

# The New Normal Education: Travails of Kindergarten Teachers

Elma F. Bulgado<sup>1</sup> and Rothen D. Yntig<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>University of Mindanao Tagum College

**Abstract**— This study aimed to identify the various coping strategies used by teachers to deal with difficulties that they may have encountered when implementing said distance education through online, modular, and blended modalities. The study used qualitative phenomenological design to describe the experiences and insights of kindergarten teachers during this pandemic in the Braulio E. Dujali District for School Year 2020–2021. Major themes such as encountered internet connectivity problems, encountered shortage of printing materials, encountered problems with pupil's academic behaviors, effective teaching, becoming open to feedbacks and criticisms, becoming resourceful and engage in professional development, turning to divine providence, developing a sense of positivism, new normal in education is a learning opportunity, support is essential in the new normal education, well-being of teachers is a priority regarding kindergarten teachers' experiences implementing distance learning were revealed by the study. The outcome was that it made available of kindergarten teachers' perspectives on how distance learning has been incorporated into the new norm.

**Keywords**— MAED, distance learning, travails of kindergarten teachers, new normal education, Philippines.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Health was in danger resulted from global pandemic's emergence. To stop the infection from spreading and lessen its effects, a number of measures and restrictions have been implemented [14]. Due to this, one of the industries most impacted was education, as many schools had to close due to health issues involving teachers, students, and other stakeholders, which also jeopardized the students' ability to receive an adequate education [18].

In addition, due to risks urged by the COVID-19, the pandemic has already had catastrophic effects, and are expected to have long-term social and economic ramifications. In 161 countries as of March 28, 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic was preventing more than 1.6 billion kids and teenagers from attending school. This is more than 80% of all registered students worldwide [9].

The result of international health crisis, unprecedented, far-reaching, and dramatic changes in the lives of children and their families, preservice and in-service early childhood teachers, and early childhood teacher educators. The Covid-19 brought the early childhood education system to collapse, mobilizing leading early childhood organizations to advocate for Covid-19 financial packages to protect early education programs around the world [11].

Many countries around the world, such as Colombia, Poland, Japan, Italy, and Philippines, answer the World

Health Organization's call by their respective Ministries of Education. Based on the availability in a given country, various educational online platforms such as YouTube, learning management systems (LMS), digital libraries, internet streaming or broadcast, repositories such as Open Educational Resources (REA), and the like were used. Zoom and Google Hangouts are used in higher education, while educators are encouraged to use various websites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Google forms. EdTech Hub, UNESCO Education Alliance, Learning Keeps Going (US consortium), Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Commonwealth of Learning, and other organizations are involved [3]

As these ways and programs are implemented to enable the teaching and learning to continue despite the pandemic, early articles about the experiences of teachers in preparing towards distance education suggests that teachers are having problems towards this transition. In fact teachers in different parts of Luzon have experienced problems in adjusting to the suggested new methods because of time constraints, lack of actual training and internet connectivity issues [19].

Furthermore, access to technology and the Internet, particularly in remote areas, is also a common challenge. In the public school system, it is not uncommon for students to have unstable internet connections at home or to be unable to afford to buy load for data for their phones on a daily basis. Some people also do not have laptops or phones at all. As this is a fact that many

schools, students and families will face, DepEd suggests a mix of multiple learning approaches and will use the Mixed Learning Model [16].

Although several trainings have been done, only a few researches are done in the national level and much more so in the local situation here in Braulio E. Dujali District when it comes to the challenges of teachers specifically those teaching in Kindergarten in distance learning.

Due to lack of information regarding to the challenges and difficulties of teachers in kindergarten teaching during the new normal, I as a researcher intend to study their challenges as well as their coping mechanisms to address the aforementioned challenges. I believe that this will give a way on the lack of literature on the subject matter and will allow for the realizations on different programs and activities that will help teachers teach more effectively and efficiently despite the restrictions caused by the worldwide pandemic.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological design was used by the researcher to describe insights of the kindergarten teachers during this pandemic in the Braulio E. Dujali District for the fiscal year 2020–2021. Phenomenology seeks to describe basic lived experience. According to Hancock, et.al [15], qualitative research answers questions regarding the issues involving the problems in the society. It raises the question of why people behave as they do, what are the possible opinions and attitudes formed in a certain situation, how people are affected by the society in their ways of action and how the practices and culture in the society developed.

Qutoshi [26] mentioned that phenomenology, It is more than just a way of approaching knowledge; as a philosophy and method of investigation, it is a way of engaging in interpretations and meaning-making on an intellectual level in order to comprehend the conscious lived realities of humans. Interviews, observations, and discussions can all be used as data collection techniques when using a phenomenological method of inquiry, so this approach has both philosophical and methodological stances.

In this study, researcher recorded all stories of kindergarten teachers about their experiences on distance learning method practices in their respective schools. Their stories also included their coping mechanisms for dealing with the challenges of the new

normal education. It is subjective phenomenological in nature since it is a blend of strategies such as leading virtual meetings among the participants, perusing reports, perceptions and school visitation and occasions, comprehend the lived encounters of kindergarten teachers. The study of phenomena is referred to as phenomenology. It is a way of describing something that exists in our world, such as events experiences, or concepts [10].

Researcher used virtual in-depth interview and focus group discussion to collect data. They had previously to make sure that my respondents would be available during the scheduled interview time. Methods for collecting qualitative data providing information useful for deeper understanding underlying process observed results and assessing changes in people's perceptions [13]. Furthermore, researcher must understand the research nature and the reason for conducting the study in order to introduce and request permission from respondents to conduct the study and involve them in the quest [24] [33]

### *Research Participants*

The kindergarten teachers in the Braulio E. Dujali District for the academic year 2020–2021 served as my informants and study subjects. Seven participants were chosen by the researcher for my IDI and seven participants were chosen for the focus group discussion (FGD). This is in line with Creswell's [6] claim that there can be up to seven participants in each of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. This is consistent with Creswell's [7] statement that participants may include seven for the in-depth interview and seven for the focus group discussion. In qualitative research, informants should be well informed about the upcoming interview, as well as the time and location of the meeting [8][20] and the interviewer's preferred the place [3] and time that the informants suggested to their own convenience [15][20].

The respondents were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling. Using the sampling technique known as "purposeful sampling," the researcher selects participants from the population based on his or her own judgment. It is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher chooses the elements at their discretion. Many times, researchers think that by using good judgment, they can gather a representative sample and save time and money [1]. The informants in qualitative research should be fully informed of the

interview to be conducted, as well as the time and location of the meeting [8][20] and the interviewer's preferred the place [3] and time that the informants suggested to their own convenience [15][20]. Pseudonyms shall be used in order to protect the participants' confidentiality.

When the researcher was finalizing the list of key informants and participants, he took into account the inclusive criteria regarding the type of school which my participants are assigned as well as their age, civil status, length of service, gender, and are handling teaching duties whether it is online, modular, and/or blended.

The study disqualifies grade one to grade six school teachers from the entire district of Braulio E. Dujali, respondents from Junior High School teachers and Senior High School teachers.

### III. RESULT, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discussed the experiences of kindergarten teachers in the implementation of distance education, their mechanisms in coping with the challenges posed by the implementation of distance education and their insights which combined from the information gleaned through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The research questions that guided my study are the following:

- What are the of experiences of kindergarten teachers in the implementation of Distance Education?
- How do kindergarten teachers cope with the challenges in the implementation of Distance Education?
- What are the insights of kindergarten teachers in teaching in the new normal education?

There are four section divided on this section. Focuses on the data collected from participants, from which the qualitative data were derived is the part 1. Discussed in part 2 are the procedures of data analysis as well as the steps in categorizing the combined themes from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The part 3 contains the to the in-depth interview and focus group discussion questions, and lastly, is a summary of the responses of the respondents.

The same questions were administered in both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. The researcher started by making a list of potential

informants for my research. More informants were added to my list through referrals and recommendations from school administrators and teachers using the snowball sampling method. The meetings were held in accordance with the terms of the participants' signed informed consent. Fortunately, every one of the one-on-one interviews went well because he was able to fully discussed to the subjects their rights to confidentiality and risk-free engagement in the research. Every interview was conducted using Google Meet or Zoom.

Moreover, the focus group discussion was interesting and spontaneous. The researcher made certain that the participants' ideas were not lost. He conducted the interview and took the notes. He also recorded the entire discussion with the group's permission, which greatly contributed to having a more complete, accurate, and permanent record.

#### ***RQ1: What are the experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementation of distance education?***

Presented in Table 2 are the four themes generated from collected data on the experiences of the participants. To determine the core ideas to report, the researcher used the themes generated. The themes are one – Encountered Internet Connectivity Problems; two – Encountered Shortage of Printing Materials; three – Encountered problems with Pupil's Academic Behaviors; and four – Effective teaching.

***Encountered Internet Connectivity Problems.*** Most participants revealed that they experienced having internet connectivity problems. Class discussions are being disrupted due to poor connections which might have been caused by inability to acquire load for data or lack of functional gadgets resulting to low level of class participation among students.

Moreover, the result revealed that kindergarten teachers, despite their positive experiences like having the opportunity to engage in online classes using the new technology, have negative experiences that must have given them so much frustration. The have often encountered internet connectivity problems interrupting student-teacher interactions.

These problems have amplified the burden of students who have no gadgets for online classes. Many of these students are missing out on crucial information. Slow wifi, according to teachers, is causing these learners not able to partake in their online education. Students are

placed in tough and stressful situations, fearful that their grades will suffer and their overall grade will suffer. This result is parallel to the study of Tanveer [30] who stated that Teachers claim that slow wifi is causing these students to fail in their online and digital education. Students are placed in difficult and stressful situations, afraid that their grades and overall grade will suffer as a result.

Further, these results are in consonance with the statement of Ramij and Sultana [27] who stated that Students in the age of online learning are concerned about a lack of internet connection to attend lectures and conduct any type of evaluation. Students who work and live in remote towns face systemic challenges due to poor internet connectivity and a lack of infrastructure.

**Encountered Shortage of Printing Materials.** Teachers also encountered problems on producing printing materials for the students. They expressed that they need financial support for the reproduction of instructional materials to be distributed to students.

This result agrees with the article of Bonnici [2] who said that cuts to school financing have long harmed teachers around the world, with some spending hundreds of dollars on school supplies, as well as clothing and food for low-income students. Over the last year, 45% of teachers told they had spent their own money on basic necessities for students, with the majority paying for food, while 29% bought toiletries and 23% said they bought clothing or shoes. This is also parallel to the concept of Martin and Mulvihill [21] who said that teachers in public schools invest their own money on technology like laptop computers and cellphones, as well as internet connection services, to make teaching and learning easier.

This is also in accordance with the idea of Quejada and Orale [25] that limited school supplies during distant learning, according to teachers, had a negative impact on kids. According to 65% of educators, when distance learning began, students were less likely to engage in distance learning because they lacked the necessary resources. Last school year, 55% of teachers reported having students who did not participate in their studies at all.

**Encountered Problems with Pupil's Academic Behaviors.** Another theme that emerged from the responses of the participants presents the problems

encountered by kindergarten teachers with the academic performances of their students. Some of them have pupils who have difficulties in coping with the demands of online class.

This result supports the concept of Coman et. al [5] stating that one of the disadvantages of E- learning practical application is its complexity. These cost include the fact that technology is not always efficient and that students have a harder time grasping concepts being taught. These drawbacks of online education can be easily overcome by students physically attending classes.

Additionally, students in higher education institutions who used E-Learning outperformed those who took face-to-face classes. Students who study through online learning receive higher grades than students who study through traditional methods [16].

**Effective teaching.** Despite the imperatives of distance learning during pandemic, teachers still find teaching fulfilling. The participants believe that the implementation of distance education gives them the opportunity to give their best in their profession.

Although kindergarten teachers shared their positive experiences in teaching through distance education, some of them also expressed about their hardships.

The results are in line with the conclusion of Chuyun Hu [4] that the most important aspects are the teacher and student interaction, engagement, and real-world experience. characteristics of good teachers that students from all fields and backgrounds value. According to Dos Santos [10], teachers who develop strong relationships with their students develop conducive learning environments and address their students' developmental needs.

This articulation is proven to the idea of Valente et al. [32] that when learners are actively involved in the learning process, they are less likely to lose interest in what they are learning. Students who are more engaged perform better on standardized tests and are less likely to drop out [35].

**RQ2: How did kindergarten teachers cope with the challenges in implementation of distance education?** There are four themes generated from the responses of participants on the implementation of distance

education. The themes are one – Becoming Open to Feedbacks and Criticisms; two – Becoming Resourceful and Engage in Professional Development; three – Turning to Divine Providence; and four – Developing a Sense of Positivism.

**Becoming open to feedbacks and criticisms.** During the implementation of distance education, kindergarten teachers have developed a positive trait manifested in their attitude towards negative feedback on their teaching performance. Some of them regard those feedbacks and criticisms as a compliment and a challenge to improve their teaching skills. This implies that pandemic has developed resilience among teachers to deal with the difficulties of new normal way of education.

The result conforming to the study of Yang et al. [34] that resilience reduces stress and burnout among teachers, as well as their engagement, job satisfaction, health, instructional quality, work satisfaction, inspiration, professional identity, persistence, responsibility, and self-efficacy. It improves teachers' abilities to help children master in a different context that significant to their overall development.

The findings also support the idea of Lee, Richards and Washburn [18] that teachers flexibility is required because it allows them to process and overcome obstacles in their profession and not led them to use negative coping strategies. Resilient teachers rely on their skills and support systems to overcome challenges and work through issues.

**Becoming resourceful and engage in professional development.** Kindergarten teachers consider remarkable ways to cope with the challenges of teaching in distance education by attending in various trainings so improve their performance in the classroom. These professional development avenues speak about the resourcefulness of the participants in augmenting their pedagogical and content knowledge in the field.

This implies that kindergarten teachers believe that working together produces a better learning opportunity. They are fully aware that collaboration among teachers has a positive impact on student progress and empowers them as educators.

Such findings conform to the idea of Nordgren et al. [23] stating that Collaboration is essential for teachers to feel

like they are part of a professional environment and to derive personal fulfilment from their work, as well as to encourage their instructional function. When teachers collaborate the background, abilities, and interest of each teacher can be beneficial to a project. When teachers work together as a team, they can delegate tasks based on each team member's personality and skill. This type of collaboration fosters trust.

Further, these findings support the idea of Drehmer and Gala [11] who assert that collaboration breaks down barriers between partners in order to maximize mutually advantageous resources and common goals. According to their study, schools that support teacher cooperation had greater student accomplishment than schools that do not encourage collaboration.

**Turning to Divine Providence.** Another theme that emerged from the responses of the participants on how they face the challenges posed by teaching in distance education is turning to divine providence. Kindergarten teachers believe that praying to God by faith is their ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge during the times of crisis.

This implies that kindergarten teachers believe that divine wisdom is an effective mechanism to provide their pupils a holistic education gearing them to a higher level of academic, spiritual and moral excellence. This also implies that education centered on God helps children realize their divine potential and makes them ready for life by providing them with the skills they'll need to keep learning throughout their various experiences.

The results are in accordance with the concept of Phan et. al [25] who asserts that spirituality refers to a person's link to the limitless and all-powerful heavenly superior. When a teacher connects to this source while teaching, he emits good energy that helps his students learn. In the pursuit of a holistic and human education, moral and spiritual concerns are essential; awareness of human values and rights; and as a (coping) resource for the teacher to discover meaning and personal and professional purpose.

The results also agree with the concept of Sapra et al. [28] that students who participate in spiritual practices have greater satisfaction with their interpersonal life on campus, have more pleasant relationships with fellow students, score a more favorable overall school

experience, and report higher GPAs than non-spiritual students. According to the findings of McLaurin [22] on the influence of spirituality on academic achievement, students who do well attribute their spirituality as a primary factor, whereas students who perform badly attribute their lack of spirituality as a primary reason for their poor academic performance.

**Developing a Sense of Positivism.** Participants shared during interviews that one best way to cope with the challenges of distance education in the new normal is optimism. When they encounter impediments in their profession, they take things positively in order to stay on the track.

The findings conform to the idea of Longobardi et al. [20] that a Collaboration is necessary for teachers to feel like they are part of a professional environment, to derive personal fulfilment from their work, and to promote their instructional function. When teachers work together, the backgrounds, interest and abilities of each teacher can be used to benefit a project. When teachers work as a team, they can delegate tasks based on the personalities and skills of each team member. This type of collaboration cultivates trust and commitment, as well as teachers' confidence in contributing their most dynamic abilities to the school's advancement.

The findings also support the idea of Taghizadeh and Hajhosseini [29] that Teachers who use teaching methods that are closest to indicators, such as moral support and classroom structure, are more likely to predict students' attitudes and actions. Teachers who are good at increasing test scores are not always good at changing their students' attitudes and actions.

### **RQ3: What are the insights of kindergarten teachers cope in new normal education?**

There are three themes that surfaced from the responses of participants on their insights from teaching in new normal education. The themes are one – New normal in education is a learning opportunity; two – Support is essential in the new normal education; and three – Well-being of teachers is a Priority.

**New normal in education is a learning opportunity.** The participants consider teaching in the new normal as an opportunity for growth and development. They believe the pandemic has brought

wider avenues for learning and enrichment that benefit their students in the classroom.

This implies that teachers find opportunity in the midst of pandemic, and the disruption has given teachers the chance to reconsider how they carry out their responsibilities and attempt fresh methods to tasks they may have been performing the same way for years. Kindergarten teachers have rekindled their enthusiasm for their jobs after being compelled to do things differently.

This articulation is proven to the idea of Gurajena, et al. [14] that taking into account the challenges in teaching in the new normal, schools' issues are technology, pedagogical, and social issues. Distance learning promotes student-centered and self-directed learning. It provides schools with a variety of benefits, including adaptability, research advancements, flexible learning, variety, remote student assistance, assessment technique adjustments, innovation opportunities, non-academic course offerings, and pedagogical policy changes.

**Support is essential in the new normal education.** The kindergarten teachers shared a lot of new insights from their experiences in teaching during the implementation of distance education. They have learned that successful teaching in the new normal demands support from all stakeholders of the academe.

This result is parallel to the idea of Lakomski and Evers [17] stating that administrators should focus on developing partnerships by speaking with educators and pupils on a daily basis; finding ways of bringing teachers and families together to work collaboratively and form lasting bonds; trying to engage teachers, students, and families in solving problems with an emphasis on effectiveness; and contributing to students' growth.

**Well-being of teachers is a Priority.** Amidst the crisis, challenges faced by kindergarten teachers during the implementation of distance education brought another insight which pertains to making their well-being a priority. In order to survive in the new normal teaching, teachers should possess qualities that shall help them withstand the challenges of their profession.

This outcome corresponds to the study of Dabrowski [9] showing the correlation between better teacher well-being and increased student academic performance, instructional techniques, and student learning, as well as

enhanced student-teacher interactions. According to Falecki and Mann [12] Overall happiness among teachers increases intrinsic motivation, avoid disciplinary issues, level up the academic success, increases school satisfaction, and leads to individual, community, and national flourishing.

Such results are also in consonance with the idea of Turner [31] that teachers' mental health and wellness activities should be ongoing and all-encompassing. Teachers can improve and maintain their personal wellness by engaging in self-care activities such as regular exercise, socializing, and establishing work-life boundaries.

### **Implications to Practice**

*On the experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementation of distance education, there were four themes generated: Encountered Internet Connectivity Problems; Encountered Shortage of Printing Materials; Encountered problems with Pupil's Academic Behaviors; and Effective teaching.* The kindergarten teacher's experiences in the implementation of distance learning imply that schools may provide internet connections and establish learner's management system to keep at par with the demands of the new normal. The use of the internet for help to the exchange of information and communication. It enables students and teachers to get study materials in different multimedia formats and watch lessons online. It also benefits teachers by enabling them to use a variety of tools in the classroom. Technology assists teachers in accommodating different learning method, and students learn more effectively via lectures, reading, examples, or video. Students can learn at their own pace by listening to audiobooks, watching online videos playing engaging games, and doing other activities.

Teachers may also be sent to trainings on how to manipulate online technology in the classroom to optimize the utility of the learning management system to provide quality education to students. Teachers can use digital platform to increase their productivity, integrate useful digital tools to improve their students' learning options, and increase students participation. It also enables them to improve their teaching-learning techniques and able to personalize learning for their students.

Further, schools possibly provide adequate allocation for the reproduction of instructional materials to support

the teachers in their plight of providing quality modules to their students. The goal is to provide a source of learnings involvements for their students while also facilitating interaction between teachers and students during the learning process. Hence, these resources help students learn experience while gathering a variety of learning needs.

*Kindergarten teachers On the coping mechanisms in facing the challenges posed by the implementation of distance education, there were four themes which emerged: Becoming Open to Feedbacks and Criticisms; Becoming Resourceful and Engage in Professional Development; Turning to Divine Providence; and Developing a Sense of Positivism.* The aforesaid results as coping mechanisms kindergarten teachers imply that professional development and teachers spirituality of indispensable to their success in teaching the students. Trainings and webinars enable teachers to stay up to date with curricular requirements and instructional practices that shall benefit the students. Professional development is important when it comes to education efforts because individual skill sets are enhanced, and the total value of the school is also improved.

The school shall also conduct regular spiritual retreats to develop teachers' spirituality and be imbued with the positive energy that helps student learn better. Spiritual development among teachers improves their ability to share with their career's ups and downs and recover from adversity brought by various challenges in their profession. As they grow spiritually, they discover how much better it is to build compassion and empathy for their students and to contribute to their improved academic performance. Further, the education provided by teachers with healthy spirituality helps students realize their divine potential and makes them ready for life as they are provided with the skills to keep learning throughout their various experiences.

Lastly, administrator may also work to increase student achievement by emphasizing the quality of teachers' instruction. They should assist in identifying and maintaining highest expectations, addressing teacher efforts, and connecting with the classroom and especially to the teachers. Based on the findings of this study, effective administrators should promote ongoing professional development, emphasize research-based teaching-learning strategies, and initiate discussions about instructional approaches.

This also implies that school administrators ensure that teachers are given adequate workloads on a daily basis, as well as thoughtful task assignments, in order to avoid jeopardizing the delivery of quality education to students. The findings also suggest that the Department of Education should redouble its efforts to uphold appropriate hiring policies based on the school's specific educational objectives.

### **Implications to Future Research**

Since the study is limited only to schools within Davao del Norte Division, listed below are the implications for further research are advanced:

First, future research on the experiences of kindergarten teachers in the workplace with a different group of participants could be done to strengthen the foundation and validate the findings of this study since the results of this study cannot be generalized to fourteen participants.

Second, the conduct of future studies may administer to be added to the basis of the experiences of kindergarten teachers in Region XI.

Third, future studies were conducted by re-interviewing the respondents to see if their views and insights on the experiences have not changed.

Fourth, because the study was conducted for public school teachers, additional studies may be conducted to investigate the same phenomenon among educators in semi-private schools.

An additional study to ascertain the perspectives and insights of students and school administrators on kindergarten teachers in the workplace may be conducted in order to verify the findings of this research.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The investigation on kindergarten teacher's experiences in the implementation of distance education has highlighted the significance and the necessity of this study.

The participants' own experiences provided insights into their motivations. The findings of this phenomenological study is a description of the essential structure of the experience. It aided in the comprehension of lived experiences. This methodology

is best suited for the exploratory study of kindergarten teachers' experiences.

As a result, the triangulation technique was accomplished by the focus group discussion. Creswell [6] stated that, data validation through cross validation from more than two sources was facilitated. Readings on teaching in the new normal as first source, the second was the in-depth interview, and lastly it was focus group discussion.

The study's contributed to the existing information on available kindergarten teachers' experiences and insights on the implementation of distance education in the new normal, as well as the constructs derived from the findings. Furthermore, it demonstrates the benefit of employing a qualitative approach in comprehending specific experiences. It has also opened up new avenues and ideas for future research, as there is still much to learn about teaching in the new normal.

As a researcher I manage to put in action all the things needed in this study from the request of permission to our supervisor, school Heads, of different schools in Braulio E. Dujali District. Their permission given me opportunities to keep in touch virtually with my key informants. The Trust and willingness of the respondents in focus group discussion as well as in in-depth- interview led to the success of this study.

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