



**English Learning Anxiety Among Eighth-Grade Students at
Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School**

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Abstract

English Learning Anxiety Among Eighth-Grade Students at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School. This research examines English learning anxiety among eighth-grade students at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School, where preliminary observations showed students avoiding participation due to fear of mistakes, peer judgment, and perceived difficulty of English. Using descriptive quantitative methodology with purposive sampling (N=25), data was collected through questionnaires (FLCAS) and observations. Results revealed moderate anxiety levels (mean FLCAS score=61.84), with male students displaying higher anxiety (63.07) than females (60.00). Fear of negative evaluation emerged as the predominant anxiety factor, exacerbated by limited English exposure and resources in this EFL context. These findings highlight the need for anxiety-aware pedagogy in Islamic boarding schools to create safer language learning environments.

Keywords : language anxiety, EFL learners, Islamic boarding school

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A. Introduction

The phenomenon of foreign language anxiety has emerged as a critical area of investigation in English language education,¹ particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language.² In Indonesia, where English holds official status as the primary foreign language in national education,³ learners frequently encounter psychological barriers that hinder their language acquisition process.⁴ This study examines the specific case of English learning anxiety among eighth-grade students at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School, an educational institution that presents unique linguistic and cultural challenges for English language learners.

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia represent a distinctive educational environment where students must simultaneously navigate multiple language demands,⁵ including mastering Arabic for religious studies while acquiring English as a foreign language.⁶ Preliminary observations at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School revealed significant signs of language anxiety among students, manifested through avoidance behaviors, reduced classroom participation, and visible discomfort during English speaking activities. These observations align with Horwitz et al.'s conceptualization of foreign language anxiety, which identifies three primary components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.⁷ The boarding school environment, with its constant peer interactions and emphasis on religious

¹ Shan Wang, "The Relationship Between Learner Beliefs and Foreign Language Anxiety of Chinese EFL International Students," *International Education Forum* 2, no. 2 (2024): 28–34, <https://doi.org/10.26689/ief.v2i2.6746>; Meihua Liu and Bin Wu, "Teaching Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety Among Chinese College English Teachers," *Sage Open* 11, no. 2 (2021).

² Abegail L Lao and Viola P Buenaventura, "Foreign Language Anxiety and Reading Motivation of Students," *American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation* 3, no. 3 (2024): 45–55, <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajmri.v3i3.2693>; DQHE Putri, D Destari, and A Komariah, "Analysis of Speech Acts in Natasha Berg's Presentation on ChatGPT: A Pragmatic Examination Drawing From Searle and Yule's Theory," ... *Journal of Language Studies*, 2024, <https://journalweb.org/ojs/index.php/El-Syaker/article/view/278>.

³ anis komariah Rizkiatun aulia, dina destari, "Student's Perception of Using Google Translate at English Education Department UINSI Samarinda," *El-Syaker: Samarinda International Journal of Language Studies* 1 (2024): 1.

⁴ Tira Nur Fitria, "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Standard in Bahasa Indonesia Bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) Textbook: A Competency Mapping Analysis," *Lingua Didaktika Jurnal Bahasa Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa* 17, no. 2 (2023): 139, <https://doi.org/10.24036/ld.v17i2.124244>.

⁵ Diah Aulia Ulfah et al., "The Effect of Muhawarah Method on Speaking Skills of Arabic Language Education Students at UINSI Samarinda," *El-Syaker: Samarinda International Journal of Language Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 42–54.

⁶ Ahmad Fadhel Syakir Hidayat et al., "Keterampilan Berbahasa Arab Dalam Literatur Akademik Indonesia: Tren Penelitian Dalam Jurnal Terakreditasi SINTA (2018-2022)," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 4, no. 1 (2024): 50–64; Elly Malihah et al., "Islamic Boarding School Based on Women's Empowerment and Equality," *Komunitas International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 15, no. 1 (2023): 91–98, <https://doi.org/10.15294/komunitas.v15i1.39561>.

⁷ Asiiia Erzhanova, Valeriya Koncha, and Kharkhurin Anatoliy, "Exploring Xenoglossophobia: How Subjective Socio-Demographic Status and Language Experience Relate to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety?," *Психологические Исследования* 16, no. 90 (2023): 3, <https://doi.org/10.54359/ps.v16i90.1435>.

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recitation, may inadvertently amplify these anxiety factors, creating a complex psychological landscape for language learning.

The theoretical foundation of this research draws upon several key frameworks in language acquisition research. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) provides the primary measurement tool.⁸ while Krashen said that the Affective Filter Hypothesis offers explanatory power for understanding how anxiety creates psychological barriers to language processing.⁹ Contemporary research in Asian EFL contexts further informs the study's approach, particularly regarding cultural variations in anxiety manifestation.¹⁰ Previous studies in Indonesian settings have established baseline data about language anxiety in public schools, but significant gaps remain regarding Islamic boarding school environments.¹¹

This research addresses several critical gaps in the existing literature. First, it provides much-needed empirical data about language anxiety in Indonesia's pesantren system, which educates a substantial portion of the nation's students but remains underrepresented in language acquisition research. Second, the study employs quantitative methods to complement the predominantly qualitative approaches used in previous studies of similar contexts. Third, it investigates potential gender differences in anxiety experiences within this unique educational setting, an aspect rarely examined in prior research.

The significance of this research extends beyond theoretical contributions to practical educational applications. Findings may inform teacher training programs and curriculum development specifically tailored for Islamic boarding schools, helping educators create more supportive language learning environments. As Indonesia continues to emphasize English proficiency as part of its global competitiveness strategy while maintaining its distinctive Islamic educational traditions, research that bridges these priorities becomes increasingly valuable.

This study aims to achieve three primary objectives: first, to measure the overall level of English learning anxiety among eighth-grade students at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School using standardized assessment tools; second, to identify the most prevalent forms of language anxiety in this specific educational context; and third, to analyze how these anxiety manifestations correlate with students' language performance and classroom behaviors. By addressing these objectives, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence that can guide pedagogical interventions and policy decisions for English language education in Indonesia's Islamic boarding school system.

The investigation employs a descriptive quantitative research design, utilizing survey instruments adapted from the FLCAS along with classroom

⁸ Elaine K Horwitz, Michael B Horwitz, and Joann Cope, "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety," *The Modern Language Journal* 70, no. 2 (1986): 125–32.

⁹ Stephen Krashen, "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition" (Pergamon Press, 1982).

¹⁰ Jean-Marc Dewaele and Peter D MacIntyre, "The Two Faces of Janus? Anxiety and Enjoyment in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 4, no. 2 (2014): 237–74.

¹¹ Ridwan Nafiul Faqih, "Learners' Technique of Speaking Used to Reduce Anxiety in the Classroom: State University of Surabaya," *Scripta English Department Journal* 10, no. 2 (2023): 295–303, <https://doi.org/10.37729/scripta.v10i2.3781>.

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observation protocols. The participant pool consists of 25 eighth-grade students selected through purposive sampling, ensuring representation across gender and proficiency levels. Data analysis focuses on identifying patterns of anxiety manifestation, with particular attention to how the boarding school environment may influence these patterns differently than conventional school settings.

Understanding the dynamics of English learning anxiety in pesantren environments carries important implications for language education policy and practice in Indonesia. The findings may help educators develop targeted strategies to reduce anxiety barriers while respecting the cultural and religious values inherent to Islamic education. Furthermore, the study contributes to broader discussions about affective factors in language learning, particularly in multilingual societies where learners must navigate multiple language systems simultaneously. As English continues to play a pivotal role in Indonesia's educational and economic development, research that illuminates the psychological challenges of English acquisition in distinctive learning environments like pesantren becomes increasingly essential for developing effective, culturally-sensitive language education approaches.

B. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to identify and explain the factors influencing English language anxiety among students.¹² The sample consisted of 25 eighth-grade students from Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School, selected using random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), consisting of 25 items modified to suit the students' context. Additionally, observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data on speaking anxiety in English.

Data collection involved administering the questionnaire to students, which was translated into Indonesian to ensure accurate comprehension. Anxiety levels were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with respondents selecting answers based on their anxiety levels. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation to measure the anxiety levels. An independent sample t-test was also employed to analyze gender differences in anxiety levels.

The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested using the FLCAS questionnaire, which has been internationally recognized as valid, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed to identify patterns of anxiety, and the findings were used to design pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing anxiety in English language learning in Islamic boarding school settings. According to Sugiyono in his book *Educational Research Methodology* states that "Quantitative research methods can be interpreted as research methods that are based on positivist philosophy, used to research certain populations and samples, sampling techniques are generally carried out randomly, data collection uses research instruments, has been analyzed quantitative/statistical data that aims to test a predetermined

¹² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: (Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R & D)* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2008); John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

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hypothesis. The population of this research are the students of Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School Loa Kulu, in the Academic Year 2024/2025. There is only one class. The sample is the object being studied and is considered to represent the entire population. According to Sugiyono, the total sampling technique is that all members of the population are used as samples. This research sample was from 25 students of the VIII class. this research used simple random sampling to determine the sample.

C. Findings and Discussion

As mentioned in the research methodology, to find out the students' anxiety in English Learning, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 25 statements with five options. To give a score for the answer, the researcher gave five alternative answers with different values. The five options were assessed using the Likert scale rating. They are: 5 points for answer Strongly Agree, 4 points for answer Agree, 3 points for answer Undecided, 2 points for answer Disagree, and 1 point for answer Strongly Disagree.

In determining the Sum Score Anxiety Level Formula distance interval formula is needed, where you need to know is the maximum score was 106 and the minimum score was 31 and the total interval was 5. Then the distance interval of 15 is obtained so that the total number of scores that the researcher can obtain by adding the scores to each statement is as follows;

Table 1. Level of Anxiety

Interval Score	Level of Anxiety
31 – 46	Not anxiety
>46 – 61	Mild anxiety
>61 – 76	Medium anxiety
>76 – 91	Severe anxiety
>91 – 106	Anxiety is very heavy

The questionnaire was about the students' anxiety in English Learning. The maximum score was 106 points, and the minimum score was 31 points. After scoring the questionnaire results, the researcher described the score list of the questionnaire as follows:

Table 2. Score List of The Questionnaire

No	Respondent	Students anxiety score	Category interval score
1	A	51	Mild anxiety
2	B	76	Medium anxiety
3	C	54	Mild anxiety
4	D	46	Not anxiety
5	E	72	Medium anxiety
6	F	57	Mild anxiety
7	G	41	Not anxiety
8	H	81	Severe anxiety

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No	Respondent	Students anxiety score	Category interval score
9	I	49	Mild anxiety
10	J	69	Medium anxiety
11	K	73	Medium anxiety
12	L	37	Not anxiety
13	M	47	Mild anxiety
14	N	31	Not anxiety
15	O	38	Not anxiety
16	P	69	Medium anxiety
17	Q	77	Severe anxiety
18	R	106	Anxiety is very heavy
19	S	51	Mild anxiety
20	T	101	Anxiety is very heavy
21	U	66	Medium anxiety
22	V	36	Not anxiety
23	W	70	Medium anxiety
24	X	80	Severe anxiety
25	Y	68	Medium anxiety
Total score		1.546	
Maximum		106	
Minimum		31	

The table above shows that the total score of 25 respondents who were given a questionnaire on English learning anxiety was 1.546, with a maximum score of 106 and a minimum score of 31.

To see further in detail which component of language anxiety was perceived by the participants as anxiety-provoking in learning English, all FLCAS items were analyzed based on four elements related to foreign language anxiety, namely, communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The mean score and standard deviation from all items were calculated to figure out which items were the most concerning to the students. The mean score above 3.15 was categorized to point a high anxiety level, meanwhile the mean score below 3.00 was considered to indicate low anxiety level.

Table 3. Data Analysis for Communication Apprehension Items

No	Question	N	Mean	SD
2.	I feel uncomfortable when facing English lessons	25	3.04	0.68
5.	I start to panic when I have to speak English in front of the class without any prior preparation	25	2.80	1.44
6.	I am afraid when I do not understand what my teacher says in English	25	2.28	0.54

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No	Question	N	Mean	SD
7.	I am upset when I do not understand what my teacher means when correcting my mistakes	25	1.64	0.49
9.	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules that must be learned in order to be able to speak English	25	1.96	0.73
10.	I feel that I make mistakes every time I speak English	25	2.76	0.93
12.	I feel insecure when speaking English in class	25	1.48	0.65
17.	I feel worried if my teacher asks me to make a conversation with my friends	25	3.08	1.19
20.	I feel worried if I speak English among people I have just met and meet them for the first time	25	4.08	1.22
21.	After my teacher explains the material, I do not dare to ask even though I do not understand the material that has been explained	25	2.64	0.95
25.	In learning English, if my teacher asks me a question, I will ask my friends to help me answer it	25	2.72	1.28

Communication apprehension is anxiety that arises when someone has to interact using a foreign language, such as English. Based on the data in Table XI, the study participants gave a medium average score on all apprehensive communication items. This shows that although participants experience anxiety when communicating in English, their anxiety levels are not high overall. Of the 11 items, the highest anxiety was experienced by participants when they had to speak English among people they had just met. Item 20. This finding is in line with the theory that new social situations can worsen communication anxiety due to the pressure to adapt to an unfamiliar environment. In addition, the tendency of participants to ask friends for help when asked by teachers Item 25 reflects an avoidance strategy that is commonly used by individuals with moderate levels of communication anxiety.

Table 4. Data Analysis for Test Anxiety Items

No	Question	N	Mean	SD
1.	I still feel anxious, even though I have prepared beforehand	25	2.00	0.76
3.	I feel more tense and nervous when studying English than other subjects	25	1.80	0.87
8.	I often think about skipping English class	25	3.24	0.44
15.	I worry about the consequences if I get a bad grade in English class	25	1.52	0.51

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No	Question	N	Mean	SD
22.	I tremble when I know my name will be called when studying English	25	1.44	0.77
23.	I choose to sit in the back row when there is an English class	25	2.80	0.71

Test anxiety refers to the fear of failure that arises in an evaluation situation. The data in Table XII show that participants gave medium to low average scores on test anxiety items. The item with the highest score was the participant's tendency to think about skipping English class, Item 8. This indicates that the pressure to face English class, especially without preparation, is the main trigger for anxiety. Meanwhile, the participants' response to the tension when learning English Item 3 actually showed a lower level of anxiety compared to other subjects. This finding strengthens the idea that test anxiety in the language context is not always dominant, but is highly dependent on the individual's perception of the specific challenges faced.

TABLE V

Table 5. Data Analysis for Fear of Negative Evaluation Items

No	Question	N	Mean	SD
4.	I feel nervous when my English teacher asks me questions that I don't know before	25	1.84	0.85
11.	I'm afraid of being laughed at by my friends in class when I speak English	25	2.92	0.91
13.	I feel worried about making mistakes when learning English	25	1.72	0.84
14.	I'm embarrassed to volunteer to answer questions from my English teacher	25	1.24	0.66
16.	I'm afraid that my teacher will correct every mistake I make when speaking English	25	2.76	0.83
18.	I always feel that my friends in class speak English better than me	25	4.24	0.93
19.	I'm afraid to give criticism if my teacher makes a mistake in delivering English material	25	2.04	0.89
24.	I just keep quiet if the teacher asks me to ask about the subject	25	3.20	0.96

Fear of negative evaluation is related to the worry of being judged or criticized by others. In Table XIII, participants gave medium to high average scores on items related to this fear. The highest scoring item was participants' feeling that classmates were more proficient in English Item 18 This reflects participants' tendency to compare their abilities with others, which can trigger anxiety due to competitive pressure. In addition, participants' fear of being laughed at when speaking English Item 11 indicates that the social environment of the classroom plays a major role in shaping this anxiety. These findings are in line with the theory that low self-esteem and excessive focus on external evaluation can inhibit active participation in language learning. Descriptive

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Statistics: Mean (Average) From the data of students' anxiety score stated in the score of the questionnaire above, the researcher analyzed the mean of a variable "the students' anxiety in English Learning" by using the formula as follows:

$$M_x = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Based on the data presented, the calculation was as follows:

$$\sum x = 1.546$$

$$N = 25$$

$$M_x = \frac{1.546}{25}$$

$$M_x = 61.84$$

Table 6. Descriptive Statistic

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOTAL_SCORE	25	31.00	106.00	1546.00	61.8400	19.63984
Valid N (listwise)	25					

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the total of the data (N) in each variable is 25. The minimum score of students' anxiety (variable X) is 31, and the maximum score is 106, the mean score is 61.84, with a standard deviation score is 19.63, So the Independent Sample T-Test (T-Test for Gender Comparison) Within a total of 25 questionnaires collected, among 25 fully completed questionnaires, 40.00% (N = 10) were from female participants and 60.00% (N = 15) were from male participants. The total FLCAS mean score from all participants was 61.84. This score falls within the medium anxiety interval (61-76), indicating that participants in this study exhibited a moderate level of language anxiety.

In regard to separated groups, the male mean score was found to be slightly higher than their female counterparts, obtaining the mean score of 63.07, while the female group's mean score was 60.00. Both groups' participants showed medium anxiety levels according to FLCAS classification. There were 73.33% (N = 11) of males and 70.00% (N = 7) of females scoring above the mild anxiety threshold (>46), with total scores ranging from 31 to 106. This finding suggests that while both groups experience language anxiety, the distribution varies between genders.

So, foreign language anxiety has been shown to be very influential in the process of learning a foreign language. Several studies have shown that foreign language anxiety is negatively related to student learning achievement. The purpose of this research was to determine the level of language anxiety of students at Daarurrahman Islamic Boarding School and to identify certain components that contribute to their anxiety in learning English, so that ways can be proposed to overcome it.

It was revealed that the students scored above the medium range of the total FLCAS score, indicating that they experienced a fairly high level of language anxiety. Regarding gender, the mean score of male students was found to be higher than that of female students. This finding is in line with Horwitz's statement, which states that "females are better than males in learning a foreign language." Some of the reasons attributed to EFL students' tendency towards anxiety are a threatening classroom environment, dominant teachers in the

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classroom, lack of exposure to English, weak willpower, lack of motivation, and lack of interest in English since they are not English majors. Considering the context of the current study, the students' level of language anxiety may also justify the causes of anxiety found in previous studies, since students learn English in a more teacher-centered classroom, have less exposure to English, and rarely practice English outside of class.

However, the current study is not the only case where the communication anxiety component was not considered the main cause of anxiety by students. Marwan noted three factors that contributed to students' language anxiety: lack of preparation, lack of self-confidence, and fear of failing in class.¹³ Of the three factors, lack of preparation was considered the most worrying by most students

Overall, fear of negative evaluation was found to be a major contributor to language anxiety in students in the current study. This study provides several useful ways to alleviate students' language anxiety. First, it is important for teachers to take a supportive and non-threatening role.

Capan and Simsek noted that the students expected teachers to adopt a more intimate style in the classroom, such as calling the students by name and giving error correction in a friendly way without offending their feelings.¹⁴ Similarly, students' interviews in Wu's study revealed that they were anxious to speak with the native teachers, but the humorous and kind personality of the teachers eventually made them relaxed and enjoy chatting in the target language.¹⁵ Secondly, learners must be made aware of the anxious feelings and fears they have in learning a foreign language. Getting the learners to share the tension and apprehension will inform the learners that it is a common situation and that they are not alone in experiencing it.¹⁶

Furthermore, a sense of community also appears to make the class less threatening. Working in groups and not feeling pressured is reported to make students less anxious and more confident in completing assignments. Finally, students need to reflect on their abilities. Anandari figured out that through performing self-reflection, the students could be led to recognize the strengths and weaknesses they have.¹⁷ Students weaknesses are then used to solve problems and find solutions to overcome personal weaknesses. This activity increases students' self-confidence because they can identify their strengths and weaknesses and become less anxious in class.

D. Conclusion

This study found that the majority of students exhibited a moderate level of language anxiety, with the fear of negative evaluation being the most significant contributing factor to their anxiety in the English language classroom. Among the four components related to language anxiety, the fear of negative

¹³ Ardi Marwan, "Investigating Students' Foreign Language Anxiety," *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research* 3, no. 1 (2007).

¹⁴ Seyit Ahmet Capan and Harun Simsek, "General Foreign Language Anxiety among EFL Learners: A Survey Study," *Frontiers of Language and Teaching* 3, no. 11 (2012): 116–24.

¹⁵ Kun-huei Wu, "The Relationship between Language Learners' Anxiety and Learning Strategy in the CLT Classrooms," *International Education Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010): 174–91.

¹⁶ Renee Von Worde, "Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety," *Inquiry* 8, no. 1 (2003): n1.

¹⁷ Christina Lhaksmita Anandari, "INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN SPEECH PRODUCTION: POSSIBLE CAUSES AND REMEDY," *Teflin Journal* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1.

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evaluation was identified as the most prominent. This finding provides valuable insight into understanding the dynamics of language anxiety in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where students are often less exposed to English, have limited opportunities to practice, and learn English with limited resources. The study also highlights the importance of identifying the factors that cause anxiety in English language learning, so that more effective pedagogical interventions can be designed to reduce anxiety and improve students' learning experiences. By considering the conditions and challenges faced by students in EFL environments, the findings of this research can contribute valuable input to the development of more supportive and adaptive teaching strategies, ultimately enhancing students' overall English language proficiency. The implications of this study suggest that educators should focus on creating a more supportive and less judgmental classroom environment to mitigate the fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for tailored instructional practices and resources that can address the specific needs of students in EFL contexts, especially in environments with limited exposure to the language. The findings could serve as a foundation for future research and the development of interventions aimed at reducing language anxiety, fostering more confident and effective language learners.

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