

Investigating the Existing Principle of Obedience in Workplaces: A Bibliometric Review

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Abstract

This bibliometric review investigates the principle of obedience in workplaces, analyzing scholarly publications from the past two decades to understand trends, contributions, and key themes. Utilizing the PRISMA framework, 81 relevant documents were identified from an initial pool of 886, sourced from the Scopus database. The study reveals fluctuating interest in workplace obedience, with a notable peak in research activity in 2021. The United States, United Kingdom, and France emerged as leading contributors, reflecting diverse cultural and academic perspectives. Key institutions, such as The University of Hong Kong and Universidade de São Paulo, demonstrated consistent research output. Prominent authors, including Abdullah Alhassan and Rosa M. Alabrús Iglesias, have significantly influenced the field. The analysis of research terms highlights the multifaceted nature of workplace obedience, intersecting with themes like decision-making, authority, and ethics. The study underscores the importance of understanding obedience within organizational contexts, particularly in light of global socio-political changes and the evolving nature of work. It suggests future research directions, including cross-cultural studies and the impact of digital transformation on workplace dynamics. This review provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on workplace obedience, offering valuable insights for academics and practitioners alike.

Keywords: Workplace Obedience, Workplaces, Bibliometric Review, PRISMA Framework

Introduction

The principle of obedience has long been a cornerstone of organizational behavior, significantly influencing the dynamics between authority and subordinates within workplaces. This concept, rooted in psychological and sociological theories, emphasizes the importance of complying with directives from superiors, which is crucial for maintaining order and achieving organizational objectives. Historically, obedience in the workplace has been linked to positive outcomes such as increased efficiency and consistency in decision-making. However, it also poses risks, including suppressing innovation and allowing unethical behaviors to flourish unchallenged (Milgram, 1974; Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

Recent studies have delved deeper into the nuanced effects of obedience in modern workplaces. For example, Treviño et al. (2014) argue that while obedience can streamline processes, it may inadvertently lead to ethical blind spots, where employees follow orders without question, even if those orders contradict their moral beliefs. This is particularly evident in hierarchical organizations where power distance is high, as noted by Hofstede (2010). Moreover, research by Burris et al. (2020) highlights that a culture of unquestioning obedience can discourage employees from voicing dissent, thus stifling creativity and innovation.

Further exploration into the global context of workplace obedience reveals that cultural factors play a significant role. For instance, studies by Aycan et al. (2017) and House et al. (2004) demonstrate that cultural variations influence how obedience is perceived and enacted in different countries. In some cultures, high levels of obedience are associated with respect for authority and tradition, while in others, they may be seen as a lack of critical thinking and independence.

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive bibliometric review of studies on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the last two decades. The primary research questions guiding this study include: What is the distribution of research on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past 20 years? Which nations have made the most significant contributions to this field? Which educational institutions and authors have been most influential? What have been the most prominent research terms concerning this topic? By addressing these questions, this study aims to offer a detailed overview of the research landscape on workplace obedience, highlighting key trends, gaps, and future directions for scholars and practitioners. Thus, the following research questions were formulated to achieve this study objectives:

1. What is the distribution of Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years?
2. Which nations have the most impact on Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years?
3. Which educational institutions have made the most notable contributions to the study of Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years??
4. Which Authors have produced the most substantial contributions to the field of Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years?
5. Over the last 20 years, what have been the most prominent research terms concerning Principle of obedience in workplaces?

Methods

Data Sources and Search Strategy

This bibliometric review utilizes the PRISMA framework (Moher et al., 2009) to systematically explore the principle of obedience in workplaces. The primary data source was the Scopus database. A detailed search strategy was implemented to identify relevant documents. The search query was as follows:

Table 1

Search Query

Search Field	Query
Keywords	obedience AND work
Publication Year	> 2002 AND < 2024
Subject Area	ARTS, SOCI, BUSI, ECON, ENVI
Exact Keywords	Law, Obedience, Work, Human Experiment, Justice, Government, Authoritarianism, Employee, Disobedience

This query initially retrieved 886 documents, which were then narrowed down to 81 relevant documents after a rigorous screening process.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this review encompassed articles published between 2002 and 2023, written in English, and focusing on the principle of obedience in workplace contexts. Studies not meeting these criteria, such as those outside the specified subject areas or lacking relevance to the specified keywords, were excluded.

Screening and Data Extraction

The initial search yielded 886 documents, which underwent a screening process based on titles and abstracts. This screening aimed to exclude irrelevant studies, resulting in 81 documents suitable for detailed analysis. Key data extracted from these documents included publication year, country of origin, contributing institutions, author information, and prominent research terms.

Data Analysis

The selected documents were analyzed to address the following research questions:

- The distribution of research on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past 20 years.
- The countries contributing most significantly to this field.
- The educational institutions making notable contributions.
- The authors with substantial contributions to the study of obedience in workplaces.
- The prominent research terms concerning the principle of obedience in workplaces over the last two decades.

PRISMA Framework

The PRISMA framework guided the systematic review process, ensuring transparency and replicability. The four key stages—identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion—were meticulously followed to ensure the robustness and validity of the study's findings.

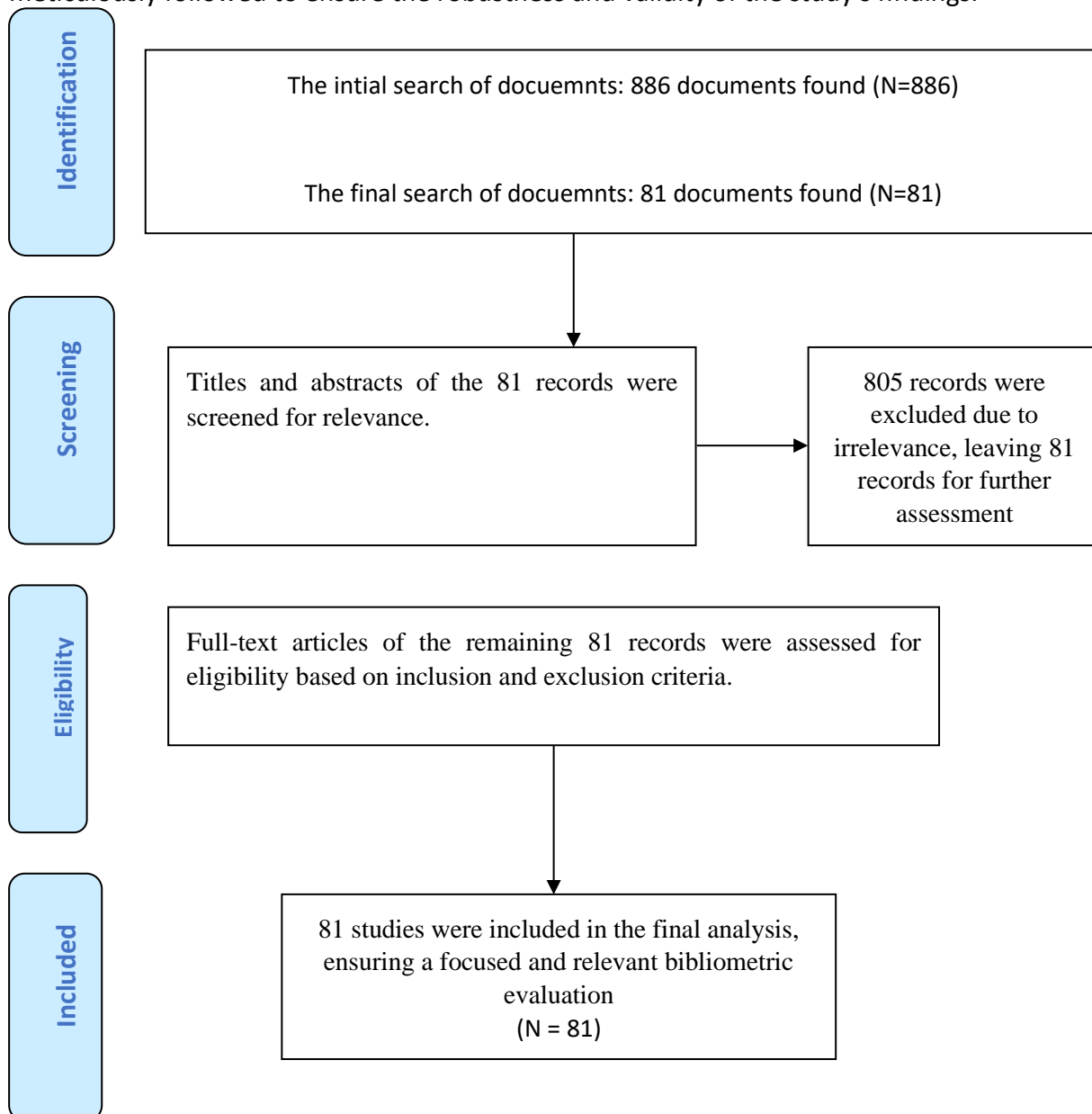


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework for a visual representation of the study selection process

Results

What is the Distribution of Principle of Obedience in Workplaces For the Last 20 Years

This section explores the distribution of research publications focusing on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past two decades. The analysis aimed to identify trends and shifts in academic interest in this field, highlighting periods of increased or decreased research activity.

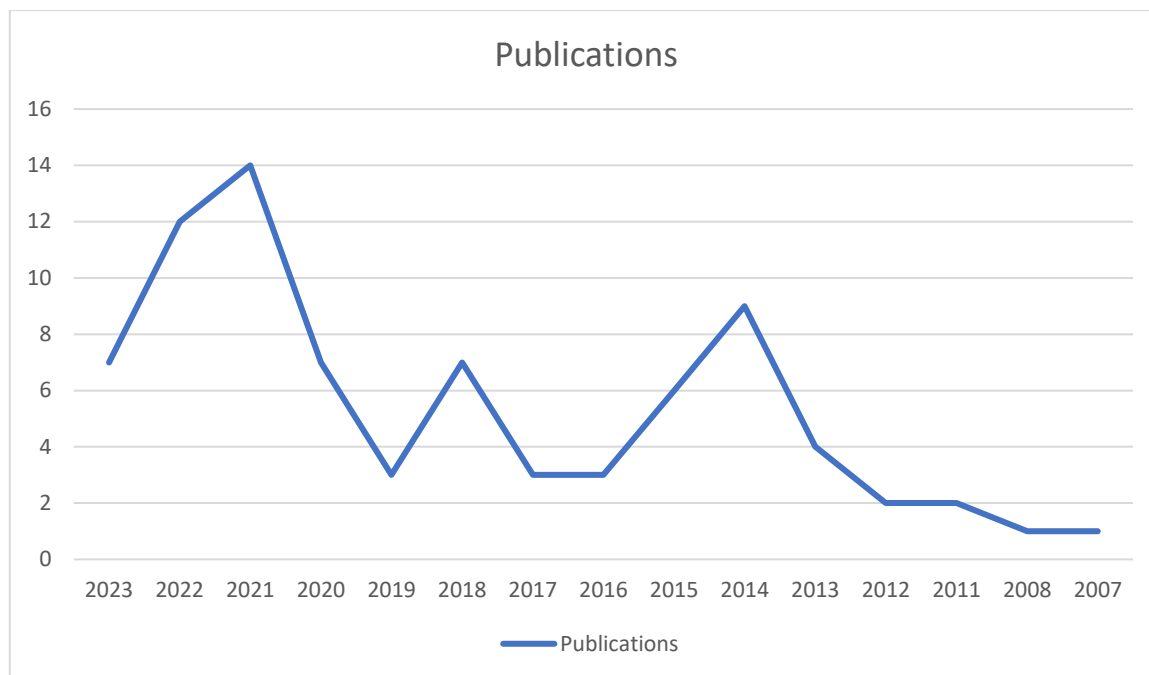


Figure 2: Distribution by years of Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years

The figure above illustrates the yearly distribution of research publications on the principle of obedience in workplaces from 2007 to 2023. The data reveals several key trends. Notably, there was a significant peak in research activity around 2021, with 14 publications, suggesting heightened scholarly interest during this period. This surge may correspond with increased scrutiny of workplace dynamics amid global socio-political changes and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizational structures.

Following 2021, the number of publications experienced a notable decline, with only three publications in 2019 and a slight increase to seven in 2020. This fluctuation indicates a varying level of academic focus on the subject. The years 2017 and 2016 also showed consistent, albeit modest, contributions with three publications each. However, from 2012 to 2015, there was a gradual increase in publications, peaking at nine in 2014, reflecting a period of growing interest in understanding workplace obedience.

The data from 2008 to 2011 shows a relatively low output, with one or two publications annually, suggesting limited research attention during these years. Interestingly, the earliest data point in 2007 records only one publication, marking the beginning of the observed timeline.

Overall, the distribution of research publications indicates a dynamic and evolving interest in the principle of obedience in workplaces. The variations in publication numbers over the years may reflect broader societal and organizational changes, influencing the focus and urgency of academic inquiry into this topic.

Which Nations Have the Most Impact on Principle of Obedience in Workplaces for the Last 20 Years

This section investigates the geographical distribution of research on the principle of obedience in workplaces, highlighting the nations that have significantly contributed to this field over the past two decades. The analysis provides insights into the global academic landscape and the varying levels of interest in this topic across different countries.



Figure 3: Distribution by nations of Principle of obedience in workplaces for the last 20 years

The figure above depicts the distribution of research publications on the principle of obedience in workplaces across various nations. The map reveals that the United States leads in scholarly output, with a total of 19 publications, indicating a strong focus on this area within American academic circles. This prominence may be attributed to the diverse and complex nature of the U.S. workplace environment, which has been a fertile ground for exploring issues of authority and compliance.

Following the United States, the United Kingdom has also made substantial contributions, with 15 publications. This reflects a significant interest in exploring the nuances of workplace obedience, possibly driven by the UK's rich history of labor studies and industrial relations research.

Other notable contributors include France, with eight publications, and Spain, with six. These countries have shown a consistent interest in examining workplace dynamics, particularly in relation to organizational behavior and management practices. Australia and Canada each contributed four and two publications, respectively, reflecting a moderate level of academic activity in this field.

The map also highlights contributions from countries such as Brazil, China, and Russia, each with two publications. These nations, while having fewer publications, still play a crucial role in providing diverse perspectives on the principle of obedience in workplaces, influenced by their unique cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Overall, the geographical distribution of research indicates that the topic of workplace obedience is of global interest, with varying levels of engagement across different regions. The predominance of publications from Western countries suggests a strong academic focus on this issue in developed economies, where workplace structures and authority dynamics are often scrutinized and analyzed.

Which Educational Institutions Have Made The Most Notable Contributions to The Study of Principle Of Obedience In Workplaces For The Last 20 Years

This section identifies and highlights the contributions of various educational institutions to the study of the principle of obedience in workplaces. By examining the output of these institutions, we can understand the academic centers that have significantly influenced research in this area.

Table 1

Top Educational Institutions in the Study of Principle of Obedience in Workplaces

#	Educational institution	Country	TP*
1	The University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	2
2	Universidade de São Paulo	Brazil	2
3	Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University	Russia	2
4	Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne	France	2
5	Liverpool Hope University	UK	2
6	Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences	Russia	2
7	Capella University	USA	1
8	Antioch University Santa Barbara	USA	1
9	Bishop's House	UK	1
10	Devon & Cornwall Police	UK	1

TP*= Total Publications

The table above lists the top educational institutions based on the number of publications they have contributed to the study of the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past 20 years. Notably, The University of Hong Kong and the Universidade de São Paulo are among the top contributors, each with two publications. These institutions have shown a consistent focus on exploring the dynamics of obedience within organizational settings.

Similarly, Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University and the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne have made notable contributions, also with two publications each. Their research has provided valuable insights into how cultural and regional factors influence workplace obedience.

Liverpool Hope University and the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, both with two publications, have further enriched the discourse on this topic, offering diverse perspectives from the UK and Russia, respectively.

Other institutions, such as Capella University and Antioch University Santa Barbara, along with organizations like Bishop's House and Devon & Cornwall Police, have contributed one publication each. While their contributions are fewer, they still provide unique insights and expand the scope of research on workplace obedience.

Overall, the data indicates that a wide range of educational institutions from different countries have engaged in the study of the principle of obedience in workplaces, reflecting a global interest in understanding this complex aspect of organizational behavior

Which Authors have Produced the Most Substantial Contributions to the Field of Principle of Obedience in Workplaces for the Last 20 Years

This section highlights the key authors who have significantly contributed to the research on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past two decades. By examining their publications, citations, and impact, we gain insights into the leading scholars and their influence on this field.

Table 2

Top Authors in the Study of Principle of Obedience in Workplaces

#	Author	Affiliation	TP*	TC*	H-index
1	Abdullah, Alhassan	Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia	58	380	13
2	Alabrús Iglesias, Rosa M.	Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, Barcelona, Spain	11	5	1
3	Almasy, Rudolph P.	West Virginia University, Morgantown, United States	8	7	2
4	Alvarez, Luciana	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Buenos Aires, Argentina	5	8	2
5	Aracil, Adrien	Sorbonne Universit Centre Roland-Mousnier, France	5	1	1
6	Benitan, M. C.	Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, United Kingdom	1	0	0
7	Blancher, Marion	École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, Lyon, France	2	0	0
8	Blissman, Beth	United Nations, New York, United States	1	0	0
9	Bokody, Péter	University of Plymouth, Plymouth, United Kingdom	4	2	1
10	Bollmann, Grégoire	Universität Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland	11	328	8

TP*=Total Publications, TC*= Total Citations

The table above presents the top authors in the study of the principle of obedience in workplaces, ranked by their total publications (TP) and further evaluated by total citations (TC) and H-index. Abdullah Alhassan of Flinders University leads the list with 58 publications, 380 citations, and an H-index of 13, indicating a significant impact in this research area. His extensive work has been widely recognized and cited, making him a prominent figure in the field.

Rosa M. Alabrús Iglesias from Universitat Abat Oliba CEU follows with 11 publications, while Grégoire Bollmann from Universität Zürich has contributed equally but with a notably high number of citations (328), reflecting a strong influence despite having fewer publications. Rudolph P. Almasy and Luciana Alvarez also stand out with their respective contributions from West Virginia University and Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas.

"decision making," "authority," "education," "psychology," and "law," reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the research.

"Decision making" appears as a significant term, suggesting a strong focus on how obedience influences or is influenced by the decision-making processes within organizations. The term "authority" is also prominent, highlighting the examination of power dynamics and hierarchical structures as critical factors in understanding obedience.

The presence of terms like "education" and "training" suggests an interest in how these elements contribute to or mitigate the effects of obedience. This indicates a potential focus on the role of educational and training programs in shaping employee behavior and compliance in the workplace.

Other notable terms include "control," "risk assessment," and "moral," which suggest a concern with the ethical and risk-related aspects of obedience. The terms "law" and "justice" indicate an interest in the legal implications and frameworks surrounding obedience in organizational settings.

Overall, the visualization provides a comprehensive overview of the key themes and topics that have dominated the study of workplace obedience over the last 20 years. It underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of this field, highlighting the various angles from which researchers have approached the subject. This analysis not only reveals the breadth of the literature but also identifies potential areas for future research, such as the intersection of obedience with emerging organizational and societal trends

Discussion

The findings from this comprehensive bibliometric review provide valuable insights into the research landscape on the principle of obedience in workplaces over the past 20 years. The analysis covered various aspects, including the distribution of publications, the contribution of different nations and institutions, key authors, and prominent research terms.

Distribution of Publications

The data indicates fluctuating interest in the study of workplace obedience, with notable peaks and troughs. The surge in publications around 2021, followed by a decline, may reflect a heightened focus on workplace dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted traditional work environments and highlighted issues of compliance and authority. The early years, from 2007 to 2011, saw relatively few publications, suggesting a nascent interest in this area. The gradual increase in later years indicates a growing recognition of the importance of understanding obedience in the workplace context.

Geographical Contributions

The United States emerged as the leading nation in this field, contributing the most publications. This may be attributed to the country's diverse and complex organizational structures, which provide a rich context for studying obedience. The significant contributions from the United Kingdom and France highlight these nations' strong academic traditions in organizational behavior and sociology. The contributions from countries like Brazil, China, and Russia, though fewer, offer diverse perspectives influenced by different cultural and socio-economic factors. This geographical diversity in research contributions underscores the universal relevance of studying workplace obedience, as organizations worldwide grapple with similar challenges.

Institutional Contributions

The analysis of institutional contributions revealed that several universities and research centers have played pivotal roles in advancing this field. Notably, institutions like The University of Hong Kong, Universidade de São Paulo, and Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne have made consistent contributions, demonstrating a focused interest in exploring the dynamics of workplace obedience. The presence of institutions from various countries, including Russia and the United States, indicates a broad academic interest across different educational and cultural settings.

Key Authors

Prominent authors such as Abdullah Alhassan and Rosa M. Alabrús Iglesias have significantly influenced the discourse on workplace obedience. The diversity in authorship, with contributors from Australia, Spain, and Argentina, among others, highlights the global nature of this research area. The variation in total publications, citations, and H-index among these authors reflects the different levels of impact and recognition their work has received within the academic community.

Prominent Research Terms

The network of research terms reveals a rich tapestry of themes and topics that have shaped the study of workplace obedience. The centrality of terms like "decision making," "authority," and "education" underscores the complexity of obedience as a multifaceted concept, intersecting with various organizational and psychological factors. The presence of ethical and legal terms, such as "moral" and "law," indicates a concern with the broader implications of obedience, including its potential to foster unethical behavior or complicate legal compliance.

Conclusion

This bibliometric review highlights the evolving and dynamic nature of research on the principle of obedience in workplaces. The analysis reveals a growing academic interest in understanding the nuances of obedience, driven by global socio-political changes and evolving workplace environments. The contributions from a diverse range of nations, institutions, and authors underscore the universal relevance of this topic, as organizations across the world navigate issues of authority, compliance, and ethical behavior.

The study's findings suggest several areas for future research. There is a need for more cross-cultural studies to explore how obedience manifests differently across various cultural contexts. Additionally, the impact of digital transformation and remote work on workplace obedience presents a promising avenue for exploration. Understanding how new technologies and work arrangements influence obedience and authority structures could provide valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

Overall, this review provides a comprehensive overview of the research landscape on workplace obedience, offering a foundation for future studies to build upon. It highlights the importance of continued investigation into this area, as organizations strive to create ethical, productive, and respectful workplace environments.

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