

Analysis of Elementary School Students' Learning Obstacles in Dance Art Learning

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ABSTRACT

Arts education at the elementary school level plays an essential role in supporting students' cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and creative development. However, dance learning in elementary schools still encounters various challenges that may lead to learning obstacles among students. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the learning obstacles experienced by elementary students in dance learning. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design involving 120 elementary students as research subjects. The case study was chosen because the researcher explored in depth the phenomenon of learning obstacles experienced by students in the context of dance learning in elementary schools. Data were collected through diagnostic tests and document analysis, including teaching modules, learning models, and student worksheets. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This aims to ensure the credibility of the data obtained by researchers. The findings reveal three categories: ontological, didactical, and epistemological obstacles. These obstacles were associated with students' misconceptions about dance concepts, instructional design issues, and limited understanding of dance properties. The study highlights that learning obstacles in dance education are influenced by students' prior knowledge and learning processes. This study contributes to expanding the understanding of learning obstacle studies in elementary arts education and provides implications for developing more student-centered learning designs.

Keywords: arts education, dance learning, elementary school, learning obstacle, qualitative study

Submitted	Accepted	Published
02 July 2026	03 August 2026	30 September 2026

Citation	:	Safitri, S., Fitria, Y., Sartono, S., Iraqi, H.S., Wulandari, F.T., Salmaini, S., & Triswandari, R. (2026). Analysis of Elementary School Students' Learning Obstacles In Dance Art Learning. <i>Jurnal PAJAR (Pendidikan dan Pengajaran)</i> , 10(5), 842-854. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v10i5.1677 .
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INTRODUCTION

Arts education in elementary schools plays a crucial role in supporting student development. Arts education not only develops aesthetic abilities but also supports the development of students' cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social, and emotional aspects (Fitriah & Vivian, 2022; Juliawan et al., 2024). In elementary education, art provides a space for students to express themselves and develop creativity from an early age (Komala & Nugraha, 2022; Oktari & Desyandri, 2023). Therefore, arts education should receive equal attention to other subjects.

One branch of arts education taught in elementary schools is dance. Dance is a form of expression through structured body movements that have specific meanings (Adawiyah & Nurbaeti, 2023). In elementary school, dance not only teaches movement skills but also instills cultural values, cooperation, discipline, courage, and self-confidence (Darmayanti et al., 2022). In addition, learning dance can help students recognize themselves and their social environment.

The dance movements learned are not merely physical activities, but also a means to train body coordination, develop imagination, and enhance creative thinking skills (Tan, 2026b). Dance activities also train students in understanding symbols, rhythm, and movement patterns, which require complex thought processes (Tan, 2026a). However, the reality on the ground reveals that dance instruction in elementary schools still faces various challenges. Numerous students experience difficulties in the learning process, as evidenced by low participation, lack of interest in learning, and an inability to follow the movements taught by the teacher.

Another frequently encountered problem is the perception that art subjects are merely supplementary subjects. Several students consider dance instruction less crucial than other subjects (Antosa et al., 2017; Indri, 2018; Priyadi et al., 2024; Sumarsono et al., 2024). This view indirectly influences student motivation to participate. Furthermore, teachers often face limitations in implementing dance instruction because not all elementary school teachers have an arts education background or specialized skills in dance (Guang & Xueliang, 2025). As a result, learning is often carried out in a simple manner and does not pay enough attention to students' in-depth learning needs.

In the learning process, each student has a different skill to understand the material. Numerous students can follow dance movements quickly, while others need more time to understand certain movement patterns (Sylvester, 2025). These differences need to be addressed to prevent learning obstacles. Learning obstacles are conditions that cause students to experience difficulty in understanding learning material, which can be influenced by factors such as the student, teacher, material, and learning environment (Nurhikmayati et al., 2025). The concept of learning obstacles is essential to study because learning difficulties experienced by students are not always caused by low individual abilities. Learning obstacles can arise from material delivery that is not appropriate to student needs or limitations in the learning design used (Puspita et al., 2023). In educational studies, learning obstacles are generally divided into ontological, didactic, and epistemological obstacles (Sari et al., 2024). Ontological obstacles relate to students' developmental readiness, didactic obstacles relate to the learning process designed by the teacher, while epistemological obstacles relate to students' limited understanding of certain concepts.

In dance lessons, learning obstacles can manifest in various forms, such as difficulty understanding movement instructions, matching movements to the rhythm of the music, remembering movement sequences, and expressing movements confidently. Numerous students also exhibit shyness when asked to perform in front of their peers, which impacts their active participation in the lesson (Mengting, 2025). If these conditions are not promptly identified, students can potentially lose motivation, lose self-confidence, and even develop negative perceptions about dance lessons (Wulandari et al., 2022; Xie & Husain, 2026). These conditions can ultimately hinder the achievement of dance learning objectives in elementary schools.

Various previous studies have discussed dance lessons in elementary schools, particularly regarding the use of learning models, innovative strategies, learning media, and improving learning outcomes through specific methods (Jannah, 2025; Karochmah et al., 2024; Nisa et al., 2024; Sartono et al., 2024; Sinatra, 2023). Other research also demonstrates that the use of audiovisual media and demonstration methods can increase student motivation, motor skills, and participation in learning (Dewi et al., 2025; Ngurah et al., 2022).

However, most previous research has focused on improving learning outcomes and the effectiveness of learning methods. Research specifically examining student learning obstacles in dance learning is still relatively limited. Studies on learning obstacles are more common in subjects like mathematics and science than in the arts, particularly dance, at the elementary school level. This situation indicates a research gap that needs further development.

By identifying learning obstacles, teachers can understand the factors that cause students to experience learning difficulties, thereby providing a basis for designing learning that is more tailored to their needs (Hariyani et al., 2022; Sukri et al., 2023). Furthermore, the results of this identification can be used to evaluate the implemented learning design (Pauji et al., 2023; Ulfa & Hamdi, 2025). This research is crucial because it seeks to uncover various learning obstacles experienced by elementary students in dance learning, not only in terms of learning outcomes but also the root causes of these obstacles. This study aims to identify and analyze elementary students' learning obstacles in dance learning.

This research differs from previous studies, which focused more on improving learning outcomes using models, methods, or learning media. This is because the novelty of this research lies in the integration of the concept of learning obstacles with dance instruction in elementary schools. This research not only identifies general learning difficulties but also groups learning obstacles based on their types to obtain a more systematic and in-depth picture. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions

to the development of dance instruction in elementary schools. Theoretically, this research can enrich the study of learning obstacles in the arts. Practically, the results are expected to serve as a basis for teachers in designing dance instruction that is more effective, contextual, and tailored to students' needs.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative case study. The qualitative approach was selected because it aims to identify and analyze in-depth the phenomenon of learning obstacles experienced by elementary students in dance learning (Reilley, 2024; Wang, 2026). Meanwhile, a case study was used because the research focuses on a detailed examination of a phenomenon within a real-life context. Thus, it allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the forms of learning obstacles that arise during the dance learning process.

The research subjects involved 120 elementary school students in dance learning. The students came from four elementary schools in Padang. The subjects were selected based on their involvement in the learning process, which is the focus of the study. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. The subjects are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the learning obstacles experienced by students during dance learning.

The research instruments used included diagnostic tests and document analysis. Diagnostic tests were used to identify student learning difficulties and identify indications of learning obstacles that arise during the dance learning process. The diagnostic test was developed based on material and skill indicators related to dance learning. In this study, the material used was the use of props in dance. Furthermore, the dance props were those used in the Minangkabau dance, namely the Pasembahan dance. Therefore, the results of the diagnostic test can provide information on the level of understanding and difficulties experienced by students. Furthermore, this study utilized document analysis, including teaching modules, teacher-designed learning models, and student worksheets. Document analysis was conducted to identify potential barriers stemming from the learning design implemented. All instruments used in this study were developed by the researcher. Furthermore, the instruments were validated by three experts, i.e., a linguist, a material expert, and an educational evaluation expert. Aspects validated by the linguist included the language's suitability to the developmental level of elementary students, the suitability of the question context, and the level of readability. Aspects including the suitability of the indicators to the research objectives, the construction of the questions, the ability of the questions to uncover learning obstacles, and the methodological quality of the instruments were validated by the educational evaluation expert. Meanwhile, aspects validated by the material expert included the suitability of the dance concept, the accuracy of the material indicators, the suitability of the diagnostic questions to the dance learning competencies, and the suitability of the analysis to the dance concept.

Data collection techniques included administering diagnostic tests to students and reviewing various learning documents used during the dance learning process. The data were subsequently analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques based on the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researchers selected, simplified, and grouped data relevant to the research focus. Moreover, the data is presented in narrative descriptions to facilitate the identification of emerging learning obstacle patterns. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and verifying the data to obtain an overview of the types of learning obstacles and the factors influencing the emergence of these obstacles in dance instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research results were obtained through a diagnostic test on 120 elementary school students and an analysis of learning documents, including teaching modules, learning models, and student worksheets. The data collection process was conducted to obtain a comprehensive picture of the learning obstacles experienced by students in dance learning. The data were subsequently analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data

reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, revealing patterns of learning obstacles that emerged during the learning process.

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the learning obstacles experienced by students were not limited to movement skills. Students also experienced obstacles in conceptual understanding, the learning process implemented by teachers, and the way students constructed knowledge about dance. These findings indicate that students' difficulties in learning dance are not solely caused by low individual abilities but are influenced by various interrelated factors.

The diagnostic test results indicate that most students had prior knowledge about dance. However, this knowledge was limited and, in some cases, resulted in an inaccurate understanding. Students' prior knowledge tended to be derived from everyday experiences, social media, art performances, and previous learning experiences. These conditions cause students to develop specific perceptions about dance, which ultimately influence their understanding of the learning material.

Furthermore, the analysis of documents in the form of teaching modules, learning models, and student worksheets revealed several conditions within the learning process that could potentially create learning barriers. For example, the applied learning strategies tended to focus on technical aspects and movement mastery, preventing students from gaining a comprehensive learning experience. Based on the overall data analysis, the learning obstacles identified in this study were classified into three categories: ontological, didactic, and epistemological obstacles.

Ontological Obstacle

Ontological obstacles are learning barriers related to students' readiness to understand a concept based on their experience and development. In this study, researchers identified ontological obstacles in how students interpret the essence of dance movement. Based on the results of a diagnostic test, several obstacles were identified, as follows.

The first finding indicates that students assume that dance movements must be beautiful or technical. This understanding underscores that students tend to judge dance solely on the visual aspect of the movements. This condition makes it difficult for students to understand that simple movements, even everyday movements, can be developed into dance forms with aesthetic value.

The second finding indicates that students assume that dance movements must have standard rules that must be followed, similar to the rules of pitch in music. This understanding makes students afraid to explore movements because they perceive the possibility of errors. As a result, students' creativity in creating new movements is limited.

The third finding indicates that students view dance movements solely as a form of performance. This perception indicates that students do not yet understand the broader function of dance, such as a medium of communication, a means of self-expression, education, and cultural preservation. The fourth finding indicates that students believe that dance movements must always be accompanied by specific music. However, music in dance is not a mandatory element, as a number of dance forms emphasize movement expression without musical accompaniment. This perception indicates students' limited understanding of dance elements comprehensively.

The fifth finding indicates that students believe that dance movements are regulated by clear and unchangeable norms. This understanding leads students to view dance as rigid and stifling creativity. These five findings indicate that students tend to perceive dance as a difficult art form because it is bound by certain norms. This, in turn, leaves students unprepared to learn and fully understand dance concepts, ultimately hindering their development in applying dance.

Didactical Obstacle

Didactic obstacles are learning barriers that arise from the learning process designed and implemented by teachers. Based on the results of the analysis of learning documents, researchers identified several

conditions that could potentially create learning barriers for students. The first finding indicated that the learning strategies were not varied, leading to students feeling bored and unmotivated. The lessons tended to use the same methods repeatedly, resulting in less engaging learning experiences for students.

The second finding indicated that the lessons emphasized the technical aspects of movement without integrating emotional and musical elements. This condition made dance learning feel rigid and less meaningful. Students focused more on movement precision than on understanding the meaning of the movement. The third finding indicated that the dance learning process tended to focus on a specific culture, resulting in a limited understanding of Indonesian dance. This situation resulted in students having limited knowledge of the diversity of dance cultures in Indonesia.

The fourth finding indicated an assumption that students already understood technical terms in dance. As a result, communication between teachers and students was less effective because numerous students had difficulty understanding the instructions. The fifth finding indicated that the lessons emphasized technique over expression. This leads to an unbalanced learning environment, as students are only directed to master movements without understanding the expressive value inherent in dance. The five findings above demonstrate that a learning process conducted without considering students' knowledge leads to obstacles in certain subjects, including dance. A good learning process should be implemented while still considering students' knowledge. This way, the dance learning process can be well-received and understood by students.

Epistemological Obstacle

Epistemological obstacles are learning barriers related to students' limited understanding of a concept in a specific context. In this study, researchers identified several epistemological barriers to students' understanding of the use of props in dance. The first finding indicated that students believed that props in dance served only as a means of entertainment. This perception underscores that students did not yet understand the function of props as a component that could strengthen the character and meaning of the dance. Essentially, dance props are an integral part of the dance itself, not as an addition, but as a reinforcement of the dance's character.

The second finding indicated that students considered props a secondary element in a dance performance. This understanding led to a lack of understanding of the importance of the relationship between props and the message conveyed in a performance. The third finding indicated that students believed props were monotonous and could not be manipulated. This situation indicated that students did not yet understand that props could be used creatively and developed into part of the dance movements.

The fourth finding indicated that students perceived the use of props as restricting the dancer's movement, thereby diminishing the dance's aesthetic value. This perception arose because students viewed props as additional objects rather than as supporting dance movements. The fifth finding indicated that students assume that props are merely ordinary objects or tools that have no specific meaning. However, in dance, props can have symbolic value related to the theme, character, or message being conveyed. The sixth finding indicated that students consider props to be a separate part of the dance itself. This condition indicates that students do not yet understand that props can be an integral element that supports the entire dance performance. Overall, the results of this study underscore that learning obstacles experienced by students in learning dance arise from various interrelated aspects, including student readiness, learning design, and the construction of students' knowledge. These findings reveal that the dance learning process requires a more contextual, varied design that adapts to student characteristics so that emerging learning obstacles can be minimized.

Discussion

The research results reveal that the learning obstacles experienced by elementary students in dance lessons fall into three categories: ontological, didactic, and epistemological. These findings demonstrate that students' learning difficulties are not solely influenced by individual abilities. They are also influenced by

learning experiences, instructional design, and how students construct knowledge. This aligns with Brousseau's learning obstacle theory, which explains that learning obstacles arise through the interaction between students and the learning situation they encounter (Cahyati et al., 2025; Hendriyanto et al., 2024). Furthermore, learning obstacles can stem from students' learning readiness, the teacher's learning process, or even their limited understanding of a concept in a specific context (Artigue, 2024; Munthe & Naalsund, 2024).

The findings above demonstrate that students have several initial perceptions regarding the nature of dance movement. Students assume that dance movement must be beautiful, technical, have standard rules, be frequently accompanied by music, and be used solely as a performance medium. This condition indicates limited conceptual readiness among students in understanding basic dance concepts (Musyrifah et al., 2022; Puspita et al., 2023). Based on an ontological obstacle perspective, this condition arises as a result of students' prior knowledge gained from previous experiences. This knowledge then becomes a framework for understanding new concepts (Adisonmez & Onursal, 2022; Quílez, 2021). However, this prior knowledge is not aligned with the scientific concepts being learned. This can lead to obstacles in the learning process. This is as explained by Brousseau, who states that ontological obstacles are related to students' readiness and development in accepting certain concepts (Lemma & Belachew, 2023; Manolino, 2024).

Furthermore, other findings in this study related to ontological obstacles indicate that students view dance as an activity closely tied to rules and the beauty of movement. This is likely influenced by students' experiences of seeing dance more frequently in formal performances than through movement exploration activities. As a result, students tend to view dance as a finished product, rather than a creative process (Ramadan et al., 2025; Sutrisno & Asyhar, 2023). This contradicts the concept of creative dance learning, which emphasizes that dance movements can originate from various forms of movement exploration, bodily experiences, and students' everyday experiences (Imron & Syukri, 2025; Kusno et al., 2025; Utaminingsih, 2025). Dance learning should provide opportunities for students to discover and develop their creativity through exploration.

The findings underscore that ontological obstacles in dance learning are not only related to students' lack of conceptual mastery but are also influenced by aesthetic experiences they have had before formal school learning. Students construct their understanding based on experiences watching dance performances in their community and in the media; hence, dance is perceived as an activity that must meet standards of beauty and rules, and it is performance-oriented. This condition expands the understanding of ontological obstacles proposed by Brousseau. In the context of arts education, ontological obstacles do not solely arise due to limitations in students' cognitive development but are also influenced by social, cultural, and aesthetic experiences that shape how students interpret dance (DeLeon, 2024; Heinrichs et al., 2025). Thus, dance learning in elementary schools needs to be directed at conceptual reconstruction through movement exploration, improvisation, and reflection activities so that students understand dance not only as a performance product but also as a meaningful creative process.

Regarding the obstacles related to the learning process, it was found that didactic obstacles arose from the teaching process implemented by teachers. Document analysis results indicate that the learning strategies used are still lacking in variety, tend to focus on technical aspects, and do not provide ample space for students to explore their learning experiences. According to Brousseau, didactic obstacles arise from the learning system implemented, which causes students to have difficulty understanding certain concepts (Genc & Ergun, 2022; Ramdhani et al., 2025; Risfiandina & Sumiaty, 2026). These obstacles are related to the sequence of material, the method of presentation, and the instructional design used by teachers (Haro & Aguilar, 2025; Meika et al., 2025; Rahaju et al., 2024).

This implies that dance learning still emphasizes mastery of technique over developing expression. This condition causes students to focus more on the accuracy of movements than on understanding the meaning of the movements being learned. In fact, dance education aims not only to develop motor skills but also to develop students' creativity and expressive abilities (Finkelstein, 2025; Song et al., 2024; Yu & Buck, 2024). Previous research has shown that creativity-oriented dance instruction can increase student engagement in the

learning process (Chen, 2025; Kaymakci & Can, 2024; Megawati et al., 2025; Mesnan et al., 2023). Learning that provides opportunities for students to imagine, explore movement, and create new dance forms can enhance a more meaningful learning experience.

The findings reveal that didactic obstacles are not only caused by limited variations in learning strategies but also indicate the existence of a dance learning paradigm that is still oriented towards mastery of technique. The emphasis on movement precision, teacher demonstration, and movement reproduction causes students to view dance more as a motor skill than as a medium for expression and creativity. This finding provides conceptual implications that dance learning in elementary schools needs to shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach. Teachers not only act as movement demonstrators but also as facilitators who create learning experiences through exploration, collaboration, and reflection (Melia et al., 2024; Nasir et al., 2025; Priyono et al., 2024). Thus, the development of dance learning should not only be oriented towards achieving technical competencies, but also towards the formation of creativity, cultural appreciation, and students' skills to construct meaning through movement.

Regarding learning barriers related to epistemology, researchers found that students experienced epistemological barriers in understanding the use of props in dance. Most students viewed props as mere entertainment tools, secondary elements, meaningless, and even considered them to limit the dancer's movements. According to Brousseau, epistemological obstacles occur when students possess knowledge that can only be used in certain contexts but have difficulty applying it to different situations (Maknun et al., 2022; Siagian et al., 2022; Suryani et al., 2025). In this study, students understood props solely based on their experiences in dance performances. Students tended to view props as additional objects used by dancers, rather than as elements with artistic and symbolic functions. This condition resulted in students' incomplete understanding of the concept of props. The use of props in dance plays a crucial role in character building, strengthening themes, and supporting the delivery of messages within a dance (Indriany & Muthi, 2024; Istiandini et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2022). When students perceive props as mere accessories, they will struggle to grasp their true function. This study demonstrates that students' learning experiences significantly influence the formation of their knowledge (Harel, 2024; Jatisunda et al., 2025; Sulastris et al., 2022; Suwanti et al., 2024). If the learning experience is limited to imitating movements without exploring meaning, students tend to construct incomplete concepts. Therefore, the dance learning process needs to be designed in a more contextual, exploratory, and student-centered manner to minimize various learning obstacles.

The findings regarding epistemological obstacles underscore that students tend to understand dance properties as stand-alone elements and are not related to the meaning or structure of the dance performance. This condition indicates that students' knowledge is still fragmentary; thus, they are not able to see the relationship between movement, properties, expression, and cultural values as a whole. Conceptually, this finding underscores that dance learning is not enough to simply introduce dance elements separately, but needs to be designed contextually and integratively so that students are able to build relationships between concepts (Agustin et al., 2024; Simard, 2023). Thus, this study contributes to the development of dance learning by affirming that conceptual understanding in art develops through the integration of physical experience, aesthetic experience, and cultural meaning.

Overall, the research results reveal that learning obstacles in dance learning are not only related to student abilities but are also influenced by the learning process and the learning experiences students acquire. In addition, this finding reinforces the gap in previous research that focused more on improving learning outcomes than identifying student learning obstacles in dance learning. The research findings also reveal that dance learning requires not only mastery of movement skills, but also involves students' thinking skills, creativity, experience, and interpretation of the meaning of movement. Dance education is fundamentally characterized by placing creativity as a crucial part of the learning process. Therefore, when students experience obstacles in understanding dance concepts, this condition can affect the process of developing meaningful learning experiences. Previous research accentuates that dance learning should provide opportunities for students to explore, discover, and develop their creativity independently.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results and discussion, elementary students in dance learning experience various forms of learning obstacles that affect their understanding process and learning experience. The learning obstacles are classified into three categories, namely ontological, didactical, and epistemological obstacles. In the ontological obstacle, students indicate a limited understanding of the nature of dance movement, such as the assumption that dance must be beautiful, technical movements, have standard rules, frequently be accompanied by music, and only function as a performance medium. In the didactic obstacle, obstacles arise due to less varied learning strategies, learning that emphasizes technical aspects more than expression, the use of a less contextual approach, and the assumption that students already understand technical terms in dance. Meanwhile, in the epistemological obstacle, students experience limitations in understanding the function and meaning of dance properties, so that properties are seen only as complementary elements separate from the dance performance. The findings of this study indicate that learning obstacles in dance learning are not only influenced by students' abilities, but also influenced by learning experiences, learning design, and the construction of knowledge that students have.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be implemented by various parties. For teachers, the research results demonstrate the importance of designing dance lessons that are not solely focused on mastering movement techniques but also provide opportunities for students to explore movement, develop creativity, and understand the meaning of movement and the function of dance props through contextual, reflective, and student-centered learning. Teachers are also advised to use more varied learning strategies, utilize regional dances as learning contexts, and provide explicit explanations of technical terms that have the potential to give rise to misconceptions. For curriculum developers and those developing learning materials, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing teaching modules, worksheets, and learning materials that focus not only on achieving technical skills but also on developing students' conceptual understanding, cultural appreciation, creativity, and reflective abilities. Furthermore, learning materials need to be designed in stages, accommodating the various learning obstacles identified so that the potential for misconceptions can be minimized from the beginning of the learning process. For future researchers, the results can be used as a basis for developing a didactic design specifically designed to address ontological, didactic, and epistemological obstacles in dance learning in elementary schools. Further research is also recommended to test the effectiveness of the didactic design at different educational levels, student characteristics, and cultural contexts to obtain a more adaptive dance learning model that suits the needs of students.

Limitation

This research analyzes students' learning obstacles in dance instruction. This research needs to be further developed, specifically into a didactic design. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Padang; thus, further research needs to be conducted elsewhere to identify student learning obstacles there.

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