

Adolescents Career Aspirations, Gender and Socio-Economic Status

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Abstract – Adolescence is a time when teenagers develop certain aspirations regarding their educational and future careers. Aspirations represent a person's orientation towards particular goals. This study is very important as during adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals.

The present study was descriptive in nature. This study was undertaken to assess the career aspirations of 100 adolescent boys and girls of IX class in relation to Socio-economic Status. The mean score of Career Aspirations of Girls was found little higher than the mean scores of boys which reveal that there is the difference in the career aspirations of boys and girls. The mean scores of Socio-economic Status of boys and girls are not significant which reveals that there is no difference in the Socio-economic Status of boys and girls. The study further reveals that there exists a positive and significant correlation between Career Aspirations and Socio-economic Status of adolescents of Government Schools of Chandigarh. Thus it can be concluded that the stronger financial motivation of students from low-SES backgrounds signals their hopes for occupational futures that provide financial security, while students from higher SES backgrounds appeared to see greater scope for pursuing their interests and passions.

Keywords: Adolescents, Career Aspirations, Gender, Socio-Economic Status.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence can be a time of both disorientation and discovery. Adolescence describes the teenage years between 13 to 19 and can be considered the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. It is a period when rapid changes occur in the physical and psychological development of an individual. It is considered as a period of storm and stress. The adolescents are in the process of deciding their goals, priorities and values. During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals.

Aspirations represent a person's orientation towards particular goals and can be influenced by gender, socioeconomic status and family support (Domenico & Jones, 2007). During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals.

According to Gotfredson (2005), by the age of 13 and 14, adolescence has developed two cognitive competencies related to career development i.e. self-concept and perception about occupations. During adolescence, students have achieved an adult-level understanding of the sex type and prestige level of common occupations.

Career Aspirations

A Career preparation in adolescence is an important precursor for successful career development across the lifespan and is closely related to adolescence adjustment and well-being (Skorikov, 2007). During adolescence, developing a vocational identity is a central developmental task. According to Silvia (2001), aspirations refer to an individual's expressed career-related goals or intentions and also include motivational components which are not present in mere interests. The career aspiration of adolescents has been viewed as significant determinants of both short-term educational and long-term career choices (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Patton & Creed 2007).

According to Brien (2001), career aspirations are a desire to pursue higher education after high schools, such as a four-year college; two-year College or a vocational school in order to increase career possibilities.

According to VandenBos (2007), career aspirations are defined as long-term individual work-related goals.

Thus, educational aspiration of an adolescent can be measured by asking him to predict what performance he expects in a test, what he plans for his future education and what his outlook is towards higher education. He allows his abilities to determine what he will do or attempt to do. Adolescence is a time when important choices have to be made. In high school years, the student decides what subjects to take and the decision is based on his plans for his higher education. To make a wise choice, one must have a realistic idea of the kind of person he is and can become.

Determinants of Aspirations

Aspirations are influenced by two types of factors that are environmental and personal. In early childhood, before the child is old enough to know what his abilities, interests and values are, his aspirations are largely shaped by his environment. As he grows older and is more aware of his abilities and interests, personal factors have a greater influence, but many of his aspirations, his values, for example, are still environmental in nature.

There is a variety of factors which affects adolescents' aspirations. These factors are as follow:

Environmental Determinants:

Parental Ambitions: Parental ambitions influence the level of aspiration of the child (Manpreet, 2012).

Social Expectation: Society expects more and more from some people than from others. It is generally assumed that one who is successful in a particular area may also be successful in another area if he wishes (Kaur, 2012).

Family Pressure: Aspirations are often influenced by pressures from members of the family, mainly parents and grandparents, but also siblings and other relatives. Pressures for high achievement, the "great expectations syndrome" begin early and become stronger as the child approaches adolescence (Mistry, 2015).

Peer Pressure: With increasing age, the person is more influenced by the group and less by the family. Friends may encourage or discourage a child from anything. If they encourage him, it is possible that he

will develop a tendency of high goal setting (Lata, 2016).

Culture: The traditions that influence a person's aspirations are closely related to the social structure of culture. In democratic societies, going from one social class to another is possible and relatively common people are encouraged to aspire high and are loaded for doing so. Cultural traditions are important factors for setting the goal but a rich cultural background helps the child in fulfilling higher expectation (Manpreet, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Social Values: Values are a reflection of the person's home training, cultural background and philosophy of life. They influence the intensity of the person's interests and give an emotional tone to his/her aspirations. It also varies with the area of achievement. Social reward prestige also works as reinforcement (Kaur, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Mass Media: Mass media influences goal setting because they imply that "everyone does it" or that it is the "thing to do." Whether the pattern of behaviour is depicted on the screen or in print, the person assumes that it has the stamp of approval of the social group. This strengthens her/his desire to accept it as the pattern for her/his own aspiration. The effect of mass media on aspirations is by no means limited to the young (Mistry, 2015).

Competition: Many parents believe that to be successful in adult life, their children must be trained to strive for high achievement. Competition with siblings and peers in the hope or better than others is also an affecting factor for the level of aspiration (Kaur, 2012).

Group Cohesiveness: It is also considered as a determinant of goal setting. One does better and sets a high goal when he is acting in a group (Manpreet, 2012).

Personal Determinants:

Wishes: If one needs to achieve something or he has high achieved motivation, his level of aspiration for achieving will be higher, and thus his wishes influence the level of aspiration (Lata, 2016).

Personality: The personality traits also determine the kind and strength aspirations. They are greatly influenced by personal characteristics such as foresight, frustration tolerance and ability to delay gratification of wishes, self-esteem, and meaning in life or purpose in life, ambition and temperament (Kaur, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Past Experiences: The previous success strengthens one's aspirations failure weakens it. Whether frustrations come from the person's lack of ability or from environmental obstacles, their

influence on her/his goal setting will depend on her/his capacity to tolerate frustration (Kaur, 2012).

Values and Interests: Personal values and interests also determine the extent of the level of aspiration. Studies show that aspirations that develop from and are closely related to interests that satisfy some need in the person's life are more likely to persist, more realistic than those related to transitory interests that may be fostered by social pressures (Manpreet, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Sex: It is generally said that the boys and girls differ in because of their different interests, goals and expectations of society. Both the boys and girls have higher aspirations in different areas and greater need for achievements. Boys and men generally feel a greater need for achievement in school work, athletics, and vocational advancement than girls and women. As a result, they tend to set aspirations above their capacities in these areas (Kaur, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Socio-economic Background: The person's status within a group likewise influences her/his aspirations. It is noticed that the middle and upper group, have a higher degree of an aspiration than those of lower group (Manpreet, 2012; Lata, 2016).

Racial Background: Minority groups aspire higher than majority group, just a sort of compensation on the part of minority groups (Kaur, 2012).

Thus, career aspirations are the degree to which an individual sets his educational goal, academic goal and occupational goal realistically in relation to his physical and mental attributes. These goals are individual sets for his own self-differ from one individual to another due to certain factors.

Socio-economic Status

Socio-economic status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. While analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined National Centre for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2008). Socio-economic status is typically broken into three categories, high SES, middle SES, and low SES to describe the three areas in which a family or an individual may fall into. When placing family or individual into one of these categories any or all of the three variables (income, education, and occupation) can be assessed. A 4th variable, wealth, may also be examined when determining socioeconomic status.

Willms (2004) defines SES as the relative position of a family or individual on a hierarchical social

structure, based on their access to, or control over, wealth, prestige, and power.

The socio-economic status in a layman's way of thinking would simply refer to the stratification of the society into three main categories i.e. high, middle and low. Socio-economic Status has usually been confined to five components.

1. Education of the parents and other members of the family.
2. The profession of parents and other members.
3. Income of the family from all sources.
4. Size of the family.
5. Total status of the family.

Domenico and Jones (2007) reports can be influenced by gender, socioeconomic status and family support. During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals.

Main Factors of Socio-economic Status (as cited in Ranjana, 2014; Amandeep, 2016).

Income: Income refers to wages, salaries, profit, rents and any flow of earnings received. Income can also come in the form of unemployment or workers compensation, social security, pensions, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance.

Education: Educational attainment is preferable to analyze for Socio-economic Status because it can be figured for all individuals. A person's educational attainment is considered to be the highest level (grade of degree) of education they have completed. Education also plays a role in income. Median earnings increase with each level of education is associated with better economic and psychological outcomes (i.e.: more income., more control. and greater social support and networking, Education plays a major role in skill sets for acquiring jobs as well as specific qualities that stratify people with higher Socio-economic Status from lower Socio-economic Status.

Occupation: Occupational prestige as one component of Socio-economic Status encompasses both income and educational attainment. Occupational status reflects the educational attainment require to both the job and income levels that vary with different jobs and within ranks of occupation. The occupational status measures social position by describing job characteristics, decision-making ability, control, and psychological demands of

the job. Some of the most prestigious occupations are physicians and surgeons, lawyers, engineers, etc. These jobs, considered to be grouped in the high SES classification, provide more challenging work and ability to greater control over working conditions. Those jobs with lower rankings were food preparation workers, counter attendants, bartenders and helpers, dishwashers, janitors, maids and housekeeper, vehicle cleaners, and parking lot attendants. Many scales rank occupations based on the level of skill involved, from unskilled to skilled manual labour to professional, or use a combined measure using the education level needed and income involved, from unskilled to skilled manual labour to professional, or use a combined measure using the education level needed and income involved.

Wealth: Wealth reflects intergenerational transitions as well as the accumulation of income and savings. Income, age, marital status, family size, religion, occupation, and education are all predictors of wealth attainment. The increasing cost of colleges and universities seems to be a deterrent for students of lower socio-economic status. Students may feel that cost itself would hold them back. This belief, although commonly held, might be overcome if the students were counselled to find economic assistance through scholarships and loans. Children whose parents are of a higher socio-economic status are more likely to have higher IQ's, test better and advance in their education further than those of a lower socio-economic status. This may be due to several reasons. Studies have shown mental health to be impaired due to the daily stress due to unemployment, economic displacement and housing dislocation, including homelessness. In addition, it is more difficult to provide healthy food, safe communities and clean work environments in areas of lower socio-economic status. On the flip side, those people with higher socioeconomic status have more exposure to health care and information that promotes healthy behaviours. In today's society, students of the lower socio-economic background are generally lacking the technology needed to keep up with the general population. The obvious reason is the high price of technology. Studies have shown that by using computers and the internet in the classroom helps to equalize students of all socio-economic backgrounds. It allows students to be more involved academically and professionally in their futures. They may even become as technologically literate as their more economically advantaged peers.

Caste: Though used less often, the term caste is also related to SES because caste tends to convey one's social class, status, or position. But unlike SES, or at times an even social class, caste tends to convey a place in the hierarchy that is not surmountable by effort. Caste is set at birth and is rigid if not impenetrable. It is directly tied to the luck of one's birth parents (Arrow, Bowles & Durlauf, 2000).

Technology and Gadgets: Socioeconomic disparity affects students' access to technology and their technology competence (Sun & Benton, 2008). Staying constantly connected to one another through technology has become a normal part of everyday life, so it's inevitable that owning the latest products has become a status symbol. Staying constantly connected to one another through technology has become a normal part of everyday life, so it's inevitable that owning the latest products has become a status symbol.

Social class or status of the family refers to the hierarchical distinctions between individuals or groups in societies or cultures. Social class influences socio-economic status because low people are treated depending on the class they come from, which may be determined by various factors. Socio-economic status strongly influences the varying student education. The probability of students on the value and attending schools of the higher attending school of higher education can also be an indicator of socioeconomic status is based on income, but to is connected to race as well.

Social class or status of the family refers to the hierarchical distinctions between individuals or groups in societies or cultures. Social class influences socio-economic status because low people are treated depending on the class they come from, which may be determined by various factors. Socio-Economic Status strongly influences the varying student education. The probability of students on the value and attending schools of the higher attending school of higher education can also be an indicator of socioeconomic status is based on income, but to is connected to race as well.

To sum up, socioeconomic status can be defined as a position which, up, from its personal attributes or special service, determines for its possessors, a degree of respect, prestige and influence. Further, it can be said that socio-economic status refers to the relationship between the individual and the racial set up in which he propagates. It encompasses the entire social environment that is provided to the individual and attitudes to a cluster of factors including, his occupation, income, cultural features of the home, religious beliefs, family relationships, living standards, caste etc.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Many studies (Gutman, 2008; Perry, Przybysz & Al-Sheikh, 2009) revealed that among urban youth, girls reported higher occupational aspirations than boys. Obura and Ajowi (2012) findings of the study indicated that there was a gender disparity in career aspirations of secondary school students in Kisumu Municipality. The relationship between students' career aspiration and their gender was found to be statistically significant. Kumari and Gupta (2017) found that Occupational aspirations of male students

were higher than the females. But Khan (2006) conducted the study to find out and compare occupational aspirations of boys and girls studying in different types of senior secondary schools of Delhi. The study concluded no significant difference between the occupational aspirations of girls and boys of all the schools taken together. Despite the cross-study differences evident in the recent literature, what is clear from this body of research is that the historical trend of girls' occupational aspirations being reliably and consistently lower than those of boys is no longer typical

Bradley Report (Aust. Dept. of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008, as cited in Pflingst, 2015, p.1), Osa-edoh and Alutu (2011), Abiola (2014), Gore, Holmes, Smith, Southgate, Albright (2015), Berger, Holmes, Gore and Archer (2016), Gore (2017) and Rani (2017) identified that students from a high socioeconomic background are more likely to attend university than a student from a low socioeconomic background. Results revealed that students from low socio-economic status backgrounds hold lower career aspirations and that outreach activity whereas Sandra (2012) conducted a correlation analysis to examine the relationships between predictor and outcome variables. The results indicated that gender and family socioeconomic status were not associated with continuing education aspirations or career achievement aspirations.

To summarize, it can be stated that the studies on career aspirations have implied the significant importance of the variables gender, socio-economic status. The reviewed studies have helped in developing conceptual understanding.

THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

Adolescence is a critical time for forming aspirations for the future, especially with regard to career aspirations (Schulenberg, Goldstein & Vondracek, 1991; Vondracek & Lerner, 1982). Career aspirations take a firm shape during adolescent years, it is different from individual to individual. There are many variables that can affect a student's career aspirations. Some researchers feel that genetics accounts for 80% of an individual's potential, while others feel that the environment affects their potential (Marion, 1983). Out of different career hurdle in an adolescent's life, the major hurdle is socio-economic status. The influence of socioeconomic status on the occupational aspirations of youth has been investigated by a number of social science scholars. For the most part, the results of their work consistently found that socio-economic status has somewhere between a small to large but significant effect on the careers aspirations of adolescents (Liu, 2009; Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Abiola, 2014; Gore, Holmes, Smith, Southgate & Albright, 2015; Gore, 2017). But in contrast to the above studies (Nwachukwu, 2003; Sandra, 2012) and theoretical data found an insignificant relationship between

career aspirations and socio-economic status. The review of the related literature has contributed to the conceptual understanding of the influencing factor. In the present study, the investigator will try to study the relationship between career aspirations and socio-economic status of adolescents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study the difference in the career aspirations of boys and girls adolescent.
2. To study the difference in socio-economic status of boys and girls adolescent.
3. To study the relationship between career aspirations and socio-economic status of an adolescent.

Hypotheses

For the purpose of the present study the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There exists no significant difference in the career aspirations of boys and girls adolescent.
2. There exists no significant difference in socio-economic status of boys and girls adolescent.
3. There exists no significant relationship between career aspirations and socio-economic status of an adolescent.

Delimitations of the Study

The following are the delimitations of the study:

1. It was restricted to Chandigarh only.
2. It was restricted to three Government Senior Secondary Schools of Chandigarh only.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Method

The present study was descriptive in nature. The purpose of the study was to examine the career aspirations of adolescents in relations to socio-economic status.

Sample

This study involved 100 secondary school students from randomly selected four Government senior secondary schools of Chandigarh. A total of 100 students successfully completed and returned the

questionnaires of which were 50 boys and 50 girls studying in class IX. The participants voluntarily participated in the study.

Tools Used

In the present study, these tools were used

1. Career Aspirations Scale (CAS) developed by the researcher.
2. Socio-economic Status Scale (SESS) developed by the researcher.

The procedures

Data were collected from a sample of three government school students studying in class IX. The entire data was collected from the government school students with due permission from the principal of each school. All the students were made to fill in the data individually in order to avoid duplication of the data in their sheets. Those sheets were collected and scoring was done by using the scoring procedure. Descriptive statistics, t-ratio and Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to analyse the data statistically

Analysis and interpretation of results

Table No-1 Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis on the variables of Career Aspirations and Socio-economic status

Statistics		
	Career Aspirations	Socio-economic status
N	100	100
Mean	61.7400	118.43
Median	61.0000	121.00
Std. Deviation	5.3231	173.34
Skewness	-0.169	-0.341
Std. Error of Skewness	0.241	0.241
Kurtosis	-0.849	-0.258
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.478	0.478

Hypothesis-1

“There exists no significant difference in career aspirations of boys and girls adolescent”.

Table No-2 T-ratio between Boys and Girls Career aspirations.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-ratio	Level of significance
Career Aspirations	Boys	50	60.7600	5.3511	0.75677	1.864*	Significant at 0.05 level
	Girls	50	62.7200	5.1628	0.73013		

*t-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 shows the ratio between the level of career aspirations of boys and girls is 1.864 which is more than the table value. So, t-ratio is significant at 0.05 level of significance.

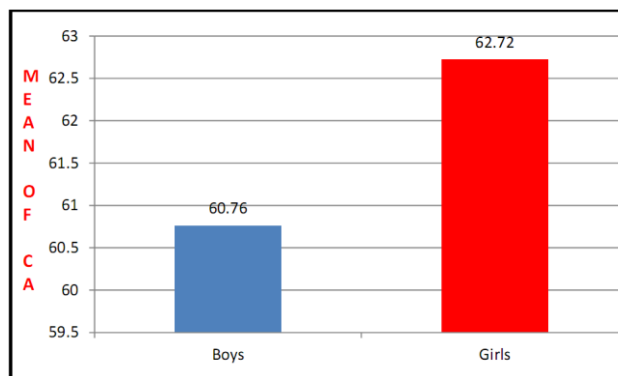


Figure 1 Bar diagram showing the difference in mean scores of boys and girls Career aspirations

It is apparent from figure 2 which indicates that Girls adolescent are high on Career aspirations than their counterparts. This shows that Boys and Girls adolescent differ significantly in their Career Aspirations. The result of the study also supported by Gutman (2008),Perry, Przybysz and Al-Sheikh (2009) who found girls have more career aspirations than boys, Obura and Ajowi (2012) also found significant gender difference, while Kumari and Gupta (2017) findings are contradictory as they found no significant gender difference in their Career Aspirations.

Thus the null hypothesis-1 state “There exists no significant difference in the career aspirations of boys and girls adolescent” is rejected.

Hypothesis-2

“There exists no significant difference in socio-economic status of boys and girls adolescent”.

Table No-3 T-ratio between Boys and Girls on the Socio-economic status

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-ratio	Level of significance
Socio-economic status	Boys	50	117.90	16.867	2.38	0.304	Not significant
	Girls	50	118.96	17.944	2.53		

Table 3 shows that t-ratio between the level of socio-economic status of boys and girls is 0.304, and it is less than the table value. So, t-ratio is not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 both levels of significance.

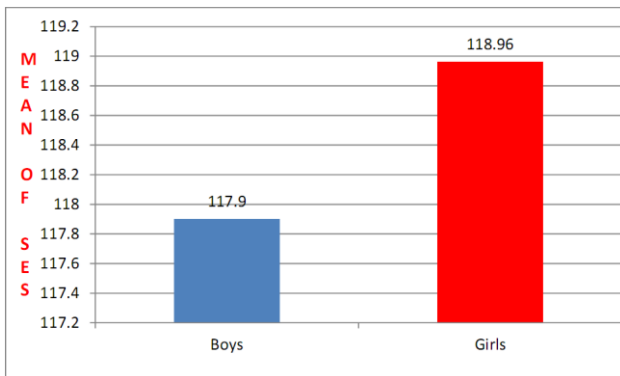


Figure 2 Bar Diagram showing the difference in mean scores of boys and girls Socio-economic Status

It is apparent from figure 2 which indicates that mean scores of Boys and Girls don't differ in Socio-economic status. This shows that Boys and Girls adolescent have the same condition on the variable socioeconomic status.

Thus, the null hypothesis-2 stating that "There exists no significant difference in socio-economic status of boys and girls adolescent" is accepted.

Hypothesis-3

"There exists no significant relationship between career aspirations and socio-economic status of adolescents".

Table No -4 Coefficient of Correlation for Career Aspirations and Socio-economic Status of adolescents

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	-Level of significance
Career Aspirations	100	0.612**	0.01 level of significance
Socio-economic Status			

Table no 4 shows that the coefficient of correlation between the scores of career aspirations and socio-economic status of adolescents is 0.612, which is positive. Therefore, it can be concluded that correlation is significant 0.01 level of significance. Thus, Hypothesis-3 state, "There exists no significant relationship between career aspirations and socio-economic status of adolescents" is rejected. The results are supported by Bradley Report (as cited in Pflugst, 2015, p.1), Osa-edoh and Alutu (2011), Abiola (2014), Gore, Holmes, Smith, Southgate and Albright (2015), Gore (2017) and Rani (2017). It means if the student has a high socio-economic status his career aspirations will also be high and low socio-economic status indicates low career aspirations. Even if these students have aspirations for higher education and attainment levels that would make them eligible, they might find the long-term financial debt harder to repay and therefore might limit their enrolment inexpensive degrees and careers of choice (Perry, 2014).

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

From the results, the researcher came to the conclusion that career aspirations have a positive significant relationship with the socio-economic status of class IX school students in Chandigarh, which means career aspirations will be high if a child is having high socio-economic status and it will be low if his status is low. The stronger financial motivation of students from low-SES backgrounds signals their hopes for occupational futures that provide financial security, while students from higher SES backgrounds appeared to see greater scope for pursuing their interests and passions. The results of the study which support by others are Beuka (2008), Bradley Report (as cited in Pflugst, 2015, p.1), Osa-edohand Alutu (2011), Obura and Ajowi (2012), Sandra (2012), Abiola (2014), Gore, Holmes, Smith, Southgate and Albright (2015), Gore (2017) and Rani (2017) whose respondents voiced lack of financial resources as the major barrier in their career choice. The focus of the study is based on when students are understood to make decisions about their post-school

destinations, given that their final school subject selections are made around that time, as well as conventional understandings of their readiness for doing so. And yet we found that the aspirations of younger students were similar in many respects to those of older students. Studies have shown that those from higher socio-economic status backgrounds are more likely to aspire to attend university or higher studies. They also found that interest in university education is strong across all socio-economic status groups; there is a considerable gap between aspirations and enrolment levels. They suggested that this 'aspirations gap' is larger for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. The present results supported by earlier findings.

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