"IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR & HABITS: HOW SHOULD ONE TACKLE THE PROBLEM"



COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' indicates corona, 'VI' says virus, and 'D' for disease. The current COVID-19 pandemic the widespread outbreak is unprecedented. It all started in the month of March 2020, when the World Health Organization declared that COVID-19 was a global pandemic, indicating significant global spread of the virus. China had been the first country where the virus was first detected in the month of December. Soon, the virus was in all continents and over almost 180 countries. The virus was extremely contagious leading to mass deaths of human habitation. The most critical cases resulted to a humongous number of people being admitted into the intensive care units of hospitals, leading to a concern that the virus would create an unhealthy scarcity of resources in local health care systems.

As the deaths rose from the virus since there was no known treatment or vaccine found to cure the same, countries shut their borders, banned travel to other countries and began to issue orders for their citizens to stay at home, with no gatherings of more than 5 individuals while the virus outbreak was active as to create a precautionary measure to save lives and country as a whole. Governments around the globe coerced their dear citizens to stick to preventive health measures & behaviors, aiming to reduce the effective reproduction & spread of the virus. Governments also enforced numerous emergency & safety regulations against the outbreak. Universities and Schools closed their physical practice of teaching and moved education system online. Major events were cancelled, airlines where shut ,flights were cut down, tourism started vanishing, restaurants, movie theaters, hotels and bars were closed strictly, film productions were cancelled, manufacturing industry was paused, services, and retail stores were ordered to be closed. Some Businesses and industries had switched to alternative way of working & had to train their employees to be able to work remotely from home, whereas in others, workers were forced to bid adieu to the organization or had their hours cut. People were caged to their homes just like the animals in the zoo as staying home was the safest option to save one's life and family. They took time to adapt this change as it was an unplanned event in everyone's life. Human mind started panicking initially as the freedom and access to outside world was cut down. Fear built homes in the brains of the people as there was no escape and no manual control introduced to the situation leading the loss in different aspects of the human mankind.

Everyone had lost something to COVID-19 and everyone is searching a way out to recover from loss caused by the outbreak. There are those who have lost their loved ones and

experience grief and pain, there are those who have lost income and financial security and lastly there are those who have lost their freedom. The situations can be summarized as the:

- Loss of physical connection with the outside world
- Loss of financial security and
- Loss of independence.

Since the pandemic is the biggest global event and challenge for our normal life, it continues to redefine our daily lifestyle-related habits in a significant manner as and when the train of pandemic progresses and boards the new station of different phases leading impacts to change in food habits, dietary quality, normal daily activities, access to recreational public buildups, social activities, work and financial security. These factors conclude into ultimate impact on human attitude, habits and behaviors, especially daily eating, routine activities and sleep behaviours that are known to be one of the risk factors for metabolic complications such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disorders. But it is not only the biological characteristics of the virus that are most dangerous, it is also how people behave towards the outbreak, that really matters. Also, behavioural factors can play a large part in slowing down, curing and stopping disease spread.¹²

¹ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7205668/

 $^{{}^2\}underline{\text{https://www.hindustantimes.com/art-and-culture/coronavirus-outbreak-5-poems-to-feed-your-soul-during-the-lockdown/story-ei9gMA0A23CKjenvS7IzOI.html}$

Insights of Impact on Human Behaviour & Habits

The reasons for change in lifestyle related behaviour were because of fear of coronavirus infection, preferring home-cooked food, and less involvement in eating out and socializing were the prime reasons for improvement in healthy eating and decline in junk food consumption at-home workout sessions and yoga, adverse changes in physical activities were caused due to lack of motivation, excess time availability indoors due to restricted access to parks, dance centres and gyms, worrying about their family, followed by boredom, loneliness and financial loss were most commonly observed reasons for adverse changes in stress and anxiety levels during COVID-19 outbreak.

1. No Cheer, only Fear

Being caged up, people experienced serious negative effects on the social well-being of as an individual themselves and society as a whole. Too much of anything can be bad, even the time spent with those closest to you that is what some families experienced during the lockdown of outbreak of virus. During these difficult times, people often turn to prayers & worship practices. However the places for worship and religious practices were also closed down which eventually took a toll on large crowd indirectly resulting into discomfort, stress and anxiety as the times were tough and packed by fear bites every now and then.

2. All Alone.....

Humans being social beings their interaction with each other i.e. friends, family and outside environment is an important factor for normal terms of sensibility, emotions and for mental well beings. Elders say for a baby to grow and develop skills it is important to let him observe things and learn, continuous and repetitive scenes can also affect their growing minds, similarly grown-ups were thrown into the throes of loneliness due to social distancing guidelines and restrictions of travelling way back to their homes and social gatherings was a clear no. Elder people living alone, started feeling left out and vulnerable as they were not technically equipped, sound and savvy. Loneliness made people overthink or overwork or not work at all. People learnt how to stay on their own, cook alone, eat alone, study alone, work alone, etc. resulting into becoming self-sufficient as positive impact and negative impact of with missing out on various other factors and also, spending times with their loved ones who are staying in different cities, states and countries.

3. Disruption in Education system and Birth of Crime goes Hand in Hand

For safety measures of the golden and young aged population of the country from the dangerous outbreak of covid 19 the universities and schools were shut and the education system took an online alternative as a primary platform for educating the future of the country. Online alternative is definitely an option for continuing the learning but is it a fully proved alternative? It has its own drawbacks as the major impact was loss of interest due to lack in physical presence of faculties and friends as children felt isolated from their friends and started to struggle to cope up with the remote educational system. People turned towards alcohol & drugs to help them ease with the stress which in turn has a negative impact on the people who lived with them. Social isolation led to an increase in domestic violence cases. The victim locked down with the abuser, was threatened as there was nobody to help the victim, and nowhere to go has given victim the complete superiority and control to the abuser to increase of violence with no fear of punishment.

4. Riches to Rags

No, we do not consider the literal meaning of the above terminology. It is a metaphor used to describe the financial instability that caused burden to people who lost their money and the loved ones too. Covid-19 took away the only bread earners from so many families and this a caused a huge adverse impact on the financial comfort feeling of families. The inflation has took a rise, whether it is on luxury, day to day resources or even the medical supplies. Unemployment resulted into financial insecurity and stress of having to generate income somehow to feed your family and keep going took an enormous toll on the mental state of the people.

5. Being Lazy is the New Crazy

Staying indoors has actually introduced us the new lifestyle of working and earning from home. Physical activity has a consecutive fall as after almost a year staying at home has made our body adapt this kind of lifestyle. We are even introduced to a word 'New Normal'. Sitting for stretch of long hours impacted our bodies to turn Lazy. The decline in physical activity and increase in stress outweighed marginal deterioration in dietary behaviours, which might have led to a negative calorie imbalance, further leading to weight gain and resulted into obesity and associated metabolic comorbidities such as diabetes and cardio metabolic diseases. After, staying in the pattern of work from home people will love this feeling of comfort of staying indoors. There will be a rise in people spending more time at home and will prefer to

adapt this local lifestyle. Desire for cocooning, along with opportunities for those with creative strategies to enable it, will move center-stage from office to home sweet home.

6. Blessed but Stressed!

The post-traumatic stress explains trauma as "exposure to actual or threatened death." Individuals (especially Doctors and medical personnel) who are closer to that exposure providing healthcare services to infected, witnessing the very deadly effects of the virus on patients or loved ones, witnessing losses of patients, family, or friends due to outbreak might experience these incidents of crisis potentially traumatic. People on the frontlines of the pandemic, such as healthcare personnel, first responders, grocery store workers, and other essential clerks, encounter the threat of possible exposure to the deadly virus regularly and on an ongoing daily basis. Similarly, the obliged population and those who might feel compelled and stuck, financially or otherwise, to work in close quarters without adequate personal protective equipment (e.g., factory workers) may be exposed to the threat of COVID-19 virus for perpetual period without being noticed or in an actual recourse may suffer negative mental health problems as a result. COVID-19 survivors, particularly those who might have been struggled through various medical procedures and prolonged hospital staycations, may likewise emerge with unique or multiple constellations of mental health reactions ranging from risk to resilience.

Additionally high-risk groups such healthcare professionals, doctors or first responders staying with patients may have experienced significant moral and mental injuries as a result of making unfathomable decisions on the job for the affected ones. (e.g., providing admission or ventilator access to one patient at the sacrifice of another). Similarly, avoidance of thoughts or emotions related to the COVID-19 crisis may increase the risk of experiencing trauma and related symptoms. Severe symptoms noticed of mental health disturbances can be depression or anxious mood due to significant concurrent life stressors (e.g., financial problems, job loss, and difficulties in relationships), low social support and connect, sleep disturbance, and emotional numbing or detachment from outside world due to social distancing. 345

³https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/company/coronavirus-human-experience

⁴ https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/human-behavior-in-the-time-of-covid-19

⁵ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7451060/

Story Time

To experience and relate the impacts of virus on mental health closely, let's see what it is to be affected with Covid-19? (Based on a story)

Through the eyes of 2 siblings infected by Covid

At first, they thought its seasonal flu. Since the weather in Bangalore was quite grey and cold from past 4 months. Carol's Brother started experiencing subtle throat pain in the next afternoon out of nowhere, later at night he started feeling even worse, and he developed a splitting headache and body ache and whole body felt hot. His body temperature was 101°F that same night.

Next day, they went to see a doctor and he prescribed some medicines and gave him an injection. The effect of injection lasted for few hours, then again the fever, headache and body ache was back! He took the medicines prescribed by him for next 4 days, His fever only lasted for 3 days. On 4th day he had No fever and headache but still had sore throat and was feeling very weak. This kind of body weakness and lack of energy is very hard to explain, as he could feel it in bones that he is weak and his energy was very low. He was cooking Rajma for breakfast (something spicy after eating simple and bland food for few days) but he got no aroma of the spices and that was when he got the first doubt. His fever was gone though. He called Carol and asked whether she is able to smell the spices in curry and she said no! Then he sprayed the strongest perfume in the house for 4 to 5 times on his hands and Carol's hand as well and they both got no smell. Moreover, both of them didn't have running nose. Both of them could not even get the taste of spices in Rajma, it was tasteless and bland.

This was the first time both of them noticed that they have lost their sense of taste and smell! She and her brother were both infected by the virus and they both fell ill on the same day itself. They were completely shocked as the fear in the air took a toll on their minds. Carol was fit to stay and cure at home whereas her brother needed the hospital treatment as his low oxygen level was a trouble area the next day du to weakness. They tried contacting many hospitals but due to scarcity all the beds were full. At the time of finding the hospital bed they almost lived the death because the treatment was really needed. Finally, after much struggle she was able to arrange a bed for his brother and he was taken! She started sobbing as the thoughts in her mind were discomforting her for her brother's health and for the loneliness with which she was let alone. Carol was told to stay home quarantined. After taking those medicines,

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she could feel the difference. Carol was feeling a little more active day by day and felt less body weakness. Her sense of taste and smell returned almost after 15 to 18 days.

Carol was all fine now, but the one who was not well was Carol's mind as she was experiencing acute depression and anxiety. Obviously, staying home alone with Covid and away from his brother made an impact on her attitude and mental health. She was trying to coping up every day and keep herself as calm she was able to. Her brother was discharged after a period of 14 days and the reunion was the heartwarming as covid affects more mentally than physically because one says "To survive this outbreak you need to have a strong mind first and then strong body" Both Siblings lifted and had each other's back and are trying to bring their lives back to normal which was disrupted due to this unprecedented event.

How should one tackle it?

Let us put the ways to tackle these impacts on human behavior and habits. Actually, the solution lies in the word "IMPACTS" itself:

- **I I**nsightful
- M Manifestation,
- P Personal Care
- A Acceptance
- C Consciousness
- **T T**o Be Grateful
- S Solidarity

INSIGHTFUL

"Empathy is the medicine, the world needs." - Judith Orloff MD

The coronavirus pandemic has led to unexpected changes and disruptions in almost every aspect of daily life. Increasing Restrictions and changing of guidelines all the time, though for our betterment still it's very certain to feel overwhelmed by our own anxieties. It is important to be insightful and practice empathy during this time, not only for others but for yourself as well to create a minimum required level of understanding and bond. In such times the true definition of insightful can be Empathy. Empathizing with others can make you feel much better and more connected. It also increases the likelihood about people reaching out and helping each other when in need. In addition to increasing helping behaviors and boosting social connectedness, empathizing with others also improves your ability to let your emotions spread in a positive way during times of stress. It also allows you to better manage balance between the anxieties you are experiencing without feeling overwhelmed.

Sometimes, we are very quick to criticize others without even making the effort to understand or empathize how their situation and experiences are impacting their choices. Yes, it's easy to lob criticism at others in a time of crisis, particularly for those who don't seem to be taking the following situation seriously. Try to remember and understand that everyone copes and reacts differently in such a time of hardships. People may also feel overwhelmed by conflicting information and some rumors from news sources and social media platforms. It is hard to maintain the sanity and insightfulness one needs. While you cannot control how others think and behaves, but can control your own actions and help society near you to develop a comfort and support they need by sharing positive and correct health information from reliable

and proper sources. Let others understand and observe your desire for physical distance and try to gently encourage family and friends to stay home, practice social distancing, wash their hands frequently, and self-isolate yourself in case they are experiencing any symptoms.

MANIFESTATION

"Fully inhale your dream and completely exhale manifestation of it." — T.F. Hodge Manifestation shouldn't be stressful, but it should be motivational. Motivation comes from both outside and inside of us. External or extrinsic, motivation is when we are compelled to do something for a reward such as for money, praise, or social recognition or any fear of punishment. Internal or Intrinsic, motivation is when we are pressurized by things that are personally gratifying, such as taking an interest, satisfying a curiosity, learning, problemsolving and success. Be kind to yourself! Take it easy and try to be calm in case you do not meet your daily targets in new culture of work from home or studies. In fact study and recognize your own patterns and motivators. Set yourself some positive deadlines. This creates a great help to keep on the job. If your projects and works sessions are long-term, break them down into smaller tasks with a healthy deadline for each parted ones. "There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure." — General Colin Powell

COVID-19 has altered our ways and planning to achieve dreams too. Not that we have changed our dreams but the way to travel the path needs to be mended and plans to cope up with the same. Another solution can be termed as Make Do and Mend, although many have lost something in this crisis, there's also an emerging evidence of people trying to create something new and innovative. Take your dreams seriously and keep working slowly and steadily towards them. Start where you are and be determined, because every step counts and it builds a step closer in the ladder of your success. Be okay with not being highly productive right now.

Personal care

People affected with the virus often being unaware that they may be symptom-free or with the mild symptoms circulate in the open and can transmit it to others as it is a contagious and fast spreading outbreak. Hence, it is important to accept the fact of staying indoors is the safest option to save yourself and stop the chain of transmission and quarantine yourself in case of symptoms experienced. Inform your parents, relatives or to to ones who is taking care of you if you are feeling sick and ask them to maintain social distancing to stop the spread.

Take appropriate breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news as it can be disturbing listening about the spread of the outbreak for multiple times in a day, applying same to social networks. Take good care of your body as it is said that your body is your first TEMPLE to worship it with care. Take a deep breath, meditate or stretch out. Make sure you are getting enough calories. Try inculcating habits of healthy eating, have nutritious and balanced meals as eating a diet high in processed foods is known to contribute to low mood and productivity. While a healthful diet can support good moods, focus and better productivity, exercise regularly for keeping your body active, have some sound sleep and avoid harmful substances. Part out some time for relaxing. Start to combine and work on things you have to do with activities and you enjoy. Reach out virtually to close friends or look into some virtual stress management tools and resources example: Daily 5 minute Journal. One can also connect to some mental health organizations who are offering free support and resources online.

Meditation is a highly effective way of dealing with stress, depression and anxiety. Rather than using it to stop an anxiety attack, meditation should be used as a daily preventive medicine for upcoming mental instabilities and built your mind strong enough to survive the impact as brain is an organ with very high metabolic and nutrient demands. To conclude the personal care habit it can be described as pointers below mentioned to follow daily for balanced and healthy life. Those pointers are:

- > SPREAD THE LOVE, NOT THE VIRUS
- > OFTEN, GIFT YOURSELF A SHORT BRAIN VACATION
- ➤ LOAD UP ON VEGETABLES AND AVOID UNHEALTHY CARBS
- > HERBS AND SPICES ARE YOUR NEW DAILY MEDICINE
- ➤ HAVE A SOUND AND GOOD SLEEP!

ACCEPTANCE

Accept the uncertainty that the outbreak is going to stay here for a while, yes its harder but a good way to avoid negativity. We all are facing so many unknowns and unexpected events right now. It's an adaptive response to fix something difficult that many of us are facing. But, when we don't have any clear solution for this difficulty one can lose the calm and experience more frustration. We may try to run away from problem-solving in the fear it might make things worse. Sometimes, one may not know how to deal with a problem, so they might try to avoid and ignore it. As it provides immediate relief this can fetch comfort for short term, but usually the thought catches up with us accordingly. Uncertainty is kind of hard to deal with. Being

humans, we might like feeling that we are in control of what is happening. It's ok to be not okay, it's okay to feel whatever you are feeling in this moment. Maybe you're even feeling multiple things at once happy to have more time with your kids simultaneously frustrated as to keep them entertained all the time is one kind of a job. There is no "wrong" or "right" way to cope up with the uncertain changes in our life.

It takes a lot of effort to keep it our sanity in place as and when we're coping with our emotions. If we try to fight against them or try to avoid or hide them, we may explode someday or react with the emotion we didn't really mean. It's a completely needed urge to avoid thinking about all the COVID-19-related inappropriate information right now, as it can even provide relief. But the avoidance required for throwing these thoughts takes energy, and it's short-lived and disruptive. We also have another options, Acknowledging, validating and letting ourselves experience our feelings will help us more, and will provide the some comfort and relief in the current situation. If we strive and decide to accept each other's emotions, it can sort things and cause less effort to solve stress issues. We all have our own insecurities and anxieties, but in this situation we should lose our kindness and face it with the thought of acceptance.

TO BE GRATEFUL

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul." – Henry Ward Beecher.

Gratitude is defined as the ability to recognize the goodness in your life, which is due to your surroundings as well as the actions of another person or a group of people. Emotions of gratitude may help you to cope with uncertainty and anxiety by letting your mind focus on the things in life that adds value, as well as which are in your control, and what you can give back to others. Cultivating an attitude of gratefulness can help build the feeling of resilience that helps you to cope up with the current problems or issues and provides a green signal to move forward despite of the challenges we face.COVID-19 has made people feel like as if their world was turned upside down overnight. There is a simultaneous struggle with the feeling of fear and panic all around. Practicing gratitude every day helps us to bring some stability to our life by getting us to focus on what is good rather than what is unpredictable or uncertain. These are few ways to be more grateful, try incorporating some of these practices into your everyday life especially during these hard times:

➤ Maintain a Gratitude Journal

Expressing gratitude helps you to feel more connected to other people in our life. Small gestures like this can make a significant change on well-being and brings you the feeling of satisfaction. It even allows you to focus and appreciate about another person's success, which brings us the feeling of happiness and satisfaction.

Don't force to build the said feeling

Having a hard time feeling grateful is completely natural, don't force yourself. One of the best thing one can do for themselves in such tender time is give yourself the grace and time to process your emotions, at their own pace. Unconditional self-acceptance and self-love is more important than ever. When our survival feels under threat we turn quicker to judge ourselves and others too. None of us are at our best right now. Practicing self-compassion and giving yourself the required space to accept your own thoughts and feelings first is critical as we are more judgemental towards others then we are more judgemental towards ourselves. Once we realize that we are imperfect, it will be easier to accept the imperfection in others too. Let's enjoy the feeling of being Perfectly Imperfect.

➤ Saying "THANK YOU"

The more you thank life, the more life gives you to be thankful for! – Anonymous

Thank you is the simplest and yet possibly most powerful means to convey gratitude. This simple word can change a negative moment into a positive one, Fights into friendship,

Arguments into Love, etc. Make sure you are generous while expressing gratitude and This will help to improve our own mindset towards those around us. Gratitude doesn't have to be something expensive, over the top or something significant. In fact, being thankful for something as small as the perfect parking spot can give our mood a little boost or a fresh cup of tea or pleasant weather can train your brain to see the good side of everything rather than the bad. Knowing that the words "thank you" are among the most powerful creators available to spread positivity, we hold an unlimited capacity to generate the "Thank You" positivity.

When we generate more positivity for ourselves, our positivity can bring about positivity in others. From there, we can work together to use the positive energy to be happier, better and more connected. Gratitude leads to happiness. Happiness is the ultimate positive attitude.

Positive attitude spreads out positive energy and vibe which is always a nice step towards positive mindset.

SOLIDARITY

"Every human being is called to solidarity in a world battling life and death."
- Ignacio Ellacuria

The COVID-19 outbreak have given us a sudden shock, whereas if we observe Solidarity is helping us the best to battle and cope up with this situation. Hopefully this outbreak ends all epidemics, we are gutting for our survival collectively and we have seen the emergence of a new global culture for the future. Learning to be cooperative regardless of caste or creed due to imminent deaths looming over us is one of the greatest strength during this hardships. Loneliness and Boredom are heading us to socialize with people virtually on social media platforms and connect to rebound the good old bonds again. Slowly learn to live in peace with ourselves. Solidarity is generally described as unity based on a similarity of interests, standards or objectives. We knew the meaning of solidarity before covid-19 but did not knew how to put the same in practice. There is always a burden of paying the bills and threat of being addictive to social media usage and outweighed social interaction and relations. One should realize that our lives have nearly no substance because we are starved on the diet of phone usage. Try to enrich our own lives, and start socializing as boredom can be one of the factor for increased social activities. We can turning to a choice of social media platforms for using our time practically. Hungry people turn to online videos and cookbooks to learn recipes, gamers to Discord servers and Reddit threads, and artists to social media posts about paintings and websites about doodling. With the chaotic pandemic of COVID-19, many organizations are working hard to turn the tide against the outbreak. The World Health Organization and the Red Cross are some examples of the above. They have teamed up to help victims affected by this disease and spreading instructions to take care of oneself. On the other hand, virtual meetings are held to maintain contact with each other. These virtual conversation helps in alleviating the pain and discomfort of not seeing our kith and kin.

"Upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all." Alexander the Great -"

Education systems adapted assisting students online to regain and re-track their lost academics. This sets as an excellent example of solidarity in such face of difficulties. To ensure the safety of their dear citizens', government are cooperating hand in hand to beat the pandemic. They are doing so in the hope that their country people get cured and its healthy distribution. What we can summarise is that even though solidarity has silently lied always in our minds, it has started to emerge fully during the pandemic situation. We should embrace it. One should group themselves lucky enough as it has grown more robust enough in these days.

Everyone knows that the impact of mental health due to COVID-19 on modern society behaviours might not be forgotten easily even after the normalcy returns. COVID has captured a major stack in all of our minds. We should try to slowly change as a society. After this pandemic, along with the many practices we have adopted and adapted to the same. Solidarity will most likely become a part and parcel of society as a whole if used in a righteous way. Importance of solidarity should be realized to ease the impacts due to covid-19 on human behaviour.

Washing hands should be followed as a ritual. Handshaking now is becoming a taboo as its prevention should be considered normal. Social distancing may become the new normal till the situation uplifts the veil of healthy environment. All of this can be learnt from the said word "Solidarity – Embrace the Solitude". Solidarity is the new way to humanity. Human psyche can be maintained in such times of the pandemic by adapting to solidarity. It has prepped us for uncertainties like this. Be thankful for it as it still remaining in the back of our minds, and saving us in these hard times. We can also help by interacting through our balconies, singing songs, playing games, or lighting candles for the frontline workers as these are some of the recreational ways to uplift the morale of the society and our neighborhood. The community will form strong individuals as this gesture and practices brings all of us close to each other by empathizing & being grateful.

Soon, we shall catch sight of this new world, gleaming like never before!

"This is the time to be slow,

Lie low to the wall

Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let

The wire brush of doubt

Scrape from your heart

All sense of yourself

And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,

Time will come good;

And you will find your feet

Again on fresh pastures of promise,

Where the air will be kind

And blushed with beginning." by John O'Donoghue (2008)

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