Exploring the Extent to Which the Distance to Centers of Social Services Affects the Quality of Life of the RDP Residents: The Case of 2013 RDP Golf Course Study, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The present research sought to explore the effects of distance to centers of social services to the quality of life of the RDP residents. The study utilized mixed methods approaches, with qualitative approach being the dominant approach. The qualitative approach used an interview guide with unstructured questions to administer in-depth interviews with the study participants; while a questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data. The findings indicated that most participants were not happy with the long distances to social services and this could be one of the primary factors contributing to higher crime levels targeted to the residents; affected their children's schooling, recreation, and made life very boring to the extent of luring the youth to engage in illicit activities. The researchers among other things recommend to the government to consider putting up infrastructures in the RDP housing estates so that people can have a better life. Improving the lives of the RDP residents through equipping them with skills of various categories; or considering giving them business grants has been recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Indubitably, the prevalence of social ills and crime appear to un relentlessly take toll in virtually all the corners of the globe prompting and demanding a global solution to the phenomenon (Ackerman and Murray 2004; van Amsterdam and van den Brink 2013). The high level of crime and social ills is argued to be high in developing countries than developed countries (Bourguignon 1999). This could be attributed to the low levels of income as well as low levels of development and poverty (Parker et al. 2008; Kurjak et al. 2010). The level of crime is also high in South Africa (Christopher 2006). The levels of crime and social ills are also, unfortunately, high in areas of RDP houses in South Africa with a likely indication that, among other factors, the inaccessibility to centers of social services such as police station scores highly in contributing to the problems. These researchers are interested in investigating the contribution that the distance to places of social services make to levels of social ills among the RDP housing residents.

Perhaps, the problem that distance could pose to possibilities of crime and other social ills had been premeditated when the Post Apartheid Government of South Africa had advised that the RDP houses should be located close to areas of social services (Republic of South Africa 1994). This was meant to facilitate the beneficiaries of these houses to easily access basic goods and services (Bähre 2007; Republic of South Africa 1994). The access to the essential services can promote safety, security and health, and thereby comply with the theory of Abraham Maslow that indicates that if certain needs of a lower level are not met, the phenomenon will disparagingly hinder meeting of other needs of the proceeding level (Maslow 1987). For instance, access to educational services is essentially important as educated people are less prone to engage in social ills and crime than those who are not educated (Reuter 1994 as cited by McVeigh and Wolfer 2004: 81). Thus, the lack of some essential services can really serve as pathology to the health of the society. This is why the collaboration of the government and other stakeholders such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to mitigate the social ills and crime in the RDP housing domain is topical, critical and long overdue. The present study explored the contribution of inaccessibility of essential services to levels of crime and other social ills focusing on the case study of Golf Course Estate in the Eastern Cape Province.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study utilized triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Triangulation in this study was especially important as both of these approaches confirm and corroborate one another (Rossman and Wilson 1991 as cited by Offredy and Vickers 2013; Barbour 2007). The quantitative approach facilitated the collection of the quantified magnitude of the perceptions of the beneficiaries; while the qualitative approach enabled the researchers to establish the meaning, the experiences, feelings, attitudes and perceptions of the study participants to the contribution of inaccessibility of the social services to crime and other social ills in Golf Course (Kumar 2010; Liamputtong 2011). Triangulation, therefore, strengthened and reinforced states of trustworthiness, reliability and validity of the results (Green et al. 1989: 256; Lamnek 2010 as cited by Buch 2012: 43; De Vos et al. 2005). The quantitative design took the form of a mini survey while the qualitative design took the form of a case study. The design was explorative, explanatory and descriptive in nature.

Research Instruments

The present study utilized an interview guide with unstructured questions as a data collection tool for the in-depth interviews with the RDP Administrator, the social worker and the 22 beneficiaries of RDP Houses in Golf Course in Alice. The study also adopted a likert designed questionnaire to interview 50 participants selected for the mini survey from the RDP houses in Golf Course.

Sample Size/Units of Analysis

This study involved 22 beneficiaries of RDP houses in Golf Course Estate, one social worker and one RDP Administrator, who were subjected to in-depth interviews; whereas 50 participants were subjected to a questionnaire interview. The interview with the RDP administrator was especially important to elicit information from the programme personnel. Who also served as the key informant. The social worker was also interviewed and his role was critical in that he was the one officially responsible for the social welfare of the residents.

Sample Selection

This study utilized both random and non-random methodologies in selecting its participants. The qualitative approach adopted purposive sampling technique in selecting the 22 beneficiaries for the interviews, the social worker and the RDP Administrator. Purposive sampling was especially utilized to collect information from the samples that carried the desired research attributes and also because they were the most useful and representative (Neuman 2006; Babbie 2007). The quantitative approach utilized simple random sampling strategy and stratified sampling in selecting the 50 participants for the mini survey conducted with the help of likert designed questionnaire. Simple random was especially useful as it gives equal chance of selection to the samples, whereas stratified sampling minimized the probability error and generalized the representation of the population (Moyé 2007; Finkelstein 2009).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The principal researcher was assisted by one research assistant from the Department of Social Work and Social Development from the University of Fort hare in collecting data from the study participants as most data that was collected from the interviews was in isiXhosa. All the data from the interviews was audio taped with consent from the study participants and was transcribed later on. Notes were also taken by the researchers to complement the data that was tape recorded. The notes were especially important to capture the temperaments, moods as well as facial expressions that could be assigned meaning by these researchers. However, the data collected was grouped, rearranged and categorized into themes as depicted from the emergent themes of the study participants.

Research Domain

The data for this study was collected from the study participants of RDP houses of Golf Course Estate in Alice Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in November 2012. The beneficiaries were interviewed from their RDP

houses while the social worker and the RDP Administrator were interviewed from their offices. This location was considered to be suitable for this study because Eastern Cape is one of the poor provinces in South Africa and since this project is associated with poor people it would be ideal to empirically investigate their perceptions regarding the RDP houses from poor provinces (Jones and Stokke 2005).

FINDINGS

Profile of the Beneficiaries

Gender and Race

The findings from this study indicated that the gender representation was skewed in that there were 62% females compared to 38% males; Also, 88% of the participants were blacks while 12% were colored (see Table 1). Since the findings indicated that females outnumber males. this prompted researchers to advocate for female empowerment projects that can affirm them as a way of acknowledging the impact of poverty across the gender divide. The fact that women form the poorest individuals in the country also justifies these researchers call for affirmative action to assist women residing in the RDP houses.

Marital Status

Further, the findings also indicated that 60% of the participants were single; 28% were married; and 6% were widowed; while those that were either, widowed, divorced or separated were 2% each respectively (Table 2). These findings indicated that the single people are the ones that are mostly affected by poverty and this could mean that poverty alleviation strategies may need to be selectively and affirmatively mainstreamed to these people.

Occupation

The findings from this study also revealed an unfavorable employment situation as 52% of

Table 2: Marital status

S. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Single	30	60.0
2	Married	14	28.0
3	Divorced	1	2.0
4	Widowed	3	6.0
5	Windowed	1	2.0
6	Separated	1	2.0
7	Total	50	100.0

the study participants indicated they were unemployed; 32% were employed; 6% were casual laborers; and 8% were students; and 2% were self employed (see Table 3). These findings indicate that these beneficiaries need both the government and non government to stage efforts that can create employment opportunities for them. These opportunities could take the form of entrepreneurship training and asset based development to try and improve their livelihood. This, in these researchers' perspectives could also be an intervention to reduce social ills and crime levels in Golf Course estate.

Table 3: Occupation of study participants

S. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Employed	16	32.0
2	Unemployed	26	52.0
3	Casual	3	6.0
4	Self	1	2.0
5	Student	4	8.0
6	Total	50	100.0

Policing Services

The findings from this study indicated that 52% of the study participants revealed that the distance to police services was far; 14% indicated it was not far; while 34% revealed that it was very far (see Table 4). These sentiments were corroborated with the following qualitative perceptions of participants who were subjected to one-on-one interview:

"It is quite dangerous to live in Golf Course because there is no police around our houses

Table 1: Gender of the study participants

S. No.	Race	Frequency	%	S. No	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Black	44	88.0	1	Male	19	38.0
2	Coloured	6	12.0	2	Female	31	62.0
3	Total	50	100.0	3	Total	50	100.0

Table 4: Perceptions on distance to social services

S. No.	Police services	Frequency	%	S. No.	Alice shopping mall	Frequency	%
1	Not far	7	14.0	1	Not far	11	22.0
2	Far	26	52.0	2	Far	26	54.0
3	Very far	17	34.0	3	Very far	12	24.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0
S. No.	Public hospitals	Frequency	%	S. No.	Social welfare offices	Frequency	%
1	Not far	15	30.0	1	Not far	13	26.0
2	Far	23	46.0	2	Far	25	50.0
3	Very far	12	24.0	3	Very far	12	24.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0
S. No.	RDP administration	Frequency	%	S. No.	Primary school	Frequency	%
1	Not far	14	28.0	1	Not far	8	16
2	Far	27	54.0	2	Far	25	50
3	Very far	9	18.0	3	Very far	17	34
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0
S. No.	Secondary/ high school	Frequency	%	S. No.	University/ FET college	Frequency	%
1	Not far	8	16.0	1	Not far	4	8.0
2	Far	28	56.0	2	Far	24	48.0
3	Very far	14	28.0	3	Very far	22	44.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0

and this affects us psychologically as there are a lot of thieves, murderers as well as burglary".,

"These police services are very far from us and we are very vulnerable. A grandmother was raped during the day, it's terrible and we don't know what is going to become of us"

From the sentiments above, the essence and value of police services cannot be over emphasized as they are the guardians of the rule of law who are supposed to ensure that the people are safe and secure; as well as to assist the vulnerable from pockets of violence, crime and other social ills. Thus, they are supposed to be located where the people reside so that they safeguard the communities against unlawful and criminal tendencies. These researchers, therefore, thought that the government needed to consider committing itself to the policies of Integrated Developed Plan (IDP) to ensure that these programmes are implemented to effectuate safety of the RDP housing beneficiaries. This will ensure that the challenges of access to housing are addressed holistically as housing encompasses various structures, security included.

Health Services

The findings also indicated that 24 % of the study participants revealed that the distance to the health services such as Victoria Hospital Hospitals was very far, 46% indicated that it was far; and 15% revealed it was not far (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the participants who were subjected to one-on-one interviews:

"We do not have any hospitals and we have to travel a long distance to a clinic or the hospital. One has to walk for many kilometers to get to any health service. Imagine what will happen when you get critically ill."

These perceptions from the beneficiaries indicate that these people are isolated from accessing health and medical care services. It is incontrovertible, therefore that these services could unfortunately threaten their health and therefore quality of life. Since the estate was ravaged with HIV/AIDS and possibly other conditions such as STI that are inextricably linked

to HIV/AIDS, then the access to medical and health services could help address and mitigate their effects. Some services such as access to prevention tools such as condoms are critically important in the era of HIV/AIDS. These researchers suggest that the government need to seriously consider providing mobile clinics as well as the construction of primary health care centers to alleviate the suffering of the RDP housing residents.

RDP Housing Administration Offices

The findings from this study also indicated that 28% of the study participants revealed that the distance to the RDP housing administration was not far; while 54% of the study participants indicated that the distance was far; and 18% of the study participants revealed that it was very far (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative perceptions from the beneficiaries who were subjected to one-on-one interview:

"That issue is very serious, because we are very far from those RDP officials, at least they should be working here so that they can experience what we go through, unfortunately we are so isolated and that's very painful"

"We appreciate the government for these houses but they should have located these housing officials closer to us so that they can hear our feelings". ''There is a lot of crime and social problems here which they should at least be the ones that are assisting us to fight against these problems. We are living in fear of crime and other ills."

These findings confirmed that the beneficiaries are not satisfied with the distance they have to travel to seek the services of the RDP housing administrator. The government needs to ensure an office is located in the estate so that housing problems can be handled with ease. The housing administrator needs to allay fear that the residents have that solutions will be sought by relevant authorities. For instance they should work together with the municipality towards ensuring that these houses are safe from crime and that social services are accessible to mitigate the levels of social ills.

Primary Schools

The findings from this study indicated that 16% of the study participants revealed that the distance to primary schools was not far; 50% revealed it was far; while 34% of the study participants indicated that it was very far (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries of the participants who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"It is very expensive to send my children to school because I have to use taxis and I depend on the child support grant. I cannot leave them to walk that distance because it is very dangerous. We really need schools close to our houses."

These findings revealed that the primary schools are unfortunately located very far from these beneficiaries. It is disappointing that little children have to face the hardships of travelling long distances to their first basic education. This can even negatively disturb their motivation and psychology to learn. This is because by the time they arrive school, probably they will be very tired. This could also affect their performance and disable them from qualifying for better grades to secure good degrees or employment opportunities. It is also a matter of concern for these beneficiaries because they indicated that it is not safe if they leave their children to go alone to schools because of scaring levels of crime and murder. These researchers are prompted by these complaints to advocate for the government to carry out an assessment of these houses and expeditiously plan to construct primary schools around these houses. This could also strengthen the government's efforts to meet and achieve the Millennium Development Goal number two that aims to see citizens secure universal education before the year 2015 tickles.

Secondary Schools/ High Schools

The findings from this study indicated that 16% of the study participants revealed that the distance to secondary schools was not far; while 56% of the study participants indicated that the distance was far; and 28% of the study participants revealed that the distance was very far (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments.

"It is very far for us to go to secondary schools. We wish the government can do something to build secondary schools for us in Golf Course."

These findings indicated that the beneficiaries are finding it difficult to access secondary

and high Schools. In these researchers' contention, schools are generally centers of liberation that are very pivotal in socially and economically equipping these people to be future leaders as well as business persons; as well as making them skilled and responsible citizens. Though South Africa claims to be fighting against crime, it could be worthwhile to also address the issue of crime through efforts that ensure that children have access to secondary education especially those from vulnerable and needy populations.

University/FET (Further Education and Training) Colleges

The findings from this study indicated that 8% of the study participants revealed that the distance to the University/ FET College was not far; while 48% of the study participants indicated that it was far; and 44% of the study participants revealed that it was very far (see Table 4). These perceptions were then corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"The University is very far from our houses and we really struggle to get to the University."

"We wish they can give us transport to get to the University you see, because you cannot travel at night."

These findings indicated that the beneficiaries were not happy with the long distance between their houses and the University. These researchers also observed that this long distance to the University could also promote crime because these students cannot travel at night or in the evening because of crime. These researchers, therefore, think that the government can possibly attempt to provide transport for these housing programmes to encourage their students to study comfortably. This is a well thought plan of action because these same people could possibly contribute back to the government upon the completion of their education. In these researchers' contention, education and provision of an enabling environment to safeguard education is probably one of the best strategies to reduce crime, poverty and other related challenges.

Alice Shopping Mall

The findings from this study revealed that 8% of the study participants indicated that the distance to Alice Shopping Mall was not far; while 48% of the study participants indicated that it was far; and 44% of the participants revealed that it was very far (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments of participants who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"We appreciate Alice Shopping Mall, but it's very far for us to go there, and some of us we are old."

"Unfortunately, these tuck-shops sell foodstuffs at very high prices and they do not have everything that we need, it is like we are trapped and we wish something can be done for us."

These findings indicated that the distance to Alice Shopping Mall is very far for the beneficiaries. They are facing challenges of accessing the commodities and services they could easily access at affordable prices. This has led to illegal price hike of commodities by the tuck-shop owners. The act was adding poverty to already impoverished members of the estate. The researchers also observed that most youth were bored and to recreate themselves they were smoking dangerous drugs such as marijuana and drinking heavily. In these researchers' contention, it is wrong to build an estate as big as Golf course without considering shopping services or distance to access such services. It is also psychologically stressful if such an estate does not have sites of recreation. These researchers, therefore, advocate for the government to consider constructing a shopping mall for these beneficiaries of the RDP houses; as well as initiate recreational sites. Making football pitches and other games could help reduce the level of crime among the youth and other social ills such as abuse of alcohol.

Social Welfare Offices

The findings from this study indicated that 26% of the study participants revealed that the distance to the Social Welfare Offices was not far; while 50% of the study participants indicated that it was far; and 24% of the study participants revealed that it was very far (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries:

"We actually do not have any social worker here in Golf Course; we have to travel to town if we need a social worker". "We need the

services of a social worker and not to travel this long distance for a social worker."

"We don't know anything about the RDP houses, but most of our clients coming from those houses disclose that the area has a higher HIV/AIDS prevalence.

These findings indicated that most of the study participants revealed that social welfare services are located far from their houses. Social Welfare services are very crucial and important for they serve to assist the people with social, psychological, emotional skills through mediation, counseling, therapy, rehabilitation as well as informational campaigns. Social Workers are the ones who are primarily working towards the well-being and social functioning of the people. It is quite unfortunate that they are not linked to these people. Findings also indicated that most of the clients who visit their offices from those RDP houses were infected with the virus. These researchers think the government is not doing enough to wage a serious war against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This is because social welfare services through the social workers should be located where the people are residing as they can partner with the government in raising awareness to educate the people towards reducing the spread of the disease. These researchers, therefore, advocate for the government to integrate the offices of social workers from the government and NGOs to assist these beneficiaries of the RDP houses.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed an unbalanced representation of gender as there were more females than males. These findings are also echoed by the national statistics that indicate that there are 52% females as compared to 48% females (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). These findings also agree with writers that also discovered that poverty is mainly affecting the females than the males (Musekiwa 2013; Gutura 2011). This confirms the reason why more females than men access RDP houses. The findings also revealed that there were more people who were single than those that were, married, divorced, widowed or separated. These findings indicate that there is a great need to introduce projects that can assist single people develop economically (UNDP 1995; 1998 as cited by Manomano 2013).

The findings from this study also indicated that most of the study participants were unemployed. This state of affairs agrees with literature that indicate that the rate of unemployment is very high in South Africa and also among the RDP residents (Hunter 2007; Knight 2001 as cited by Burns et al. 2010; Lemanski 2009). Other researchers argue that this state of unemployment could lead to low levels of motivation, stress as well as lack of focus in life. More over, the children of unemployed people are also more prone to deviant behaviour among other things (McLloyd 1989 as cited by Clarke et al. 2010). Therefore, that the government may need to introduce skilling enterprises as well as Income Generating Activities, or "IGAs" (Kang'ethe 2010: 8). These interventions can go a long way in securing these people with employment opportunities. They would also probably have an impact in mitigating and reducing social ills in the society. This finds support from some research that links the state of unemployment to issues of promiscuity and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Burns et al. 2010). Further, to confirm this point, HIV/AIDS is also believed to affect mainly those who reside in marginalized areas (van Rooyen and Bernstein 1992 as cited by Giarelli and Jacobs 2001).

It has emerged from the findings of this study that distances to centres of social services was indicated to be either far or very far by most of the participants of the study. These social services include: RDP housing Administration, Social Welfare Services, Public Hospitals, Police, Primary Education, Secondary or High School, University or FET College, and Alice Shopping Mall. To support these findings, Huchzermeyer (2003) indicated that the irregular location of these low cost houses is segregationist. This is because the people are located far way from economic opportunities. This segregation, he contends, have serious economic and health implications. Health issues poses a huge concern given the negative impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and other health issues destroying the country's image worldwide (Condon and Sinha 2008; Ramphele 2008; Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) 2007). It can also be considered important to ensure that these people have access to health care. This calls for the government to put health infrastructure in the RDP estates. This would have an impact in controlling

and mitigating health challenges, especially those emanating from risky sexual behaviours. Provision of contraceptive tools such as condoms provided in the hospitals and clinics could be instrumental in mitigating and reducing sexual related diseases such as STI and HIV/AIDS. Further, these health services will form forums of education such as mobilizing people to test, the need to have one faithful partner and, also encourage those who are infected to adopt positive living (Kang'ethe 2013; South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) 2007; Barnett and Whiteside 2006).

In these researchers' contention, although, putting up houses for the needy is a positive gesture to alleviating people's problems of housing, other developments to cater for their social amenities, shopping, health, recreation and educational needs are critical if the lives of the RDP residents is to be adequately improved. Although developments are usually associated with crime waves, they are also believed to cut down crime in the long run. This is especially when many people get occupied with various income generating activities, or are employed (Møller 1997; Manomano 2013).

According to ETU (undated), it has become common in South Africa to note that poor people are located on the peripheries of towns and cities. These are areas that suffer the problems of inadequate water and sanitation facilities. They are also unlikely to have banks and other services such as ambulances, schools and sport fields. It is also quite unfortunate that even in terms of access to education, a lot of people have little tertiary education. It is likely that most people possess only primary education. Since this educational background rarely attracts good jobs other than temporary manual ones, these are people who when hard hit by the economy are likely to turn to crime and other social ills. This explains largely why most areas with RDP houses are sites of unrelenting states of crime in South Africa. These are places known for gangsterism, alcohol abuse, drug and violence against women in all communities in South Africa (Manomano 2013).

Crime was also indicated to be high because of the poor level of policing services. Shockingly, statistics indicate that less than 50% of the crimes go unreported (Masuku 2002 as cited by Shabangu n.d.). This could be attributed to the failed visibility of these security facilities. These researchers think that South African government is investing heavily in dealing with crimes when they have been committed and not investing in research and investigation of how to nip the crime at the bud stage. Apparently, these researchers agree with many other anecdotal accusations levelled against the law enforcement agencies that they also abet or are part of some of the criminal activities. This, in these researchers' contention could partly explain why the issue of dealing and extinguishing crime in South Africa is becoming a very sophisticated phenomenon (Hammond 2008 as cited by Shabangu n.d.). It is, therefore, pertinent that law enforcement agencies first convince the government to put in place proper infrastructure that would dissuade the people from engaging in crime and crime related activities. Ensuring requisite infrastructural development in the RDP estates is therefore a recommendable step towards addressing the various unrelenting social ills that continue to bedevil the country of South Africa.

CONCLUSION

The present research was a platform to explore the perceptions of the participants on the effects that the distance to centres of social services have on the quality of lives of the RDP residents. It is hoped that these findings will be a tool that other researchers, planners or policy makers will consider in packaging RDP housing programs. It is pertinent that further researches are conducted in the housing industry in South Africa to add an impetus to convince municipalities and the central government that the RDP residents needs to have their housing problems sorted out in tandem with other requisite and significant infrastructures to better their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been suggested by these researchers. Firstly it could be developmental and progressive if the government can consider providing centres of social services closer or in the RDP houses locations. The government need to consider skilling the residents with various categories of skills such as plumbing, masonry, etc. Considering helping the residents with business grants would also be very welcome. The fact that most of the

RDP residents are single and poor people calls for selective and affirmative action to help them secure business funds, or get government sponsored skills that can help them secure some employment for their life sustenance. Otherwise, these researchers consider it pertinent if the government could consider investing in skilling these people. Probably, in these researchers' perspective the government can cut down its expenditure in ARVs, various types of destitute grants and security arrangements. These researchers believed that empowering people could have a developmental effect than helping to address the symptoms of problems or unaddressed problems. This can be done in partnership with various stakeholders as part of rural development. Public Hospitals, schools, clinics as well as offices of social welfare and RDP housing administration are a necessity for the security, safety and health of these people. Thus, it can also be worthwhile if the government includes these services in the planning of these housing projects. It can also be a huge step towards meeting various targets such as the Millennium Development Goals.

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