

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGING EDUCATIONAL CRISIS:A PANACEA FOR SCHOOLS GROWTH

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently on healing mission after undergoing different assaults on her social, economic and political sovereignty since independence, Although, with its youth friendly policies and programs, the nation stands at risk if adequate attention is not given to the most productive segment of the populace, expected at the secondary level of education. The paper proposed community involvement in managing educational crisis: a panacea for schools' growth. It discussed in sequences the concept of community, community involvement in crisis management, and models in view of scholarly works. The paper suggested among others; scanning the environment, establishment of framework for managing crisis in school activities, inculcation of multiple agencies with multi-disciplinary expertise and capacities to provide digestible information and support for leadership decision making on crisis management, develop crisis communication strategy for social media, commitment of resources on realistic events to avoid and overcome challenges of sorts, need for risk assessment, training of resources and a plan to address events involving multiple causalities.

Keywords: Community, community involvement, crisis, crisis management, secondary schools

Introduction

Nigeria's population is estimated to have passed 200 million people in 2019, making it the most populous country in Africa and seventh most populous in the world. The population is growing at an annual average of 2.7%, which is faster than the continental average, bringing with it pressure on the resources available for public programmes. More than half of the population is estimated to be eligible for education, and 4 in every 10 people in the country are eligible for basic and senior secondary education. In the past decade, the school age population increased by 23 million, with the government having to create structures to accommodate existing requirements, as well as the additional children and youth. The implication of not meeting this demand is the loss of the opportunity to equip

children and youth with functional literacy and the skills needed for gainful employment. This demonstrates the immense pressure this sector alone exerts on public resources (Education sector, 2021).

Although education is on concurrent list and the constitution provides that expenditure is a sole responsibility of the government. It is hitherto that education holds the key to social inclusion, and a necessary condition for advancing the quality of life and freedom (Saidu et al., 2024). In spite of the opportunities fostered by the technology era, Abdulaziz et al. (2022) and Okafor (2020) observed the increasing cases of behavioral disorder such as domestic violence, communal clashes, students' riot, demonstration, frauds, malpractices, armed banditry, kidnapping among others as a malfunctioning of the education sector. Poverty in recent studies has been adduced to heighten insecurities in various dimension, as a contributory factors to youth restlessness, unemployment, corruptions, and destructive behaviors. Among many findings in earlier and recent works, none involvement of individuals as stakeholders in different social groups and marginalization of women and youths in nation building cannot be overlooked for progressive policy implementation. It has challenged leaders in disposition to leadership qualities and their alignment with global standard through renewal of educational system.

More so, the beginning of this century had reiterated commitments of government, non-government organizations, agencies and corporate individual bodies to serve humanity through various initiatives. These acts had proven that that no single entity has all the resources as either public or private to promote human existence in its quality and quantity. It is in the spirit of making the world a safer abode to live that leaders of various nations put in place, community involvement as strategies to overcome challenges of sorts (Adekola & Uzoagu, 2022). Surprisingly, man-made and natural events on a daily basis continue to emerge series of crisis to be part of human life, making education a democratic right impossible. It is obvious that managing crisis in any system has come with a huge cost, disproving the believe that public service delivery should be left alone as responsibility of the government. It is therefore significant as a core value of any administration particularly in schools where the major objective is the development of cognitive, psycho-motive and affective domains of individuals, to involve communities in the affairs of their children in a formal way.

Crisis is a multidimensional concept and an integral part of emergencies, disaster and catastrophe. This is a situation arising from many unplanned misinformed, ill-timed situations around socioeconomic and political environment. A state of emotional turmoil characterized with contents of threats, uncertainty and sense of urgency with unpredictable consequences (Linnel, 2023). Crisis according to Peltola et al. (2024) is classified into three levels; organizational level crises, which threaten the whole school and its staff directly and immediately; community level of crises, which are chronic environmental stressors that evolve over a longer period of time; and individual level crises, such as difficulties within a family or traumatizing event. Crisis awake humans' negligence and generate new models to overcome future occurrence.

Nigeria is currently undergoing a serious stage of healing since 2020 aftermath of COVID 19 saga which has negative impact on the nation's socio economic and political lives. In line with the renewed hope agenda of the present administration in Nigeria, the

significance of education immersed the potent of secondary schools, which has relative larger populations and the link to future of young and promising adults' life transition to higher levels. With the youth friendly programme fostered by the present administration at all levels, the secondary school age with relatively large segment of productive group stands at risk if not given the decisive attention. Hopefully, the administration efforts to redefine the scope of education impact on the enabling youth expected to take up leadership position as future managers of societal institutions and implementer of government policies, is imminent on community involvement as best option for managing crisis in secondary schools, to avert incessant crisis within and among social groups in the nation.

Concept of Community Involvement

The idea of a community by nature is believed to stem from the basic unit of socialization. It involves father, mother and children which later extends to nuclear members such as; uncles, aunties, cousins, niece, nephew and neighbors. In certain circumstance, community which may not necessarily be related by blood but as a body that shared perspectives, history, geographical entity, profession, and are willing to advance the course of their relationship. Such existence is premised on conformity to social understanding in ethics, norms and value system. According to Organization for Economic and Community Development (2020) community implies a legitimate source of moral authority in which government is justified in promoting particular ways of life and its social consequences. Linnel (2023) summarized the term community as an established or pre-existing network in terms of organizations, workplaces, families, associations and congregations, where people are willing and ready to participate in a collective effort to achieve a common goal. To many scholars of note like Amopho (2020); Ramsey Soroghaye (2021), an ideal community ought to be conscious and considerate of socioeconomic and political needs of its members. Therefore, the word community is associated with terms such as self-confidence, self-respect and personal independence as well as to safeguard human rights and achieve social equality through community capacity building, community vitality, empowerment, rural development. The spirit of community involvement and participation in Nigeria, is an age long exercises tied to collective behavior rooted in the philosophy of the people, building a democratic communal life prior to colonial era. Such principles preserve the diversity and fundamental rights of all community members to participate on issues of concern; socioeconomic and political. In spite of the emancipation of formal education by colonial masters, the community involvement during and after the period played significant role in the structural development of Nigeria, despite exploitation expended by the former on Nigeria resources (Mbamalu et al., 2021; Maranzu et al., 2019). It is in line with this that Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) aired that community involvement in crisis management is an essential component of school administration, as it ensures the safety and continuity of education during unforeseen events. He stated that effective crisis planning, clear communication, staff training, collaboration with external agencies, and strong leadership are critical strategies for managing crises in schools

Evidence in studies had shown that community involvement is enabled by factors such as; government recognition, increased democratization and cohesive community structures (Adekola et al., 2022; Aruma et al., 2018). Rayeni et al (2021) added that involving

community in managing crisis create safe, resistant and resilient societies with strong economies and good quality of life. It is significance to involve communities in managing crisis in schools due to their understanding of environment. Many like Rayeni et al. (2021) believed that proper planning to deal with the damage and consequences of disasters, effective policy making, providing the necessary facilities and resources, formulating appropriate forecasts, preparing appropriate scenarios, and implementing planned actions in the pre-, while-, and post-crisis stages should no longer be decision made solely by governments agencies. Adekola et al (2022) stated that community involvement which fosters development is a holistic approach grounded in the principle of empowerment, social inclusion, human rights, justice, self-determination and collective actions. The scholars pointed out the use of traditional, conventional and participatory approaches could have been productive, if not in the wrong usage.

Reasons for community involvement according to Abbas (2022); USAID (2020) are: In-depth understanding of locality and its problems; ensure ownership at local level and sustainability of initiatives; accountability to stakeholders' increases quality; mutually explicit relation of parents maximize learning; an exercise of democratic rights; and community relation for provisions of relevant resources. These are distinguished by level of participation such as; marginal, where community has little influence in resource control and impact; participation increases to a wider level but externally controlled; while structural, makes direct impact in decision making and implementation process. These levels are classified based on engagement, activities that can be collaborative, manipulative and tokenism. Managing crisis by involving community is a system that considers the local people or the inhabitant as crucial and potential resources whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee, rather than an obstacle, of sustainability. Therefore, if this management method is formulated and implemented based on scientific principles and mutual respect and trust, it will be a suitable lever to ensure the reduction of damages caused by disasters (Rayeni et al., 2021).

In view of this Oyalowo (2021) opined that the formation of community involvement plunged into associations are backed up by lawsto carry out responsibilities such as; promote self-help efforts within the community; raise funds for the implementation of community projects and activities; initiate, execute and monitor community development projects; create awareness about and mobilize residents on their civic duties and community development generally; ensure peace and security within the community by collaborating with security agencies and government; monitor and maintain social infrastructure provided by government for the benefit of the community; promote and encourage compliance with government policies and programmes on community development generally; collaborate with public and private agencies and non-governmental organizations for the promotion of community development ideals and goals; and perform such other functions as may be recommended by the Ministry through the Local Government.

The education sector report (2021) estimated that Nigeria's population have passed 200 million people in 2019, making it the most populous country in Africa and seventh most populous in the world. The population is growing at an annual average of 2.7%, which is faster than the continental average, bringing with it pressure on the resources available for public programmes. The report affirmed that more than half of the population is estimated to

be eligible for education, and 4 in every 10 people in the country are eligible for basic and senior secondary education. In spite of being a fast growing in terms of population, and large market to the world, Nigeria economy is stressed with relatively large chunks of unemployed youths leading to wastage of both human and material resources. Therefore, the significance of social development as an educational process stimulating consciousness based on needs in various capacities to address prevailing situations and realities in communities evolve the concept of community involvement. This implies that community's goal is to improve the quality of life of humans in an environment. The ignorance of the appropriateness of the crisis management model with local and nation consideration is one of the most important issues that has increased the range of adverse effects of disasters, emergencies and catastrophe witnessed in Nigeria.

Defining Crisis Management

The beginning of this century calls for the attention of world leaders, particularly in African continent to myriads of crises that its management later metamorphosed into Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The goals are central to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality rate, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. These variables are the main challenges that confront rural communities in third world countries, where abundant resources are socio economically derived for the development of urban centres hence, the need for crisis management and the essence of community involvement as a strategy for achievement. (Meta et al., 2023).

The term crisis according to Ndungu et al (2022) is a significant disruption to the normal activities of an organization, leading to extensive media coverage and public scrutiny. Peltola et al (2024) definition culled the view of Grimmelt (2017) as sudden event or set of circumstances, that could significantly affect an organizations' ability to carry out its' business. Also, Canyon (2020) in the same study defines a crisis as an uncertain situation possessing latent risks and opportunities that must be resolved within a certain time-frame. Samawi (2020) described crisis as a period of unstable condition, with a clear indication of a defect existing in a society, awaiting a critical change which is pain or dysfunction. He expressed that the level of severity irrespective, brings the up the negligence of humans to knowledge. A state of emotional turmoil characterized with; suddenness, failure of the normal method of coping; short duration and have potentials to produce self-destruction behaviour. Thus, crisis can be classified as; development, situational, existential, and environmental.

Crises may damage organizations' reputation, environment, health, safety or well-being. The fundamental characteristic of crises is that they are unpredictable. Generally, crisis is subjective to the criteria of; threat, uncertainty and urgency, caused by inability to understand and interpret the situation of crisis, with implication on the organization, personnel and the environment as a fundamental and difficult task of management, which leads to wastage in resources. Maintaining a sense of control, assessing needs, giving support, reducing lethality, and linking others to helpful resources are main goals to managing crisis

(Linnel, 2023). Crisis management is regarded according to Samawi (2020) as an independent science, using scientific methods to restore society to its natural balance, once the discovery of overlapping variable by adapting to changes, in all fields of humanities. Crisis management reveals many angles and stages to issues of conflict, distinguished by pre crisis, crisis and post crisis periods. Conflict as a subset of crisis could be functional and dysfunctional depending on the management of the opportunities imbibed by the social circle within the environment (Abdulaziz et al, 2020). Such cases as the COVID 19 surge, Inflation, recession, Malaria epidemic, food Insecurity, war among others are dysfunctional to human existence. These unfavorable situations challenged the social entity of improved welfare on humanity at different times through initiatives of government policies, programmes and project at local and international levels.

Ofangbomu et al. (2024) disclosed that crisis management is a coordinated efforts strategically designed to prepare for, respond to and recover from critical incidents that can disrupt normal school activities. The scholars explained that these events may be health related, natural disaster, action of violence, to technological failures and environmental hazards. Samawi (2020) asserted that managing crisis require special skills, talents and natural readiness in character from school personnel special trained to confront possibilities in unwanted situations. He believed that managing crisis in an education system is an unceasing administrative process of predicting crisis, keeping an eye on both internal and external source of the variable, exploit the accessible resources and capabilities to mitigate at the greatest degree of effective and professionalism, with the least damage on the environment, in a minimal cost to return to normalcy while studying the cause for future prevention.

Peltola et al. (2024) opined that crisis management is a special type of change management, where change is unexpected, the size of an incident is great, and the events, which may be critical in terms of life-and-death, occurred and responded to within a short time frame. This explains crisis management in Samawi (2020) as a special management process that will produce a strategic response, to crisis situations, through a group of pre-selected and well-trained managers, who use special skills and procedures to avoid or reduce losses. Rayeni et al.(2021) submitted that one of the reasons for the high death tolls and extensive damages in crises in Iran is the weakness in planning and management united on the social and geographical conditions at the time of natural disasters. Among the issues that have been considered in community-based crisis management are empowering local people and groups, recognizing regional disasters, planning to eliminate potential risks, raising the awareness and preparedness of local communities in the face of emergencies, and similar measures that are accomplished by public participation

Models of Crisis Management in the School

Linnel (2023) Model

In Linnel (2023) crisis management becomes significant where distinct experiences differ among the social impact of catastrophe, emergencies and disaster. Library of studies in Samawi (2020); USAID (2020); Alkalawi et al. (2024) pointed out that there exist five stages of crisis management. The scholar presented the five stages of crisis below:

The first stage: It is the stage of birth and emergence of the crisis, and it needs the expertise of the decision maker to get to know the crisis and find solutions to it.

The second stage: The stage of expansion and growth of the crisis: a stage that begins when the decision maker fails to face the crisis and includes the presence of internal and external nutrients that increase the strength of the crisis.

The third stage: The summit stage of the maturity of the crisis: This stage is rare, but it is increasingly underestimated and inexperienced, as the crisis becomes highly destructive.

The fourth stage: the decline and shrinkage stage: It is not a final stage, but within the procedures followed, the crisis begins with regression and contraction.

Fifth stage: the disappearance of the crisis: the crisis loses all manifestations of strength and momentum, begins to fade, and society begins to recover.

Crises in Secondary Schools as Highlighted by Scholars

Schools as an organization different from other organizations because of the large number of novices, or students: individuals with limited ability to ensure their own safety. Schools according to Peltola et al. (2024) is a micro systems responsible for supporting students learning by creating a safe and secure environment for all personnel. Secondary school education provides opportunities to acquire more knowledge, exposure to enhance productive segment of adult life towards contributing into national development for any primary school leavers. The secondary education starts within the age of 11 years to 18 years from junior secondary to senior secondary level with its stated objectives (Amopho, 2020).

Crisis in schools is envisaged in areas where leaders are expected to make crucial decisions in shortage of resources, untimely information, poor communication among others that can lead to loss and wastage in achievement of objectives. Crisis in schools in recent cases produce traumatic events that are accompany with grief and pity. For instance, Okafor (2020) revealed that low self-esteem, and the need to cope with academic challenges were the causes of drug abuse among students of university of Ilorin, Nigeria. Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) revealed that schools are vulnerable to a wide array of potential disruptions, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, security threats, and technological failures. These crises can severely impact school operations, interrupt the educational process, and pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the broader school community.

Al Kalkawi et al. (2022) discovered that crisis management is characterized by lack of clarity and difficulty in estimating its impact especially in areas of decision-making comprising speed and accuracy that makes it difficult. Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2023) hinted that crisis in relation to educational sector is an intrusive and painful experience that cause unexpected and fundamental disruptions to school functioning with potentially high consequences for the organization, relevant stakeholders, and reputation. Ndungu et al. (2024) raised crisis issues on fire incidents, students' welfare, bullying, student unrest, among other emergencies in public secondary schools in Nairobi.

Deviva (2024) asserts that school effectiveness is achieved when there is safe, respective, nourishing and intellectually stimulating environment. The study indicated that school effectiveness decline when poor leadership skills of administrators are poor to influence teaching and learning, preparation, and students' achievement. This is opined on

the notion that school effectiveness is attainable with good crisis management skills and leadership practices. The statement aligned with Ofangbonmu et al. (2024) that failure of schools to prepare ahead of crisis face consequential losses, damages and longer recovery time.

Findings in Samawi (2020) showed the positive and significant role of the requirements of educational crisis management in areas of planning, information, communications, leadership skills, team work in raising the level of use, the importance, and the obstacles to distance learning among male and female teachers of secondary schools in Al Balqaa governorate. Findings in Ndungu et al. (2024) in the role of social networking sites in management of crisis revealed the significance of communication when 78 % Of respondent avail the scholars that social network system is preferred in communication platform using WhatsApp and face book on crisis management.

OECD (2020) supported that social media is revolutionizing the communication channel with relative low cost and high efficacy, yet challenged by issues of security of information, question of liability, multiplicity of players, confidentiality, expectation of population, generation of information among others. Bradshaw et al. (2023) in their findings emphasizes the importance of regular training for school personnel beyond selection of members as precursor to violence in crisis management. The study found that social media plays a crucial role in shaping first perceptions of news, as a significant proportion of the public can get the news first through social media before it is disseminated by traditional media outlets.

Community Involvement in Managing Crisis in Public Secondary Schools

Linnel (2023) recalled that community is complex and not often united. He explained that one community might contain another, with individuals serving as members of several communities due to factors such as location, occupation, religion affiliation, economic status and recreational status. Community becomes dynamic once connected with diverse entities beyond jurisdictional boundaries which reflect needs, priorities and economic interest in the purpose of collaboration. A good example is school which has a formal entity in operation. The school community involvement is a crucially designed relation between the school and the host community. It promotes understanding and increase mutual trust to sustain achievement of goals of the school.

The school is a second home to the students and a work place to staff, therefore requires, a supportive hand from the community as external environment as a social system. Alkalkawi (2022) found out that principals' ability to extrapolate and predict crisis ahead using requisite expertise of teachers based on local knowledge of the environment is significant to successful management of situations in schools. The role of community in school is simply a planned partnership for service delivery. Such involvement is a change process facilitated to encourage, empower and make use of expertise, knowledge, understanding and provisions of relevant values both in kind and cash towards ideas of development. Rayeni et al. (2021) hinted that community-based crisis management is designed to involve all segments of society and has a positive effect on reducing vulnerability and thus increasing resilience. According to the results of the study's findings, community-based crisis management, takes into account the causal conditions, contextual conditions,

intervening conditions, and strategies, that would lead to reduction in psychological and social problems of societies. That means the main purpose of community-based crisis management is to involve local and indigenous forces in the processes of planning, policy making, coordination, control, and organization of the crisis management with the guidance of the government.

USAID (2020) affirmed the most successful partnership include community membership leadership and participation in all aspect of initiatives which women and young people are key values and are oftencounted in assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation. Recent studies support school community involvementin building the potentials of the young minds in recognition of the community value system, strengthening the pact of social mobilization on disadvantage groups, sustaining the policies and programmes of democratic ethos in the system through mutual understanding, human and material support. (Deliva et al., 2024, Nwafor et al., 2024, OECD, 2020).

Community involvement could be in form of Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Based Management Committee (SBMC), market women and Community Youths. Ozoemema (2021) recalled SBMC as an innovative strategy to capture communities' attention and resilience in building a quality educational service delivery. The guiding principles according to the scholar are; all participants should have the required skills and understanding for SBMC programme, a well-designed scope and strength of the programme, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each structure, promotion and translation of school plans into tangible improvements, improving finance and other resources for school achievements, establish a sound procedure for transparency and accountability. Although the study revealed that environmental factors may differs such as social status, effective provision; availability and utilization of resources is guaranteed in a well-planned SBMC.

Saidu et al. (2024) described that one of the school management tasks is to involve community of the school in decision making. The study observed that leadership of schools were unwilling to integrate parents into decision making for reasons of; low level of education and poor attitudes to teachers. USAID (2020) in the report on community engagement discovered that communities are involvement with secondary schools in areas such as; provisions of teachers, security, instructional and infrastructural materials, access and quality, promotion of gender equity, schools oversight. It is through this that the report pointed out eight principles of effective community engagements as follows: establishment and maintenance of trust; education mustbe community driven in respect for culture and aspirations;partnerships to increase educational access and quality are inclusive; cooperation of local government for enhancement and sustainability of programs; equability between the parties; capacity building programmes to enhance community responsibility; flexible approach allows adaptation to local context; genuine community ownership requires long time commitments.

Onyekwelu (2018) described community involvement as a veritable approach using local resources to solve problems confronting people with a common felt need in an existing community. Bappi, et al. (2018) disclosed that low community participation was often caused by religious, economic, political ideologies, cultural belief. Other factors according to the scholars which may hinder the school-community relations include: encroachment, discrimination, politics, land disputes and in differences to local matters.

Arrays of study in Samawi (2020) wrote on educational crisis in secondary schools which revealed the importance of scientific method of planning ahead of crisis, training and provisions of stakeholders' presence in the school administration. The scholar concluded that leadership skills in terms of; decision making, communication, motivation are emotional support prior to, during and after crisis that ensure recovery in crisis management. It is in this vein that studies in Rayeni et al. (2024) stated that in the community-based crisis management system, local people are considered a potential source whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee of sustainability rather than an obstacle to it. The scholars opined that this management approach is developed and implemented based on scientific principles and mutual respect and trust, it will be a suitable lever to ensure the reduction of damages caused by disasters and lead to positive consequences, such as reducing risks, making the community resilient, accelerating accountability, prioritizing actions, better rescuing and relieving, decreasing damages and costs, determining tasks of people's groups, eliminating shortcomings of responsible organizations.

Conclusion

Community involvement is a strategic means of fostering developmental goals in nations. An in-depth analysis of crisis, cause and management by researchers revealed it as a social phenomenon instigated by illogical and nonstrategic planning circumstanced through social cultural factors and biased feelings in response to late detection. These may be due to false alarm or loss of credibility sidelining timely dissemination of information without consideration for effective line of communication. Aside the fact that communities are social entity, the presence of expertise in local knowledge, values and skills present an avenue for educational stakeholders in schools to share responsibilities by tapping from such resources in building a robust youth development programmes. And, the school through relevant stakeholders' decisive steps toward increased awareness within and outside the environment promise safety amidst eventualities now or in future. It is stated that in the community-based crisis management system, local people are considered a potential source whose participation and cooperation are a guarantee of sustainability rather than an obstacle to it. Consequently, if this management approach is developed and implemented based on scientific principles and mutual respect and trust, it will be a suitable lever to ensure the reduction of damages caused by disasters and lead to positive consequences, such as reducing risks, making the community resilient, accelerating accountability, prioritizing actions, better rescuing and relieving, decreasing damages and costs, determining tasks of people's groups, eliminating shortcomings of responsible organizations. These avail situational theory to focus on type, environment, relevant stakeholders, communication strategy and subjects involved in crisis to note its antecedents and provide solutions. In as much, crisis is not limited to nature, geographical, social, economic, technological entity but, can be mitigated by leadership practices, crisis management skills and school effectiveness not only in secondary schools but at all levels of human habitat.

Suggestions

- a. Environmental scanning to understand the social context of the community; relevant stakeholders and value system,

- b. Establishment of framework for managing crisis in school activities,
- c. Inculcation of multiple agencies with multi-disciplinary expertise and capacities to provide digestible information and support for leadership decision making on crisis Management,
- d. Develop crisis communication strategy for social media,
- e. Commitment of resources on realistic events to avoid and overcome challenges of sorts,
- f. Need for risk assessment, training of resources and a plan to address events involving multiple causalities. The plan should spell of role and responsibilities and expectation of actions on selected participants
- g. Integrating technology by investing in crisis management communication systems. Periodic evaluation of feedback mechanism.

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