiness among a	Research Design: Quantitative Sample:	The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between academic stress and depression, with an R value of 0.46. This suggests that higher levels of academic stress correspond to

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
		Sample of Chinese Adolescents	1627 students from secondary school in China	higher levels of depression experienced by students. Additionally, the study found a negative relationship between academic stress and happiness, with an R value of -0.27, indicating that as academic stress increases, happiness decreases. In the multiple regression model examining academic stress measured by the ESSA and depression, the variable "Study Despondency" exhibited the strongest influence (Beta = 0.24, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, the multiple regression model assessing academic stress measured by the ESSA and happiness revealed that school attachment had the strongest effect (Beta = 0.28, $p < 0.001$), followed by self-efficacy (Beta = 0.14, $p < 0.001$) and family attachment (Beta = 0.13, $p < 0.001$). However, only one subscale, Study Despondency, demonstrated a significant relationship with happiness ($B = -0.09$, $p = 0.001$). Synthesis: Overall, this research indicates a negative relationship between academic stress and student happiness, suggesting that as academic stress increases, the level of happiness experienced by students decreases.
8	Calingacion, Lolo, Villalobos, & Tus (2022)	The Relationship Between Stress and Happiness among Senior High School Students Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic	Research Design: Quantitative. Sample: 201 students in high school from private school.	The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between stress and happiness among high school students attending private schools. Synthesis: Overall, this research suggests that higher levels of stress experienced by students correspond to lower levels of happiness reported by those students.
9	Benjanirat, Ounprasertsuk, Jaroengarmsamer, Rojanabenjakun, Krutchanthong, Sripan, & Chaowai (2021)	Stress and Happiness in Life of Students at Rajabhat University in Thailand	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 827 college students at Rajabhat University in Thailand	The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between stress and happiness among students. The data analysis reveals that educational level and family income are associated with stress, while gender is related to happiness. Synthesis: Overall, this research highlights the relationship between stress and happiness, where demographic factors such as educational level and family income are linked to levels of stress, while gender is associated with levels of happiness.
10	King, Vidourek, Merianos, dan Singh (2014)	A study of stress, social support, and perceived happiness among college students	Research Design: Quantitative Sample:	The results of this study indicate that students with low levels of happiness tend to experience high levels of stress. Happiness is influenced by factors such as financial conditions, employment, and school situations. Furthermore, emotional

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
			485 college students in Midwestern University	closeness with friends and family is positively related to happiness. Students who feel emotionally close to others exhibit lower levels of stress. Additionally, students rarely employ stress management techniques, despite experiencing high levels of stress. Synthesis: Overall, this research suggests that students with low levels of happiness are likely to experience high levels of stress. Most students from various backgrounds report elevated stress levels, particularly related to school and future careers.
11	Judge (2018)	Stress, happiness, and psychological well-being among college students: Role of sports in mental health	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 50 college students who engage in physical exercise and 50 college students who do not engage in physical exercise	The results of this study indicate that students who engage in regular exercise exhibit lower levels of stress compared to those who do not exercise. Furthermore, students who exercise regularly report higher levels of happiness than their non-exercising counterparts. Additionally, students participating in regular physical activity demonstrate better psychological well-being compared to those who do not engage in exercise. Synthesis: Overall, this study suggests that exercise can serve as an effective mechanism for reducing stress reactions and enhancing mood.
12	Pour, Ismail, Yusop, & Rajabi (2022)	Relationship between perceived stress and resilience with happiness	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 158 female pre-university students dan 152 male pre-university students.	The results of this study indicate a negative relationship between perceived stress and happiness. This means that higher levels of stress are associated with lower levels of happiness among pre-university students. Additionally, the study finds a positive relationship between resilience and happiness. In other words, higher levels of resilience correlate with higher levels of happiness among pre-university students. Furthermore, the study explains that female students tend to have higher levels of happiness compared to male students, even though their levels of stress and resilience do not differ significantly. Synthesis: Overall, this study indicates a negative relationship between perceived stress and happiness, whereby higher levels of stress correspond to lower levels of happiness experienced by pre-university students. The research also reveals that female students tend to have higher levels of happiness compared to their male counterparts.

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
13	Calderon, Pupanead, Prachakul & Kim (2019)	Happiness, perceived stres, psychological well-being, and health behaviors of thai university students: preliminary results from a multinational study on well-being.	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 478 college students in Thailand	The results of this study indicate that Thai students exhibit lower levels of happiness and higher levels of stress compared to normative data from other countries, with female students demonstrating higher levels of happiness and psychological well-being than male students. Additionally, regarding health behaviors, male students show higher rates of alcohol and tobacco use compared to female students. A significant portion of students also experiences inadequate dietary patterns, poor sleep quality, and symptoms of depression. Synthesis: Overall, this study indicates that students in Thailand have lower levels of happiness and higher levels of stress. Additionally, female students demonstrate higher levels of happiness compared to male students.
14	Bajaj, Khoury, & Sengupta (2022)	Resilience and Stress as Mediators in the Relationship of Mindfulness and Happiness.	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 523 college students in India	The results of this study demonstrate a positive relationship between mindfulness and happiness. This indicates that students who exhibit higher levels of mindfulness tend to be happier. Furthermore, mindfulness is positively correlated with resilience and negatively correlated with stress. This means that as mindfulness increases, resilience also rises while stress levels decrease. Resilience and stress function as partial mediators in the relationship between mindfulness and happiness. In other words, mindfulness can enhance resilience, which in turn reduces stress and increases happiness. Synthesis: Overall, this research indicates that mindfulness plays a significant role in enhancing happiness and reducing stress.
15	Morás & Carmona (2020)	Happiness, Self-efficacy, and Stres of Graduate Students from Southern Brazil	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 1.312 college students	The results of this study indicate a significant negative relationship between stress and both happiness and self-efficacy. This implies that as stress levels increase, happiness and self-efficacy tend to decrease. Additionally, there is a significant positive relationship between happiness and self-efficacy, meaning that higher levels of happiness are associated with higher levels of self-efficacy. Synthesis: Overall, this research demonstrates a significant impact of stress on happiness.

No	Author, Year	Title	Method	Result
				Specifically, as students experience higher levels of stress, their levels of happiness decrease.
16	Hwang & Lee (2018)	Relationship between Stress and Happiness in Middle School Students: Dual Mediation Effect of Growth Mindset, and <i>Self-esteem</i> .	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 467 middle school students in Korea	The results of this study indicate a negative relationship between stress and growth mindset, self-esteem, and happiness. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between growth mindset and both self-esteem and happiness. Additionally, the findings reveal that stress negatively impacts happiness through the mediation of growth mindset and self-esteem. This suggests that as students experience higher levels of stress, their happiness decreases. However, the relationship between stress and happiness is not direct; when stress increases, growth mindset and self-esteem may decline, which in turn can reduce happiness. Synthesis: Overall, this research indicates a negative relationship between stress and happiness among high school students in Chungcheongnam-do, Korea. The study also highlights that stress negatively affects happiness through the mediation of growth mindset and self-esteem. This underscores the importance of developing growth mindset and self-esteem to mitigate stress and enhance happiness.
17	Sarıçam (2015)	Metacognition and Happiness: The Mediating Role of Perceived Stress	Research Design: Quantitative Sample: 290 college students	The results of this study indicate a negative correlation between stress and both metacognition and happiness. This suggests that as stress levels increase, metacognition and happiness decrease. Furthermore, stress functions as a mediator in the relationship between metacognition and happiness, with bootstrap analysis revealing a significant mediation effect. This implies that metacognition can influence stress levels, which in turn impacts happiness. Synthesis: Overall, this research demonstrates that higher levels of stress are associated with lower levels of happiness experienced by students. The study also indicates that metacognition can affect stress levels, which subsequently impacts happiness.

4 DISCUSSIONS

A review of the literature highlights the complexity of the relationship between stress and happiness among students. Research conducted over the past 13 years has consistently shown that academic stress tends to have a negative impact on happiness. Academic pressures, whether in the form of heavy assignments or high expectations, can lead to emotional exhaustion (Gisela, et al., 2025). This stress is experienced by students at all educational levels and ultimately affects their overall well-being. Rao & Venkatesh (2021) found that students experiencing high levels of academic stress reported

lower levels of well-being compared to those experiencing less stress. Similarly, Tao, et al. (2020) reported that academic stress has a significant negative impact on college students' well-being.

The dynamics between academic stress and happiness are also influenced by factors such as school environment, family condition, emotional closeness, and academic procrastination. This is supported by Kaczmarek & Trambacz-Oleszak (2021), who stated that a supportive school environment plays a key role in determining students' well-being. Muhid & Ferdiyanto (2020) added that a supportive school environment enhances the quality of learning and contributes to overall well-being. Furthermore, Wahyuni & Baroroh (2025) found that social support from family is significantly associated with students' psychological well-being. Silva & Figueiredo-Braga (2018) explained that students who experience high levels of stress tend to have closer emotional ties with their families. Ryan (2024) also noted that high levels of psychological flexibility, students who engage in procrastination tend to experience very low levels of happiness.

In facing the dynamics of stress and happiness, it is necessary to develop effective mechanisms and skills to manage stress constructively. Góngora-Coronado & Vásques-Velázquez (2018) explained that viewing stress in a more positive light can have a significant impact on achieving a happier life. The authors are encouraged to convey interesting things from their research, write down the descriptive results along with the comparison of similar previous research findings. Moreover, outline the advantages and limitations of this research. Do not rewrite the same equations, numbers, graphs, images, or figures that have been implemented in the Results section.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the phenomena of stress and happiness in the educational context are characterized by a complex dynamism influenced by various internal and external factors. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions to create a supportive environment and provide the necessary resources so that students at all levels of education can achieve optimal well-being. In addition, collaborative efforts among educators, parents, and the community are needed to establish an ecosystem that prioritizes students' emotional and psychological well-being, enabling them to thrive both within and beyond the academic environment. Through this approach, it is expected that students will not only be able to face academic challenges but also gain positive and fulfilling learning experiences.

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