

THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

This paper endeavors at foreknowing the human related facets of a Human Resources Information System (HRIS) in Pakistan. The perception of HR role as a strategic partner highlighted the technological developments in the field of HR and one having superior HRIS has competitive superiority over its rivals. A structure questionnaire was distributed by mail, email as well as personal visits. Convenience sampling was used because of scarce use of HRIS in Pakistan. The data was analyzed with Cronbach's batch alpha, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, beta value and regression etc. Survey results from HR professionals across Pakistan reveal that HRIS has added value to the performance of HR function, hence enhanced the performance of the organization. HRIS has not only enhanced the HR functions through technological advancements and value additions, but it also has a capability to replace the HR professionals in future. Investing in the HR function has been the least priority of the management however the technological enrichment has led HR function to its strategic role in the organization. The data was collect from the diverse nature of respondents because of the less availability and their perception got equal variation among groups should found and judge. Very few organizations are aware about HRIS, even some of the HR professionals are not aware. HRIS awareness program should be carried out by the universities and those who work for the development of business/organization.

Key Words: Information Technology (IT), HRIS, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Substituting or Enhancing HR Function, future of HR Professionals

INTRODUCTION

Continuous ascending in productivity of large organizations over last two decades has paved way for effective use of information technology (Dery, 2005; Evered & Härtel, 2009). Twentieth century has witnessed numerous changing fashions in the field of HRM. The changing trend from personnel to human resources function is another breakthrough in this field. Automation is another important aspect in the field of human capital management. Over a period of copious years employees have been declared as human capital and have become an important component of growth for any organization as well as country. HRIS has been enhancing the human resource function for almost a decade. The purpose of HRIS is to facilitates and integrate the strategic and organizational variables, HR functions are accountable for. HRIS has become a vital force to smooth the progress of HR function, to handle administrative jobs effectively

and to add value in organization strategic planning and its implementation (Barut & Dogerlioglu, 2010; Hussain et al., 2007; Mercer Human Resource Consulting, 2007; Mayfield et al., 2003).

Human is the most significant determining factor of the information system's achievements (Evered & Hartel, 2009). HRIS practice in any organization is fanatic as a prospect for the HR specialists to develop into strategic associates amid upper management. HRIS shall aid the HR role to perform efficiently and deliver info material for strategic decision. However, the focus of problem lies in the fact, as to whether HRIS has achieved this goal or not (Beadles II, Lowery, & Johns, 2005). The theme of HRIS in any organization is that it adds value to the organization in the form of enhancing its human resource function. Although, there is a debate that the human resource function of the organization is not a core function and is only a support function in the organization (Mohapatra, 2009). However, the effectiveness of the HR department ultimately adds value to organizational effectiveness as this function is mostly involved in the strategic planning of the organization. Another important aspect of HR function is that it deals with the internal customers (employees of the organization) and satisfying their needs and grievances on day to day basis is a very important task. These days organizations maintain databases from which relevant information can be extracted for the decision making purposes (Asim, 2010). The environment in which the implementation of HRIS happens is its foremost feature for its success or otherwise (Evered & Hartel, 2009).

HRIS has increasingly become an important measure for the organizations to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently. Number of organizations adapting HRIS has enhanced drastically (Troshani, Jerram, & Gerrard, 2010). Lengnick-Hall and Moritz (2003) as quoted by Beadles, Lowery and Johns (2005) suggested that the evolution of HR function with the origin of HRIS has evolved from availability of information and evidence to mechanization and from mechanization to modification of the HR function. This proposal of Lengnick-Hall and Moritz of transformation of the HR function orbit about the facts that HRIS shall provide authentic information and save the cost for organization in the form of better data analyses and strategic decision making. Hence, HRIS can make stand the HR function as an important strategic pillar of the organization.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

This study traces the influence of HRIS on Human Resource professionals and their functions. As HR function is a support function but it holds a role of a strategic partner, therefore its efficiency and performance is very important for the organization which can be enhanced after the HRIS implementation. Similarly, with HRIS the nature of jobs of the HR professionals change radically. So the major objective of this study is to find the future scenario.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The study aims at critically viewing successful implementations of HRIS in various organizations in Pakistan and studies its impact factor regarding its effectiveness in the organization. The study also aims at whether the HRIS has achieved the desired level of organizational effectiveness or it is still considered a hindrance in the jobs of the HR professionals. The study also looks into the possible threats that the HR professionals are facing in this critical area in the context of their careers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review articulates that scholars have highlighted the significance of the features touching HRIS and defined in different ways however the concept and constituents are more or less the same. According to McLeod & DeSanctis (1995) the history of HRIS is traced back to the 60's and 70's when the management converted the personnel records from manual storage to computer storage. According to Altarawneh & Shqairat (2010) HRIS is a perception regarding the computerization of HRM function modules. HRIS has also been defined as the fusion of computer hardware, software and databases to store and retrieve data and information regarding human resource function (Ngai & Wat, 2006). HRIS has been defined as the automated tool for the data collection, storage, maintenance and retrieval of information about the employees and their jobs (Jr. & DeSanctis, 1995). Another way of describing HRIS is a collection of systematic procedures that allows to manage all digital information related to employees. A well designed implemented HRIS helps the top management in strategic planning. HRIS is in the form of modules which acts as umbrellas for each personnel activity (Malik & Rehman, 2002). The HRIS job is to push the HR tasks than routine time and play a real role of strategic partner (Asim, 2010). HRIS constitutes vibrant systems that are well equipped with purpose for obtaining, storing, maneuvering, retrieving, analysing and disseminating relevant information concerning an organization's human capital (Troshani, Jerram, & Gerrard, 2010).

Ngai & Wat (2006) found in their research regarding the perception about the use of HRIS. Rapid action, reply and easy entry to relevant data and information were the basic concept of HRIS, although financial support is the greatest barrier. They also found very clear difference between those who adopt HRIS and those who did not. Boetang, (2007) wonders about what he found in literature that HRIS is mandatory for the competitive advantage in long term as the literature never addressed about the role HRIS plays in strategic HRM. The strategic HRM tasks found by Boetang, (2007) are: human resource development, communications, career management, worker autonomy, human capital build up, workplace commitment, leadership, relation of organization's trade unions and business processes reengineering. Strategic decision-making process also includes the quick and easy access to very important information. So we can claim that HRIS has an important role in strategic HRM decision making (Kovach et al, 2002). Gardner et al. (2003) stated in their paper that strategic human resource management tasks of an

organization will be efficiently performed only if they use HRIS technology. Further the writer even warns the organization to use HRIS, otherwise they may face bad results in future and it is equally important for small and large size organizations. Labor issues are still an issue for a technology to be solved as all the issues are almost different in nature. Still the paper claims that HRIS role is very basic in SHRM although organization management style matter. Computer software and hardware are the nominal parts of HRIS system, operator, rules, strategies, data, and procedures are essential for control and performance (Hendrickson, 2003).

According to Lego (2001) as discussed by Boateng (2007) the time organizations take to recover the investment on HRIS (payback period) is one to three years approximately. Elswick (2002) stated that technology is not enough for professionals to distribute knowledge. It will never make workforce excited to gain knowledge or information, it is just an easy access to the knowledge, means HRIS is supportive in nature (Boetang, 2007). Another study shows that HRIS is likely to have more adaptation and usage in a large organization with greater employee base. The more are the employees the more likely the HRIS shall be used for information sharing and decision making. It is also evident from the research that only half of the organizations adapt HRIS where the employee strength is below five hundred. Time and attendance are the most effective modules that are implemented within HRIS. However, most of the organizations are using HRIS for administrative tasks and very few are using it for strategic purposes of training, development and learning (Ball, 2001).

According to Altarawneh et al. (2010) HRIS is difficult to use. Highly educated and well experienced employee can use it. It was also found that HRIS was adopted for wide-ranging employment information, payroll services, tracking and controlling, allowing for fewer errors and monitoring absence. HRIS was never found to save the expenses, escalating the competition or changing the nature of HRM jobs, except the routine administrative work. Speedy response and easy entry to relevant information was found major HRIS benefits (2007). Financial support, organizational culture and top management commitment were considered the barrier for the implementation of HRIS. Very few of the change reforms descend in the category of being successful. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is vast multi user global software systems that provide layers of data security and restrictions for the required data to enter into the system. By placing strict data authorizations these systems offer integration and provide real-time information and reporting. The adoption of ERP and its modules like HRIS in the corporate world and their assurance of data reliability and integrity are still the most notoriously difficult projects to implement across organizations. Organizations fail to benefit from the ERP implementation and a high percentage of the ERP implementations are failure (Wailes, Grant & Barret, 2006).

Researchers also argue that the basic purpose of HRIS are computerization of HRM activities, decision-support is not its purpose at all (Ball, 2001; Ngai & Wat, 2006; Delorme & Arcand, 2010). Installation of complete HRIS involves a huge

cost/investment. If upper management is not well aware about HRIS, they will never give time, efforts and other valuable resources for its implementation (Ngai & Wat, 2006). HRM is the only department which should monitor the HRIS (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006). Several top HR executives receive a number of new proposals for the implementation of HRIS software modules in their organization or replacing the existing ones with new features. However, being totally technical software the selection of correct software or vendor is always a challenging task for the HR gurus. In general the HRIS application should be judged on the basis of few common aspects which are user friendliness or graphically interactive interface, detailed training manuals and documentation of configured business processes, software technology and vendor rating, integration with other modules, and ease of access (How-to-assess-an-hr-management-software, 2010).

Another study shows that HRIS is facing three main challenges. Top management commitment for assignment of resources, implementation and up gradation of HRIS. HRIS is difficult to use and the change is never welcome in organization culture. Till the medication of these three challenges, it will be merely day dreaming that HRIS will increase strategic position of HR (Dery, Grant, & Wiblen, 2009). Hussain & Prowse (2004) studied the function of HRIS that how it can assist HR managers performance. They found that HRIS was playing a significant role in helping HR professional, at least in performing operational jobs. Strategic level use of HRIS was not significant. The use of HRIS changed the working style of HR professional. Thompson, Ghee & Fedric (2007) concluded that benefits of HRIS are more visible in departmental level. Organizational benefit is less visible or less observable so the choice to implement HRIS is of the department not of the organization. No Competition was found among organization on the root of HRIS adaptation. Perhaps for this reason most of the top level managers do not want to invest on HRIS.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After getting ample support from the literature the study targets at ascertaining and gauging the causes of HRIS in organizations and its effect over the jobs of HR professionals and its future. The network of association among the dependent and independent variables is discussed under this caption.

According to the study the major dependent variables are enhancing HR functions and replacing HR functions. This research tries to find relationships of these two variables with the independent variable.

There is only one independent variable used in the study which is Human Resource Information System (HRIS). HRIS itself cannot be seen independently and it is also comprised of various features that comprise HRIS which has already been discussed in the literature review section. This is graphically represented in the network of association diagram.

Network of Association

In social research, theoretical framework is an important constituent and play significant role. It shows the climax of research. Hypothetical model of this paper is design and represent graphically after the deep study of literature and showing a clear association among dependent and independent variables.

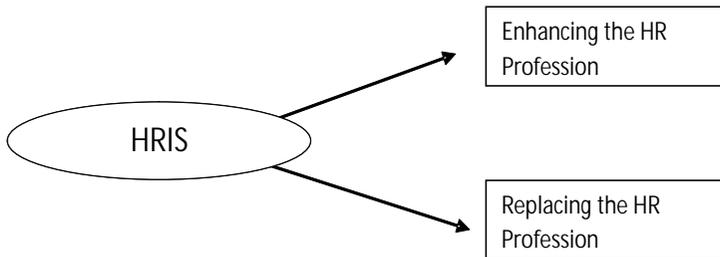


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

HYPOTHESIS

H1: *Implementation of HRIS (Human Resource Information System) enhances the overall performance and efficiency of Human Resource Profession.*

H2: *Implementation of HRIS replaces the HR functions and Profession in future.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of Study

A balance of qualitative and quantitative data analysis is used by using analyses software SPSS. Researches are of two types, qualitative and quantitative. The nature of qualitative research is subjective where interviews are usually preferred and outputs are the finding of determinants. Then the determinants are further explained usually for cause and effect relation in quantitative study, analyze the data statistically and structure questionnaire (survey) are usually preferred (Zarraga and Gracia-Falcon, 2003). The survey method has been used for quantitative area of this study. Some of the questions were kept open ended in the research tools to find untouched area if there is. The data was verified and analyze with Cronbatch's batch alpha, t-test, ANOVA, correlation, beta value and regression etc.

Sampling Strategy & Data Collection Process

Non-probability or convenience sampling methodology where the respondent availability is important is adopted in this study (Doodley, 2007). As per Doodley (2007) in convenience or non-probability sampling the data used to collect on the basis of availability. Same method used in this paper as HRIS is hardly installed in Pakistani organizations and the research is specialized one. Organizations have been specifically identified and then data was collected. A structured questionnaire has been circulated to

senior HR executives of small, medium and large organizations in various sectors like banking, telecom, oil and gas etc. The questionnaire used for collecting data was already tested by Altarawneh & Shqairat, (2010).

Data was collected from the Bank of Punjab (BOP), Allied Bank Limited (ABL), Project to Improve Financial Reporting & Auditing (PIFRA), Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited (PRAL), Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), Standard Chartered Bank, Mobilink, Borjan and Person Force, United Bank Limited. Around one hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed by mail, email as well as personal visits. Ninety-seven of them responded back positively.

Data Analysis Tools & Methods

In quantitative study, it is very important to analyze and interpret the statistical results very properly because its results may be very critical. This portion deals with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The questionnaire was coded to be understandable for SPSS and then de-coded and interpret the results. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested and retested. Around one hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed by mail, email as well as personal visits. Ninety-seven of them responded back positively. So the response rate was 65%.

Analysis & Discussion

The present study is qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. Open ended questions were used in the questionnaire for qualitative part so as to gauge what the respondents feel about the particular study instead of restricting their options and results. Likert scale is there in questionnaire of this study. The questionnaire used for data collection was pretested by Altarawneh & Shqairat, (2010).

For reconfirmation a pilot study was carried out to make sure the instrument's reliability. Reliability of the internal consistency is measured with the coefficient of Cronbach and its value lie in 0 to 1. The acceptable value of Cronbach's alpha is above 0.60 (Janz & Prasamphanich, 2003). In this study Cronbach's alpha value was found 0.721. So the instrument was found reliable. Normally a lenient cut-off of .70 or higher is good to maintain items in adequate scale. For superior research some scholars needs 0.80 cut-off. Three key variables are shown in descriptive statistics used in this paper are HRIS, Enhancing HR function and Replacing HR function about which ninety seven respondents show their consent. The mean values show that all the respondents agree on two of the variables that are HRIS and enhancing the HR function as shown in Table 1 is 4.30 and 4.20 respectively. In case of the third variable which is replacing the HR function, the average mean comes out to be 2.11, which shows that most of the respondents disagree. The box test and the tests for homogeneity are significant therefore MANOVA tests cannot be applied hence T-tests and ANOVA are used for analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HRIS	4.2990	.48229	97
Enhancing HR Functions	4.2062	.62813	97
Replacing HR Functions	2.1134	.70528	97

Table 2: Correlation

		HRIS	Enhancing HR Functions	Replacing HR Functions
HRIS	Pearson Correlation	1		
Enhancing HR Functions	Pearson Correlation	.654	1	
Replacing HR Functions	Pearson Correlation	.389		1

Table 3: Coefficients (HRIS and Enhancing HR Functions).

Model.	Unstandardized Coefficients.		Standardized Coefficients.		
	B.	Std. Error.	Beta.	T.	Sig.
1	(Constant), .852	.101	.654	8.427	.000
	HRIS				

Table 4: Model Summary (HRIS and Enhancing HR Functions)

Model.	R.	R Square.	Adjusted R. Square.	F.
1	0.654	0.428	0.422	71.01

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f. Predictor: (Constant); HRIS
- g. Dependent Variable; Enhancing HR Functions

Table 5: Coefficients. (HRIS and Replacing HR Functions)

Model.		Unstandardized Coefficients.		Standardized Coefficients.		
		B.	Std. Error.	Beta.	T.	Sig.
2.	HRIS.	0.569	0.138	0.389	4.11	0.00

- a. Dependent Variable; Replacing HR Functions.

Table 6: Model Summary; (HRIS and Replacing HR Function)

Model.	R.	R Square.	Adjusted R Square.	F.
2.	0.389	0.152	0.143	16.96

- a. Predictor;(Constant), HRIS
- b. Dependent Variable; Replacing HR Functions

To determine the extent of change in dependent variable as a result of change in independent variable, tests of correlation is advisable to use (IBM, 2010) . Table 2 shows a positive correlation (0.654) between the variables HRIS and enhancing HR function. The correlation between HRIS and Replacing HR Function is also positive (0.389) but the extent of relationship is weaker as compared to first variable.

T-tests and ANOVA are used to assess dissimilarities of two or more than two groups. It indicates the differences between groups by matching their means. The high value of F with 0.05 or lower probability show a small differences among groups and vice versa but it needs to be significant.

The beta value shows the effect of individual independent variable over the dependent variable. The T significance show how much true the beta is. The significant (0.00) and

the T value in Table 3 and 5 describe that the beta values are true.

According to Gupta (2000), before analyzing anything in research model, first we must need to check the goodness of fit model. ANOVA test was applied to check that the model is fit or not. The model used in this study is treated as two models and has been analyzed independently. In the first model the relationship between the variables HRIS and enhancing HR function is analyzed while in the second model the relationship between HRIS and replacing HR function is under observation. According to this model there are two values of ANOVA and adjusted R-square. The tables 4 and 6 show that ANOVA values (71.013, Sig. 0.00), (16.966, Sig. 0.00) are significant. In other words the models are fit for further analysis. The models explain the deviation in dependent variable and further statistical analyses can be applied for gauging the variables. The value of adjusted R-Square (42.2) in table 4 in first model shows that the phenomenon explained by the model is 42%. The second model adjusted R-Square value is (0.143) in table 6, which means that 14.3% of the inconsistency is explained.

Qualitative research refers to a social research based on observations which are not backed by statistics. The qualitative research requires direct observations and unstructured interviewing in a natural setting. It is more related to perception and behavior of the respondents and more variation in results, implies the comprehension of the people and situation under study (Doodley, 2007). The review of literature reveals interesting statistics regarding the effect of HRIS on organizations and their HR functions.

In order to review their opinions regarding the changing future of HR professionals, majority of the respondents responded positively. In traditional business, HR was considered as a cost center but now HR is becoming as a cost saving department because it plays an important role in procuring, maintaining and developing employees. With strong domain knowledge HR professionals may have a bright future. Human resource will be a fundamental part of corporate strategy and will focus on business value additions. The supervision of human resource is not the only function of HR. It is strategic business contributor. HR provides support to management in accomplishing the organization objectives. It's all about managing human beings and getting maximum output from them which is a very challenging job. It has very brilliant future and eventually it is evolving into a more strategic function. Thus study supports various authors discussed in literature review that the HR function has changed its role from being a support function to a strategic and tactical partner and playing a significant role in developing HR strategies and aligning these strategies with the organizational growth strategy.

The respondents are agreeing that they are performing three different types of roles within the HR function at various levels. The respondents were performing their duties in order of priorities in which there is an advisory role, a service role and functional role. Moreover, responding to the question of how the role of HR changed over the years, most of the respondents answered that it is going to become specialized more and more

in some aspects. The other response which was very popular for this question was that HR and organizational strategies are moving toward integration. Very few respondents revealed that it has become more like an internal consultant. The respondents do believe that their roles have become more strategic in their organizations after the implementation of HRIS. They think that HRIS has moved them away from hum drum personnel activities and enables the HR professionals to take more relevant and exact decisions.

A very crucial question has been differently answered by respondents that how the organizations can make a strategic use of HRIS. By using it for critical data analysis and by making of the HR processes more reliable and transparent the HRIS can be used strategically individually and at the organization level. Organizations which are using the HRIS in recruitment function may get the assignments done in shortest possible time with accuracy and efficiency. Moreover, by inculcating an intelligent Decision Support System (DSS) within the HRIS which may help HR Managers preempt the upcoming changes / developments and suggest appropriate alternatives. In improving employee performance, reliable and accurate information for HR strategic decisions can be made through using HRIS strategically.

One of the responded shares his experiences which support our second hypotheses that implementation of HRIS replaces the Human Resource Profession in future. According to him he was hired as HR Manager in Harirod Construction Company (HCC), Kabul Afghanistan (Nowadays HCC is a multinational company). HCC lack HR department and he was supposed to establish the department. There were more than two thousands labor and other staff and a single personal file was even not present in proper format. That HR Manager starts and establish fully functional HR department in one year duration. To show more efficiency he installed HRIS with name "Attend HRM". Initially the cost increased. Some of the admin personnel performing HR functions were on fire because "Attend HRM" handles their jobs. The projects Managers become enemies of HR Manager. Some of the project manager tried to resign. The degree of the cost-line (labor cost) suddenly decrease on the day in projects when "Attend HRM" attend the projects. According to Lego (2001) the HRIS installation cost recovery time is one to three year but in that case the cost was recovered in one month. Time passed, The HR Manager was fired and replaced by his assistant and niece of the president. Although his education and skills level were very low but "Attend HRM" was so simple that a very low skill person is running the department since September, 2012 and when he face problem, like software come in conflict with HR policy they go for outsourcing.

CONCLUSION

HRIS has certainly enhanced and encourage the HR profession and made its working both effective and efficient. The HR professionals of the future will certainly be equipped with the latest know how of the e-HRM and HRIS: The former deals with the HR software from the employee perspective while the later deals solely with HR staff

(Zafar, 2010). In future HRIS will be mandatory which will support every one for quick information. It will be helpful especially to line manager and HR department and will strengthen the partnership of HR and other departments. The role of HR is under incessant scrutiny by the academics and professionals so as to add more strategic role to this function keeping in view the changing global trends and technological innovations (Martin & Reddington, 2009).

Fifty percent consent was that HRIS has potential to progress planning and developmental decisions and especially communication will be faster than bullet. In absence of HRIS things will be vice versa. Almost all HR managers tell the eminences of HRIS. It would soon be a complete melody of HR activities. Some of the judgments of this study are very hopeful but still there are roads that need to be clear. Now it is the responsibility of HR professionals to provide competitive edge to their organization in the form of human capital, new and efficient system. They have to challenge their own selves to add values and make the road clear. Today organization development has a strongest relation with human resource development which is primarily depended on accurate and timely relevant information. So the communication system needs to be updated and reliable. In such scenario, HRIS is the best solution. In fact HRIS is the slogan of the day. It did not supports HR department and organization but the entire stake holders. Because of HRIS, today it is very easy to apply for a job and then check the updated position day by day. Even very low level employees can check their career status without visiting HR department. Things become very attractive and fascinating. It may be problematic in short run but in long run HRIS has no alternative.

HRIS as defined by different authors in the literature consists of various modules and sub modules. The cost of these modules varies from vendor to vendor and depending upon the size of the organization and the number of licenses acquired. However, most common modules which are implemented in most of the organizations are recruitment & sourcing, posting plans, trainings and organizational development, performance evaluations, payroll and benefits administration and Management Information Systems (MIS). HRIS has been declared as very important and crucial in helping the HR professional to perform their jobs more professionally. Moreover, the respondents believe that after implementation of HRIS, functions are more systematic and organized, as well as standardized throughout the entire department of HR and all the decision making depends on it. Moreover, it helps HR Managers concentrate more on strategic aspects of their responsibilities; it has increased efficiency and made life easy for HR planning. Reliable reporting and trustworthy and transparent processes also increase the dependence and outcome of organization however involvement of end users is vital in pre and post implementation phase of the HRIS.

HR profession is that much significant for the survival of organizations that its failure will be considered the failure of organizations. It is also equally true that the nature and structure of HR profession will not remain the same in future especially after the installation of full flagged HRIS in personal and rival organizations.

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