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The Views of Primary and Preschool Education Teachers on Classroom Motherhood

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ABSTRACT

Classroom motherhood has some duties like preparing the classroom, satisfying the child's needs, helping to the teacher, and making connections between parents and teachers out of the course time.

Although classroom motherhood is practiced frequently in Turkey, no research can be found about the subject. The aim of this study is to present the concept of "Classroom Motherhood", which is practiced frequently in Turkey, and evaluate the views of primary and preschool education teachers on "classroom motherhood". The data have been collected with a survey form that had been prepared by researchers. Its name is "The Views of Teachers about Classroom Motherhood". 91 female and 17 male teachers with a total of 108 have participated in this study. %66 of teachers who participated in the research had a classroom mother. % 79 of teachers noticed that the classroom motherhood is a good and useful method.

Key Words: Classroom motherhood, Family involvement, Primary school teachers, Preschool education teachers.

Sınıf ve Okulöncesi Eğitimi Öğretmenlerinin Sınıf Anneliği Hakkındaki Görüşleri

ÖZET

Sınıf annesi, sınıfta ders saatleri dışında, sınıfın düzenlenmesi, eksikliklerin giderilmesi, sınıftaki çocukların ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması konusunda öğretmene yardımcı olmak, diğer velilerle iletişimi sağlamak gibi görevlerde bulunmaktadır.

Ancak yapılan araştırmalar incelendiğinde; Türkiye’de sıklıkla uygulanan “sınıf anneliği” üzerine herhangi bir araştırmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sınıf ve okulöncesi eğitimi öğretmenlerinin Türkiye’de sıklıkla kullanılan “Sınıf Anneliği” uygulaması hakkındaki görüşlerini incelemektir. Veriler, araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanmış olan “Sınıf Anneliği Hakkında Öğretmen Görüşleri Anketi” ile toplanmıştır. Çalışmaya, 91 bayan, 17 erkek olmak üzere 108 öğretmen katılmıştır. Öğretmenlerin %66’sı, sınıf anneliği uygulamasını kullandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin % 79’u ise sınıf anneliğinin yararlı ve iyi bir uygulama olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sınıf anneliği, Aile katılımı, Sınıf öğretmenleri, Okulöncesi eğitimi öğretmeni.

INTRODUCTION

Identified as the process of behavior change in individuals, education has started with the beginning of history of humanity. Societies have developed various institutions in order to sustain their social livings, and as a result of institutionalizing the education, the schools have emerged. So, the school can be described as a social institution which is responsible of individual’s education. To fulfill this responsibility, it is vital to keep all elements in full coordination (Genç, 2005). The factors that support learning when the child goes through a successful process from birth to puberty are family, preschool educational institutions, schools, out-of-school programs and activities, high school education, social institutions like museums and libraries and other society based institutions (HPRF, 2006). If schools, families, teachers and parents can understand each other's potential to improve the education of the children, the schools can be refined. Children learn and grow at home, at school and in the community. So it is a social fact that youngsters learn simultaneously and continuously from their families, teachers, peers, relatives, part-time employers, and other adults in the community. For this reason, it can be said that the bridges of home, school, and community are inevitably interconnected (Töremen et al., 2008).

Family involvement is a systematical approach which is based on supporting and instructing families, increasing and sustaining the communication between the home and the school of the child and enriching the programs with the participations and contributions of parents. The process of family involvement, communicating and sharing information can be identified as a basic institution of the invisible program and a consistency bridge between children's worlds (Ensari and Zembat, 1999). The aims of parental involvement are to encourage families to undertake more effective roles in school administrations and activities, and to raise their awareness about the matter of education of children and youngsters with support from specialists (Töremen et al., 2008). The cooperation with the families depends on mutual trust, sharing of responsibilities and the mutual relationship between families and schools (Kasting, 1994). Therefore most of the researches made in the field of education in recent years and the activities in the extent of school developing stand on the cooperation between schools and parents, and participation of the parents (Gümüşeli, 2004). It has been determined that parental encouragement, activities, interest at home and parental involvement in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement (Epistein, 1985; Epistein, 2001; Fan ve Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Gümüşeli, 2004; Kusterer, 2009 and Woodbury, 2009). Additionally, Kephart (2007) and Otum (2006) state that parent involvement have positive influence on child development.

In the researches that give place to the views of families about participation in education, it has been determined that parents need to be guided, instructed and participate in the management process, that educations levels of families are insufficient, that parent involvement can't be carried out properly because of teacher based reasons and that participation is generally limited with helping the class activities and participating out-of-school activities (Kaya, 2002; Brooks, 2004; Akkaya, 2007; Işık, 2007; Köksal, 2008; Abbak, 2008). Beaty (2007) states that the programs that have the highest amount of involvement of families have the most lasting influence on children.

According to Morgan (1993), some teachers don't have the necessary knowledge and skill for making a cooperation with the parents. But, because the parents participate in the education process for the good of their children, they expect them to benefit from the education services in the most ideal way. In fulfilling these expectations, the parents play different roles. These roles can be listed as getting information, participating in decision of the administration, helping the school administrators and teachers, supporting the school financially, sharing their own professional

abilities with the school, taking a role in the education services personally, benefitting from the education services, and choosing to stay out of all activities (cited by Beydoğan, 2006).

Epistein (1986, 1992) described family-school interactions in six levels (Hoover- Dempsey and Walker, 2002):

1. Basic obligations of families (e.g., providing for children's health and safety);
2. Basic obligations of schools (e.g., communication about school requirements);
3. Involvement of parents at school (e.g., attendance at programs, volunteering);
4. Parent involvement in learning activities at home;
5. Involvement in decision-making (e.g., school advisory councils);
6. Collaboration with community organizations (e.g., businesses, community agencies).

Based on volunteers, the classroom motherhood which is performed in Turkey as a tradition, can be described as a substitute selected from among the students' mothers. The substitute's name is "classroom mother".

Classroom Motherhood

Classroom motherhood has some duties like preparing the classroom, satisfying children's needs, helping to the teacher, making connections between parents and teachers out of the course time. This situation allows the teachers and administrators to work easily and allocate time to their students.

In the School Motherhood Model for School Safety, which was introduced by Töremen (2008), the classroom motherhood has stood as an integral part. In this model, one classroom mother for each class is selected at the first meeting of each school year from among students' mothers. The duty term of a classroom mother is one year. Classroom mothers take a close interest in the problems of students who are from the classrooms they represent. Activities to be made in the classroom are determined by getting together with the mothers of other students before every monthly board meeting. While carrying on her activities, the classroom mother works in cooperation with the mothers of the students from her own classroom, and with other classroom mother representatives, school mothers and school

administrations. She brings the matters and problems for which she has difficulties to find solutions, and she sets the agenda to be discussed at the School Mothers Board. The board gets together once in every month with the participation of school's guide teacher, coordinator teacher, volunteer teachers, deputy principal, the school mother and classroom mothers. At the board, which is chaired by the school mother, the problems of classroom mothers and offers to solve them, and their opinions are listened. Reciprocal expectation between the school administration and school mothers are discussed at this board. Moreover, all social activities to be held in or out of school are planned at this board. The demands of students' mothers and classroom representative mothers shape the decisions to be taken by the board.

Nowadays, especially in Turkey, schools are criticized very often on the grounds that they include programs that have nothing to do with social life, which do not contain examples from social life, and which do not highlight school-environment cooperation at a sufficient level. In the studies about parent involvement has determined that school administrators are not interested in school-parent dialog and they do not have the necessary knowledge. And teachers find themselves unsatisfactory in ensuring the school-parent communication. Also school administrators, teachers and parents have a common view on the necessity of an effective cooperation and communication in realising the school-parent cooperation. However, most of the participants believe in the necessity of the school-parent dialog, but they don't put the necessary effort on the subject (Kaşıkçı, 1996; Doğan, 2000; Gökçe, 2000; Demirbulak, 2000). Nonetheless parent involvement activities in the preschool education institutions can't be executed in the way it is supposed to be. Also, the teachers are not well-informed and adequate in the execution process (Işık, 2007).

Aim

Although classroom motherhood is performed frequently in Turkey, there isn't enough research on the subject. The aim of this study is to describe the concept of "Classroom Motherhood" that is used in Turkey, and evaluate the ideas of primary school and preschool education teachers on "classroom motherhood". With this aim, answers to the following question are searched:

1. Does the number of teachers using classroom motherhood method change by gender and the assigned location?

2. Do the duties of classroom mothers' change by teacher's gender and the assigned location?

3. What do teachers think about classroom mothers building bridges between teachers and students' parents?

4. How is the selection process of classroom mothers organized?

5. According to teachers, what are the matters, which are most positively affected by classroom motherhood?

The limitation of this study is the lack of resources on classroom motherhood. This study is important in terms of being the first scientific study on the subject of classroom motherhood and being a reference for further researches.

METHOD

The survey model has been used in this study. That's the best model that aims to describe a situation as it is.

The teachers were randomly selected for the population of this research. 91 female and 17 male teachers with a total of 108 participated in this study. 30 of these teachers were preschool teachers and 78 of them were primary school teachers.

41 of these teachers worked in city centers, 35 of them worked in town centers and 32 of them worked in villages.

The data have been collected by using a survey form, which had been prepared by researchers. The survey's name is "The Views of Teachers about Classroom Motherhood". A part of the survey asked personal information including gender and the place of duty (city, town and village), and another part was about classroom motherhood asking 5 open-ended questions.

The survey form has been given to those randomly chosen preschool and primary school teachers by researchers. "Statistical Package Program for Social Sciences" (SPSS 17.0) has been used to analyze the collected data and the frequency and percentage distributions have been listed in tables. However, chi-square test was used as the statistical analysis to see if there are significant differences.

FINDINGS

The findings obtained from this study give opportunity to evaluate the ideas of primary school and preschool education teachers on "classroom motherhood".

The views of teachers about classroom motherhood are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Views of Teachers about Classroom Motherhood

Views	Yes		No		Empty	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Had a classroom motherhood	71	65,7	37	34,3	-	-
Classroom motherhood is a good and useful method	86	79,6	22	20,4	-	-
Classroom mothers knew students' names	48	67,6	22	31	1	1,4
Classroom mother in the class made occupations easier	78	72,2	23	21,3	7	6,5
Classroom mothers made a bridge between teachers and parents	95	88	13	12	-	-
Classroom mothers organized social events with parents	60	55,6	35	32,4	13	12
Total	108	100	108	100	108	100

According to Table 1, 65,7% of teachers who participated in the research had a classroom mother. 79,6% of teachers noticed that the classroom motherhood is a good and useful method and 67,6% of teachers indicated that the classroom mothers knew students' names. 72,2% of teachers thought that having a classroom mother in the class made their jobs easier, 88% of teachers stated that classroom mother helped them make a bridge between them and the parents and 55,6% of teachers stated that the classroom mothers organized social events with the parents.

As it is seen, although it is not an official practice, most teachers use the classroom motherhood practice and state that they are pretty satisfied with it.

Classroom mothers' duties according to primary school and preschool teachers are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Duties of Classroom Mothers according to Gender and Place of Duty

Duties of Classroom Mothers	Gender				Place of duty					
	Male		Female		City		Town		Village	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Meeting with other parents and making a bridge between them	4	36,36	32	52,5	13	39	17	62,96	4	33,33
Helping the teacher on matters out of the classroom	4	36,36	13	21,3	10	30	4	14,81	3	25
Helping the teacher on the class's financial problems	3	27,27	27	44,3	11	33	13	48,15	6	50
Helping the teacher on class' needs and making up deficiencies	3	27,27	22	36,1	10	30	10	37,04	5	41,67
Work-sharing among parents in order to organize fairs, celebration programs and other special day activities	1	9,09	9	14,8	4	12	4	14,81	2	16,67
Working with teacher to help the students who don't have good economic conditions	-	-	2	3,28	1	3	1	3,70	-	-
Helping the teacher in some activities like school trips, going to the cinema or theatre, and year end organizations	-	-	11	18	4	12	5	18,52	2	16,67
Putting the class in order and providing its hygiene	-	-	7	11,5	2	6,1	4	14,81	1	8,33

According to Table 2; in regards of gender, 36,3% of male teachers and 52,5 % female teachers think that the duty of classroom mothers is meeting with other parents and making a bridge between them. 27,27 % of male teachers and 44,3% female teachers think that the duty of classroom mothers is helping the teacher on the class's financial problems and 36,36% of male teachers and % 21,3 of female teachers think that it is to help the teacher on class' needs and make up deficiencies.

In regards of assigned location, 39 % of teachers working in cities and 62,96 % of teachers working in towns and 33,33% teachers working in villages think that the duty of classroom mothers is meeting with other parents and making a bridge between them. Also 33 % of teachers working in cities, 48,15% of teachers working in towns and 50% teachers working in villages think that the duty of classroom mothers is helping the teacher about class's financial problems, 30% of teachers working in cities, 37% of teachers working in towns and 41,6% teachers working in villages think that the duty of classroom mothers is helping the teacher on class' needs and making up deficiencies.

While the classroom motherhood is most used in city centers and towns in order to meet with other parents and make a bridge between them,

it is used to help the teacher about the class' financial problems in villages. It is seen that both male and female teachers use the classroom motherhood to meet with other parents and make a bridge between them.

Chi-square tests about the duties of classroom mothers in the eyes of primary and preschool teachers are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Chi-square Test Results about the Duties of Classroom Mothers in the Eyes of Primary and Preschool Teachers in respect of Gender and the Place of Duty

Chi-Square Tests	Gender			Place of Duty		
	Value	df	p	Value	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	12,80(a)	8	0,20	6,86(a)	16	0,98
Likelihood Ratio	11,25	8	0,19	7,69	16	0,96
Linear-by-Linear Association	0,15	1	0,70	0,004	1	0,95

According to chi-square test results in Table 3, a significant difference has not been found between the duties of classroom mothers in respect of gender and the place of duty ($p>0,05$).

Opinions of teachers about the classroom mothers on the matters that classroom mothers lay a bridge over with other students' parents are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Opinions of Teachers on Classroom Mothers Acting as a Bridge between the Matters and the Parents of the Students in respect of Gender and the Place of Duty

Opinions	Gender				Place of duty					
	Male		Female		City		Town		Village	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Students' parents find the opportunity to deliver their requests and complaints through the classroom mother	2	18,18	9	14,8	6	18	4	14,81	2	16,67
She deals with matters during a school trip	-	-	5	8,2	4	12	1	3,70	1	8,33
Helps in determining and providing the needs of the classroom	1	9,09	2	3,28	2	6,1	1	3,70		-
Helps the teacher in informing students' parents and delivering announcements	2	18,18	14	23	9	27	6	22,22	1	8,33
Provides information about the socio-economic and cultural features of the region	1	9,09	2	3,28	1	3	2	7,41		-
Lends assistance in organization and demonstrations and provides the needs such as costumes or the setting	-	-	4	6,56	4	12	-	-		-
Lends assistance in collecting money for financial needs	1	9,09	3	4,92	1	3	3	11,11		-
Helps to persuade students' parents to pay visits to school	-	-	1	1,64	1	3	-	-		-

According to Table 4, 18,8% of male teachers, who think that classroom mothers act as a bridge between the matters and the parents of the students, stated that they could deliver their requests and complaints through classroom mothers; 18,8% of them stated that they could inform students' parents and give announcements to them through the classroom mothers.

23% of female teachers stated that they could inform students' parents and give announcements to them through the classroom mother.

27% of the teachers who work in the city center stated that they could inform students' parents and deliver announcements to other students' parents through the classroom mother.

22,2% of the teachers who work in the country stated that they could inform students' parents and give announcements to them through the classroom mother; 14,8% of them stated that they could deliver their requests and complaints through classroom mothers.

In city centers and towns, the classroom motherhood is mostly used when teachers want to inform students' parents and deliver announcements, while the students' parents in villages find the opportunity to deliver their requests and complaints through the classroom mother. It is seen that both female and male teachers mostly use the classroom motherhood to inform students' parents and deliver their announcements.

Chi-square test results on opinions of primary school and preschool teachers on classroom mothers acting as a bridge between the matters and the parents of the students are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Chi-square Test Results about Opinions of Teachers about Classroom Mothers Acting as a Bridge between the Matters and the Parents of the Students in Respect of Gender and the Place of Duty

Chi-Square Tests	Gender			Place of Duty		
	Value	df	p	Value	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	26,24(a)	7	0,00*	19,15(a)	16	0,26
Likelihood Ratio	31,24	7	0,00	20,25	16	0,21
Linear-by-Linear Association	15,46	1	0,00	3,20	1	0,07
n of Valid Cases	47			49		

*p<0,05

According to chi-square test results in Table 5, in respect of gender, there is a significant difference between the opinions of primary school and preschool teachers about classroom mothers acting as a bridge between the matters and the parents of the students ($p < 0,05$). But, a significant difference has not been found between the opinions of primary school and preschool teachers about classroom mothers acting as a bridge between the matters and the parents of the students, in respect of place of duty ($p > 0,05$).

Criteria of teachers in selecting a classroom mother are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Criteria of Teachers in Selecting a Classroom Mother

In selecting a classroom mother	f	%
They preferred a person suggested by the parents	9	12,7
Teachers picked one from among volunteers	54	76,1
Teachers selected a mother who favor for him/her	8	11,3
Total	71	100

According to Table 6, in order to select a classroom mother; 76,1% of teachers picked one from among volunteers. Besides, 63,4% of teachers stated that classroom mothers should change every year. One of the roles of classroom mothers is volunteering. The volunteer parent is the person who is responsible of organizing out-of-class activities and helping the teacher when necessary (Gordon, 1969: Akt. Sucuka & Kimmert, 2005; Epstein, 2000). It has been decided even in this research that classroom mothers are selected on the basis of volunteering.

The matters, which are most positively affected by classroom motherhood, are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The Matters that are Most Positively Affected by Classroom Motherhood in Rrespect of Gender and the Place of Duty

Issues	Gender				Place of duty					
	Male		Female		City		Town		Village	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Communication with students' parents	1	9,09	16	26,2	5	15	8	29,63	3	25
Helps out with meeting the needs of the classroom. Helpful in shopping.	-	-	8	13,1	5	15	3	11,11	-	-
Useful in the execution of financial affairs	1	9,09	8	13,1	4	12	3	11,11	2	16,67
Rather useful for allocating more time for education	1	9,09	6	9,84	4	12	1	3,70	2	16,67
Gives help to the teacher in school trips and organizations	1	9,09	3	4,92	3	9,1	-	-	-	-
Gives help to the teacher in extra-curricular activities	1	9,09	2	3,28	1	3	2	7,41	-	-
Achieves communication at any meeting	-	-	1	1,64	1	3	-	-	-	-
It is the classroom mother that is most helpful in case of a school trip	-	-	1	1,64	1	3	-	-	-	-
Very helpful in arranging and organizing the classroom	1	9,09	1	1,64	1	3	1	3,70	-	-

According to Table 7, 26,2% of the female teachers find classroom teachers most helpful when the communicate with students' parents, 13,1% of them find classroom mothers most helpful when they meet the needs of the classroom and when they shop and 13,1% of them find classroom mothers most helpful when they deal with financial matters.

15% of the teachers who work in the city center find classroom teachers most helpful when they communicate with students' parents, 15% of them find classroom mothers most helpful when they meet the needs of the classrooms and when they shop; 29,6% of the teachers who work in the country find classroom teachers most helpful when they communicate with students' parents.

25% of the teachers who work in villages find classroom teachers most helpful when they communicate with students' parents, 16,67% of them find classroom mothers most helpful when they deal with financial matters; and 16,67% of them find classroom mothers most helpful when they need to allocate more time for education.

When the opinions of all teachers, who work in city centers, countries or in the villages, about the most positive effect of classroom motherhood are examined, it is seen that they all point "communication with students' parents".

Chi-square test results about matters that are most positively affected by classroom motherhood are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Chi-Square Test Results about Matters That are Most Positively Affected by Classroom Motherhood in respect of Gender and the Place of Duty

Chi-Square Tests	Gender			Place of duty		
	Value	df	p	Value	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	6,90(a)	8	0,55	12,95(a)	16	0,68
Likelihood Ratio	6,48	8	0,59	16,55	16	0,42
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,78	1	0,10	0,33	1	0,56
N of Valid Cases	52			50		

According to chi-square test results in Table 8, in respect of gender and the place of duty, there is not a significant difference between the matters that are most positively affected by classroom motherhood ($p>0,05$).

CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

As a result of the study, it has been determined that the majority of teachers included in the scope of the study, used the classroom mother system in their classrooms and found it useful. Moreover, it is seen that teachers consider classroom mothers convenient in classrooms and they think that classroom mothers make a bridge between other students' parents and teachers. The majority of teachers stated that they chose one of the volunteers as the classroom mother.

According to primary school and preschool teachers, classroom mothers' duties can be listed as meeting with other parents and making a bridge between them, helping the teacher about the class' financial problems, helping the teacher about class' needs and completing the lacking materials, helping the teacher about matters outside of class, easing the teacher's loads in some activities like school trips, cinema or theatre days or end of the year entertainments, and task-sharing among parents in organizations like fairs, celebration programs and other special days. A significant difference has not been found between the duties of classroom mothers in respect of gender and the place of duty. Both male and female teachers use the classroom mother system to meet with other parents and to make a bridge between them.

In a research investigating the experiences and approaches of classroom management by Akar (2010) it was found that classroom mother

system was an effective method in building a bridge between teachers and parents. According to Ersoy (2006), classroom mothers enable the teachers to find the opportunity to get closely acquainted with parents, evaluate the children's experiences before they start school in a better way and prepare their programs accordingly through family participation practices. And through the family participation practices, families can be informed about the needs of teachers and schools and they can give them the necessary support. According to the result of this research; classroom mothers act as a communication instrument between parents and teachers and they play an important role in obtaining family participation.

When teachers' opinions about the most positive effects of classroom mothers are examined, it is seen that they all point to "mediators with students' parents". When situations where classroom mothers use to build a bridge between teachers and students' parents are examined, it is seen that teachers cooperate with classroom mothers when they are to respond to the requests and complaints of students' parents, when they are to inform other students' parents and give announcements, and when they are to organize demonstrations and meet certain needs such as costumes and some other things. In city centers and towns, the classroom mother system is mostly used when teachers want to inform students' parents and deliver announcements, while the students' parents in villages find the opportunity to deliver their requests and complaints through the classroom mother.

A successful program has various features such as providing family participation and giving different roles to families like being a listener, taking on a task, supporting the program, consulting and decision-making (Ömeroğlu and Can Yaşar, 2005). Although the concept of classroom mother system doesn't rank among family participation activities, it is widely used in Turkey. The participation of families to the classroom activities can be provided through various methods like observing the class and the programs, filing, recording, taking part in activities like protecting or repairing the objects in the class and helping the teacher in social organizations, field trips and outdoor recreations (Aral, Kandır and Can Yaşar, 2000; Temel, Aksoy and Kurtulmuş, 2010). This way, teachers can take better care of children individually (Davies, 1997).

When the thoughts on classroom mother system are analyzed, it is seen that classroom mothers contribute to these activities, help the teacher in every way and strengthen the communication between the teacher and parents. Thus, teachers can spare time for children in class and they can plan and program their education methods in a better way.

In addition to this, the practice of classroom motherhood provides great convenience for teachers in building the school-family-society cooperation. That's why this practice must be generalized among all teachers.

The classroom mother system is a useful practice for reducing the workload of teachers. The duties of classroom mothers should be specified clearly in regulations. For this reason, the extent of the practice should be determined through scientific studies.

Studies about classroom mother system can be rarely found in the related literature. For this reason, it is considered that carrying out studies on classroom mother system will be useful. Reflecting the positive effects of this subject to the education practices can be ensured by concentrating on scientific studies on classroom motherhood.

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