

Supervision Matters! Put the Pencils Away or Make the Crayons Stay to Promote a Safe Environment for Preschool Children in the Classroom and at Home. A View from Preschool Parents and Guardians

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ABSTRACT

In preschool classrooms, where young children require the most protection, teachers, parents, and guardians play an important role in ensuring that young children are safe from injury and accident both at home and in the classroom. This study aimed to assess the dangers of using sharpened pencils and other sharp writing materials for preschoolers, both at home and in school. Twenty parents from a selected child development center comprised the research sample. Through purposively sampled selection, twenty parents of preschool-aged children who shared their views and observations regarding the possible dangers in connection to injury or accident from sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils during their children's writing activities at home and in school were chosen as participants using the qualitative approach with an exploratory research design. In-depth interviews were used as part of the data collection process. Throughout its conduct, the study followed ethical guidelines. To assess the validity of the qualitative data, the following trustworthiness criteria were used: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. According to the study, preschoolers can be injured by sharp writing instruments such as pencils, but crayons are safe in the following situations: when adults do not have enough time to provide close supervision; when preschoolers occasionally fight or throw tantrums; when children are still careless; and when there is insufficient staff or adults. Even if accidents and injuries are common, they can always be avoided if the appropriate safety precautions are taken in the specific situation and timely and relevant safety measures are always practiced in the current or changing environment or in the continuous development of safety guidelines for the current environment, ensuring that the safety protocol is always precise to the present situation or environment.

Keywords: Injury And Accident, Sharp Writing Materials, Exploratory Research, Child Center

INTRODUCTION

School safety is essential for creating a safe learning environment because it protects children, staff, and teachers from bullying and violence; improves children's mental health and reduces anxiety; promotes participation and attendance at school events; allows for emergency preparedness and response planning; supports a fearless learning environment; fosters trust and community involvement; improves educational outcomes; and fosters life skill development (UNICEF, 2024; UNESCO, 2025). Furthermore, school safety fosters a pleasant school climate, increases community trust, and ensures that education continues even during emergencies (World Bank, 2022).

To strengthen school safety, the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030 promotes the Child Rights and Resilience in Education approach (GADRRRES, 2022). This method emphasizes that an all-hazards, all-risks strategy for child protection and education is in line with children's rights. Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) seeks to protect students, teachers, and staff from death, injury, violence, and harm in schools and other learning environments, plan for educational and protection continuity, and limit disruptions to learning in the

face of various shocks, stresses, hazards, and threats (UNICEF, 2024). Preschool classroom safety is critical for avoiding accidents and injuries, boosting mental well-being, encouraging positive social connections, reducing distractions from safety issues, building trust between children, teachers, and caregivers, and adhering to legal requirements. It also creates a welcoming environment that promotes mental health and reduces anxiety (World Bank, 2024).

Furthermore, teachers and schools in general should consider the following factors to ensure a safe and nurturing environment in preschool classrooms: promote a positive learning environment where children can flourish; reduce the risk of accidents and injuries, ensuring children's well-being; foster social and emotional development by building trust and security; support inclusive education by accommodating diverse needs and abilities; and enhance children's abilities. Every kid is entitled to safety and survival, as well as protection, growth, and school involvement (Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) 2022-2030, 2023). However, violence, conflict, and common threats endanger children and school personnel. When these threats are realized, they can have long-term, compounding consequences on the development of children and societies, and the repercussions are interpreted differently depending on gender, disability, and social and economic inequality, making the most disadvantaged children especially vulnerable (Comprehensive School Safety 2022-2030, 2023 and Alliance CPHA, 2023).

The primary goal is to ensure the safety of children at all times. Teachers and parents must always catch the momentum and take fast, organized, and consistent action to keep children safe at school and at home, particularly in the classroom. In terms of safety, safety measures should be reviewed and modified regularly to meet the changing and current needs of children (World Bank, 2024). As a result, it is the obligation of teachers, as well as parents and guardians, to continually evaluate safety measures that are relevant to the children's current and developing needs in the classroom or at home. And, in my preschool class for the school year 2025-2026, I've witnessed the risks of using shared pencils or other sharp objects during writing exercises. According to my observations, utilizing crayons instead of sharpened pencils or sharp writing tools for writing in preschool classes is really safe. Sharpened pencils and other sharp writing tools can injure preschoolers by piercing their own bodies or other kids' bodies. Additionally, young children may strip or fall while carrying sharpened pencils or other sharp writing utensils, which can result in unforeseen injury and accidents.

And these potential dangers of sharpened writing materials are supported with data on pen and pencil injuries from 2009 to 2010, which were obtained prospectively, with one case from 2003 included retrospectively. Fourteen injuries with writing utensils were reported, including nine to the head and neck, one to the chest, two to the bladder/perineum, and two to the extremities. Eleven children were admitted, and eight required surgical surgery. One infant died from a transhemispheric brain damage caused by a pencil's intraorbital penetration. Penetrating trauma from writing implements is a common cause of injury that often necessitates surgical intervention to remove the device. Pen and pencil injuries can be severe, even lethal. Appropriate parent and teacher education about potential dangers may help to prevent such accidents (Peeling et al., 2024; American Surgeon, 2020; Fisher et al., 2020; American Academy of Pediatrics and Child Abuse, 2021).

Parents and guardians are regarded as the most important teachers' partners in educating each child (Pacific Oaks College, 2025; CSEFEL, 2019). Parents and guardians can effectively interact with teachers by exchanging knowledge, views, and observations regarding their children's needs (Sataiano, 2025; World Bank, 2024). This study will also look at preschool parents' and guardians' views of putting pencils away and keeping crayons in the classroom and at home in order to promote safety at all times. This study will raise awareness about the risks connected with preschool children using sharpened pencils or other sharp writing tools during writing activities. The recommendation is to use crayons in writing activities because they are safer, especially for preschool children. Every teacher, parent, and guardian should always prioritize the safety of all children, particularly preschool children. However, the findings will always take into account the study's limitations and efficacy, as well as other elements that were not addressed or investigated, such as the level of supervision provided by teachers, adults, parents, and guardians in relation to incidents of injury and accidents involving sharp writing materials during writing activities. Other researchers may undertake studies on these variables.

The study objectives

1. To find out how parents and guardians of preschool children feel about using crayons instead of pencils during writing activities in terms of safety?
2. What observations do parents make of their preschool children when they use crayons and pencils during activities at home?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (1952). Piaget proposed four stages to describe children's cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete, and formal. Each stage relates to a specific age range. According to Piaget (1952), as cited by Mukunthan (2021), he described how children develop cognitive skills at different stages. He claimed that children learned about the world through their activities and that children of different ages made different mistakes based on "quality rather than quantity" of intelligence (Wikipedia Contributors, 2026).

This is relevant to preschool children's behavior because preschoolers aged four to five have proprioceptive needs and may push, shove, or wrestle to acquire high pressure and sensory input (Truth Preschool Academy, 2025; Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2025). Preschoolers who struggle to cope when things don't go their way are more likely to be disappointed and frustrated with themselves, have difficulties seeing other people's points of view, struggle to establish moral standards, and throw tantrums (American Pediatrics, 2024). As a result, preschool children aged three to five are more likely to respond to stress by pushing, striking, or shoving.

In addition to this, Dr. Daniel Siegel (2024) presented his theory about tantrums in preschool children. He argued that tantrums are a normal part of young children's emotional development, and he believed that preschoolers commonly throw tantrums because they are still learning how to manage their emotions and express themselves. Siegel (2024) highlighted the prefrontal cortex's role in emotional regulation as the primary cause of tantrums in preschoolers (Professional C.C. M, 2025; CLINIC, C, 2025). Additionally, preschoolers' outbursts are linked to immature brain regions. The prefrontal cortex, a component of the logical brain, regulates both emotional control and logical reasoning. To control their emotions, young children must be able to think. However, this part of the brain does not begin to develop in preschoolers aged four to five until they are six or seven. Some young children experience it much later, between the ages of eight and nine. Preschoolers are particularly impulsive and unreasonable since their reasoning abilities are still growing (Wassenaar, 2023 & American Pediatrics, 2024).

Tantrums or being impulsive are a normal part of a child's development. However, frequent, prolonged, or physically destructive tantrums may suggest an underlying medical condition and necessitate expert evaluation (American Pediatrics, 2024; Nuerolaunch, 2024). Although tantrums or being impulsive in general is normal for young children (Heubeck, 2025). And, when a child throws himself or hits items during a physically violent tantrum, it may result in self-harm. Throwing things can also cause physical anger towards others, hurting those around them. Unsupervised tantrums in this situation may result in accidents or injuries (Psychology Today, 2023; Satow, 2024). As a result, close supervision is required, especially in the preschool classroom where preschool-aged children commonly have tantrums.

Unfortunately, during a tantrum, preschoolers may harm themselves or others. Tantrums are common at this age, as children's emotional regulation abilities are still developing (How to deal with toddler tantrums - Children's Health, 2025). Hitting is a method adopted by children to obtain attention or express suppressed emotions. They might not realize how their behaviors affect others (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2024). However, every child is entitled to safety, survival, protection, growth, and participation in school. Teachers, parents, and guardians should be aware of hitting behavior related to safety during preschool children's tantrums, as it may pose a risk of harm to the children themselves and others, especially when they use sharpened pencils or sharp

writing materials at home and in school Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) strategy or framework for 2022-2030, 2023).

This evidence should inform all teachers, parents and guardians about specific reported cases. A three-year-old child in daycare slipped while running with a pencil. A pencil travelled through the left parietal bone, the left temporal lobe, and the posterior limb of the internal capsule (World Neurosurgery, Volume 131, 2020). And broken pencils can be dangerous because their pointy tips can cause cuts or scratches. Cases involving pencil injuries provide evidence of this danger. The mother took her 4-year-old child, who had a penetrating cut on his right hand, to the accident and emergency room; he injured himself when he fell at home while carrying a sharpened lead pencil (Bursick et al. 2020 and Surgical Neurology 2020). Another, 4-year-old child was sent to the accident and emergency room after suffering a right-palm injury. His mother claims that he was doing his homework at home when he was injured. With his newly sharpened pencil in his right hand, he hurried to the lavatory. In the midst, he slipped.

Scope and Limitations

The study's results require careful and attentive evaluation due to certain limitations. The following points are important to note as limitations of this study.

First, like most empirical studies, the research presented here was limited by the indicators used. This study mainly focuses on the potential risk of sharpened pencils or other sharpened writing materials to preschoolers during writing activities, despite the scarcity of documented medical cases of preschoolers being hurt or injured by sharpened pencils at home or in school.

Second, the sample size is very small, consisting of only 20 parents from a single child development center, which significantly limits the generalizability of the findings. The reliance solely on parental perspectives may also introduce bias and does not include the viewpoints of teachers, caregivers, or the children themselves.

Third, this study exclusively examines the views and observations of parents and guardians of preschoolers regarding the risks of sharpened pencils or other sharp writing materials that their kids use for writing tasks both at home and at school in connection with the documented medical case of writing instruments causing penetrating trauma. Pens and pencils can, therefore, cause serious or even deadly injuries (Sarah et al., Amiran Surgeon, 2020 & Legal Eagles, 2023). Additionally, the study could serve as a frightening reminder of these unforeseen circumstances through sharpened pencils, and it usually involves one child getting hurt either on purpose or by mistake.

Fourth, this study did not look at the data regarding the impact or significance of adults closely or undistruptively supervising or guiding their children while they are writing with sharpened pencils or other sharp writing materials in relation to the probability of accidents or injuries. And, to improve the study, future research should include a larger and more diverse sample across multiple child development centers to enhance representativeness and credibility. Incorporating multiple perspectives, including teachers, childcare providers, and safety experts, would provide a more balanced understanding of preschool safety issues. A more systematic thematic analysis should be presented, with clear coding procedures and illustrative participant quotations to strengthen transparency in qualitative interpretation.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data Analysis

Data gathered in this study was analyzed using Colaizzi's method. This method is appropriate for the phenomenological research study and is used to analyze the lived views and observations of preschool children's parents and guardians on using crayons instead of sharpened pencils or other sharp materials during writing activities for safety measures. The following were the researcher's steps based on Colazzi's process for phenomenological data analysis (Sanders, 2003; Speziale and Carpenter, 2017):

1. Each data was transcribed to have a clear sense of the whole content; □
2. From the transcribed responses, significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study were formulated and recorded on a separate sheet noting their pages and line numbers; □
3. Statements were analyzed and meanings were formulated; □ Sorted the formulated meaning into categories, clusters of theme, and themes; □
4. Integrated findings of the study into an exhaustive and comprehensive description of the phenomenon (Elzabay,2024);
5. Formulated the fundamental structure of the event; and □ Validated the findings from the research participants

Participants

The 20 parents and guardians of preschool children were the study's participants via purposeful random sampling. The following criteria were their child are officially enrolled in preschools, specifically for the SY 2025-2026); 2) preschool children who regularly attended classes as evidenced by attendance reported from the teachers; and 3) the parents and guardians of preschool children who had their full consent to participate in the study.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher ensured that no harm was inflicted on the participants by following the ethical standards and conduct guidelines in conducting research with participants by asking the parents and guardians of the preschool children as the study participants, and they gave their full consent and will share their views and observations on using crayons instead of sharpened pencils and other sharp materials in the preschool classroom and at home during writing activities for safety purposes. And researchers respected the subjects' right to confidentiality and privacy regarding their data and permission from the parents and guardians of the preschool children, who allowed their views and observations on using crayons instead of sharpened pencils and other sharp materials in preschool classrooms and at home during writing activities for safety.

Data gathering procedure

An interview using a semi-structured interview guide created by the researcher to obtain participants' views and observations on using crayons instead of sharpened pencils or other sharp writing materials in preschool classrooms and at home during writing activities for safety purposes is suitable for phenomenological interviews with open-ended questions that encourage participants to share the specifics of their views and observations. The formation of insightful questions ensures that participants provide detailed observations and views necessary for the study, highlighting their perspectives on using crayons instead of sharpened pencils and other sharp writing materials during writing activities in preschool classrooms and at home.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Using Colaizzi's method, the formulation of themes was based on the views and observations of the participants in this phenomenological study. Based on the shared views and observations of the participants, sharpened pencils and other sharp writing materials pose a potential risk, but crayons are safe for preschool children during writing activities in preschool classrooms and at home in different situations, such as when adults don't have enough time to keep close supervision of preschool children during writing time; crayons are safe because preschool children sometimes fight or throw tantrums even when they are writing; crayons are safe since children are still reckless in using sharp writing materials for writing tasks; and crayons are safe for preschool children to use in writing if there is insufficient staffing or no adults to offer enough supervision.

Crayons are Safe if Adults don't Have Enough Time to keep a Close Supervission on Pre-school Children During Writing Time

Based on the information gathered from the participants, crayons are safe if adults don't have enough time to keep a close supervision on pre-school children during writing time.

Significant Response 1. *"Yes, I believe that using sharpened pencils or other sharp materials for writing is dangerous, especially for preschoolers. It's common for children to engage in play and even disputes over minor issues, particularly when an adult is unable to supervise them closely"*.

Significant Response 2. *"Yes, I do think that children play and even fight, especially boys who become upset easily and act out. 'At home, I have witnessed that in my kids. It is dangerous to handle sharpened pencils or other sharp materials, especially if we are not there to witness their every move. In fact, the scenario is quite similar at school"*.

Significant Response 3: *"Oh my goodness, I am so busy at home that I am unable to pay close attention to them while they are engaged in writing activities. I now recognize that sharpened pencils and other sharp writing supplies can pose risks of injury to them and others, similar to those in the crowded classroom"*.

The first participant states that if an adult cannot closely supervise preschoolers during writing activities in the classroom and at home, it poses a risk for young children to use sharpened pencils or other sharp materials. Additionally, according to participant 2, using sharpened pencils and other sharp materials is dangerous, especially if we are not there to watch everything they do. Furthermore, participant 3 claims that she is often unable to pay close attention to children during writing activities at home, despite being aware of the risks associated with using sharp writing tools or sharpened pencils, because she believes that children can injure themselves or others with these materials. And insufficient adult oversight can lead to children using sharp writing objects unsafely, as they may engage in risky behavior without guidance, which increases the risk of injury and accidents. Additionally, lack of supervision can result in inadequate monitoring of pencil usage, and it could harm or injure young children (The American Society for the Positive Care of Children, 2026).

that5.2.Crayons are Safe because Preschool Children Sometimes Fight or Throw Tantrums Even when they are Writing

Based on the information gathered from the participants, crayons are safe because preschool children sometimes fight or throw tantrums even when they are writing.

Significant response 8. *"I am able to describe tantrums, fighting, and arguments. My three kids occasionally fight and argue about little things, and I agree that it is extremely risky for them to have sharpened writing instruments like pencils when they are fighting or arguing, especially if they are boys"*.

Significant response 10. *"I am able to describe tantrums, fighting, and arguments. My three kids occasionally fight and argue about little things, and I agree that it is extremely risky for them to have sharpened writing instruments like pencils when they are fighting or arguing, especially if they are boys"*.

Significant Response 7. *"Boys often lose their temper more easily than girls; my five-year-old used to throw toys in anger before calming down. I agree that young children are at risk while using sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils during writing activities since they are still unable to control their emotions and could injure themselves or others"*

As participant 8 stated, it is extremely risky for young children to have sharpened writing instruments like sharpened pencils when they are fighting or arguing, especially if they are boys. Additionally, participant 10 expressed concern that it could be dangerous for children, especially preschoolers, to use sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils if they become upset or throw a tantrum during writing activities, as they might injure themselves or others. Furthermore, participant 7 said boys lose their temper more easily than girls because my five-year-old used to throw objects or toys to express his anger before calming down. I agree that young children are at risk while using sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils during writing activities since they are yet unable to control their emotions and could injure themselves or others. Tantrums might cause children to act impulsively, which increases the risk of injury. During a tantrum, children may unintentionally harm themselves

or others. And sometimes young children having trouble with fine motor skills can lead to frustration, which in turn can cause tantrums and emotional outbursts (Newcomer and Khan 2025; Childmind, 2026).

Crayons are Safe Since Children are still Reckless in Using Sharp Writing Instruments for Writing Tasks

Based on the information gathered from the participants, crayons are safe since children are still reckless in using sharp writing instruments for writing tasks.

Significant response 4. *"Even when my kid got up and moved around, she occasionally carried a pointy object in her hands. Additionally, I am aware that she is prone to slipping and falling, which occasionally results in bruising on her legs. I'm not certain why, but she seems to like falling. Perhaps because she's a female"*.

Significant response 2. *"I agree that children don't give much thought about what they are grasping, even if it's something sharp. Yes, since they are still young, it is always safe to keep children from handling or playing with sharp things, and that includes sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils"*.

The second participant I agree that children don't give much thought about what they are grasping, even if it's something sharp. And, participant 4 said that Even when my kid got up and moved around, she occasionally carried a pointy object in her hands. And, it acknowledged that children frequently do not understand the risks connected to sharp objects and many young children are unable to consistently recognize risky situations due to their degree of cognitive development (Pressbooks.pub, 2025).

Preschoolers are more likely to have accidents while using sharp objects such as sharp writing supplies and sharpened pencils because they lack fine motor skills. (Pressbooks.pub, 2025). Furthermore, due to their top-heavy physique, young children commonly lose their equilibrium and fall forward, headfirst. They lack the developed upper body muscles required for self-lifting, making young children more likely to be injured if they slip and fall while carrying sharp items, sharp writing materials, or sharpened pencils (Pressbooks.pub, 2025). In addition to these factors, toys, sharp objects, and other articles should be for use by children over the age of eight (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023).

Crayons are Safe for Preschool Children to Use in Writing if there is Sufficient Staffing or no adults to offer Enough Supervision

Based on the information gathered from the participants, crayons are safe for preschool children to use in writing if there is sufficient staffing or no adults to offer enough supervision.

Significant Response 1. *"As a parent, it is understandable that it can be challenging to provide each child with undisturbed care when you are supervising a large number of children. For instance, I find it challenging to monitor my four children closely, and a teacher also struggles to provide individualized supervision in the classroom when they are alone. As a parent, I understand and am further afraid that if there is less supervision, the kids would not use sharpened pencils; instead, they can use crayons for writing for safety"*.

Significant Response 11. *"Yes, I have noticed that kids used to stand while writing. Despite the fact they stood up already, the children persisted in holding their sharpened pencils, even taking them to the restroom. I am aware that while a child is getting up, adults may not immediately see that they are carrying pencils, especially if there are several children they care about. And if they fall or trip while holding sharp writing materials or sharpened pencils, such a situation is very dangerous"*.

Participant 1 said it is understandable that it can be challenging to provide each child with undisturbed care when you are supervising a large number of children. Furthermore, participant 11 shared that adults may not immediately notice when a child is getting up with sharpened pencils, especially if they are supervising several children at once. And if they fall or trip, such a situation is really dangerous. To provide proper supervision, keep the student-teacher ratio low (National ECE Workforce Center Research, 2024). However, survey data indicates that the primary causes of staff shortages are greater levels of burnout among educators and the earnings of early childhood educators. In the current environment, underenrollment often signifies a staffing shortage rather than

a lack of demand (NAEYC, 2024, and Gutierrez, 2024). To prevent injuries during writing activities, supervision is essential because it can greatly lower the likelihood of accidents by consistently reminding children of the value of safety when handling sharp objects (National ECE Workforce Center Research, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Preschool children may be harmed by sharp writing materials like pencils, but crayons are considered safe in the following circumstances: crayons are safe if adults don't have enough time to keep close supervision; crayons are safe because preschool children sometimes fight or throw tantrums; crayons are safe since children are still reckless; and crayons are safe if there is insufficient staffing or no adults can provide enough supervision. Even if accidents and injuries are common, they can always be avoided if the appropriate safety precautions are taken in the specific situation and timely and relevant safety measures are always practiced in the current or changing environment or in the continuous development of safety guidelines for the current environment, ensuring that the safety protocol is always precise to the present situation or environment. Moreover, prioritizing safety is always preferable to dealing with the consequences of accidents (Dekker, 2025). And teachers, parents, and guardians don't want their children to become hurt, so it's crucial to always keep a close observation on any possible dangers to preschoolers at home and at school, especially when they're handling sharp objects, sharp writing materials, and sharpened pencils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlights the potential risks associated with sharp objects, sharp writing materials, and sharpened pencils in specific situations, including when adults cannot supervise closely; when preschool children act recklessly; when staffing is insufficient or no adults can supervise; and when preschool children may fight or have tantrums. And the study recommends the following.

1. Use crayons if adults don't have time to provide close supervision to preschool children during writing time because using sharp materials or sharpened pencils could pose potential accidents or injury to them. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has a safety regulation that prohibits sharp points in new toys and other articles intended for use by children under eight years of age. Sharpened pencils can pose a risk of injury if not supervised (UNESCO, 2025).
2. Use crayons because preschool children sometimes fight or throw tantrums. UNESCO (2025) stated that preschool children are typically around 3-5 years old and may struggle with impulse control. This behavior is not considered developmentally appropriate for kindergarten-aged children, but educators say it's growing increasingly widespread (Jchaffer, 2019 and Heubeck, (2025)) Alternatives like triangular crayons or thick markers may be safer (UNESCO, 2025). These measures will prevent accidents and injuries.
3. Use crayons because children are still reckless; they might strip or fall while holding sharpened pencils, and this might injure them. Children's behaviors and cognitive abilities may also influence their risk of injury. For example, children under the age of 12 are less able to remember and follow complex steps for safety procedures and are more impulsive, which makes them more likely to ignore safety precautions (McKown, 2024).
4. Use crayons if there is insufficient staff or if no adult is available to provide full supervision, as this situation could result in less supervision for each child during writing time. It is absolutely critical to ensure that there is adequate adult supervision during all hands-on instructional learning activities. This can be successfully achieved by establishing and maintaining a low student-to-teacher ratio to ensure close monitoring of student behavior (Roy, 2024, and National Science Teaching Association, 2026).

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