



CHALLENGES FACED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OF MOUNTAIN PROVINCE IN INVESTIGATING RAPE CASES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to know the challenges and impacts/effects faced by Mountain Province law enforcement, as well as the coping mechanisms and strategies employed to manage these challenges in investigating rape cases. It aims to determine the prevalence of rape cases in Mountain Province. This study used a phenomenology approach to conduct qualitative research, which included gathering, analyzing, and providing non-numerical data to ten law enforcement officers from the Women and Children Protection Desk Unit using face-to-face interviews and an online platform (Zoom). The obstacles and repercussions that Mountain Province law enforcement officers have faced have allowed them to adapt to a scenario. Furthermore, Law Enforcement Officers recommend numerous coping mechanisms and solutions whenever faced with such issues. Law enforcement officers pay great attention to the victim's verbal and nonverbal signs, avoiding interruptions and conclusions. Respected the victim's privacy and ensured that the information shared remained confidential. Uses proper language and avoids terminology that may be triggering or disrespectful, and shows gratitude for the victim's willingness to participate while reassuring them that their struggle is not theirs alone. Despite the positive and negative repercussions to the victims, they have chosen to stand tall and do their best with the assistance of Law Enforcers, their families and most importantly, the guidance of the Lord.

KEYWORDS: Rape, Law Enforcement, Challenges, Coping Mechanism and Investigation

INTRODUCTION

According to the Philippine Commission of Women, rape is one of the most common forms of abuse against women and their children in the Philippines. Rape and abuse continue to pose a challenge to law enforcement and policymakers in their efforts to end violence against women and children. Shpancer (2016) stated in his article that the feminist movement was able to change how America views and treats rape in the 1960s, and that feminist consciousness raising, insightful theorizing, and persistent advocacy have resulted in enormous progress in how rape survivors are treated by law enforcement, courts, and the media. According to Baron and Straus (2014), gender inequality, social disorder, the percentage of people living in SMSAs, the circulation of pornography, economic inequality, and the percentage of unemployed all have a direct impact on the incidence of rape. Sarkar (2013) further claimed that considerable research conducted over the last three decades (and longer) indicates that various mental health conditions underpin sexual violence, notably rape. Stotzer and MacCartney (2016) also included the following as individual variables that have been linked to increased rape inclination among men: Acceptance of rape myths, high sexual arousal to depictions of rape or sexual violence, use of pornography, desire for dominance over women, increasing levels of hostile sexism, and heightened gender stereotyped attitudes towards women. On the other side, Crall and Goodfriend (2016) discovered that rape myth acceptability on the target college was extremely low, and that students disagreed with rape myths.

In the Philippines, the Philippine National Police (PNP) is the primary law enforcement agency for the first pillar of the criminal justice system. The men and women of the PNP were

supposed to respond to situations and be known as powerful, dedicated, and dependable law enforcement officers. In 2019, the Pulse Asia Survey ranked them as one of the top three most trusted government agencies (Philippine Information Agency, 2020). According to the United States Department of Justice-Bureau of Statistics (2021), the primary duties of law enforcement are to investigate, apprehend, and detain individuals suspected of criminal offenses. The New York City police force serves as an example of what police do: they apprehend criminals or crime suspects, investigate crimes and crime scenes, gather evidence, interview witnesses, and testify in court if required. In the United States, the Trump administration signed Executive Order 13896, which established a committee to investigate and offer recommendations on significant issues concerning law enforcement in the administration of justice.

In the current setting, law enforcement is vital. Law Enforcement and Policing, n.d. studies stated that without law enforcement, society would descend into chaos. Law enforcement is a formal social control procedure that establishes rules and regulations to ensure societal obedience. Law enforcement serves as the first point of contact with the judicial system. Tasked with detecting crimes, arresting offenders, investigating and filing complaints. Clearly, law enforcement's participation is critical. Whether or if justice will be served is determined by how a crime was detected, investigated, and the amount of evidence produced. Policing focuses on preventing, detecting, investigating and prosecuting crimes. Furthermore, they provide a wide range of community services and face challenges such as cultural sensitivity, resource constraints, and the need for community engagement, all of which they address through proactive coping mechanisms



such as legal information campaigns, multi-faceted assistance, confidence building, and modern equipment/training.

Early studies revealed significant problems and weaknesses in the criminal justice system. The current criminal justice system has failed to provide individuals with prompt and efficient justice, as well as to ensure that those who commit crimes face the repercussions of their actions. Given the mounting difficulties involved with criminal justice reform, it was necessary to provide a new viewpoint on the various aspects of the criminal justice system. Chakraborty's analysis found that the criminal justice systems rely largely on the police. The police's first priority was to provide quick help to the victim of the incident. The police's key responsibilities include providing emergency aid, apprehending the accused, conducting criminal investigations, and establishing the criminal justice system. Guerette and others concluded that proper crime analysis is now vital in today's police. It was prompted by both improved technological capabilities and the critical role that analysis plays in modern police practices.

The challenges that police administrators have in carrying out their duties successfully indicate to a complex environment shaped by a variety of internal and external factors. Internal resource concerns, such as budgetary constraints and a lack of people, regularly hamper police organizations, making it more difficult for them to efficiently combat crime and preserve public safety. The relationship between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve is further strained by concerns about legitimacy and trust, which are exacerbated by misconduct or excessive use of force. Proactive leadership, strategic planning, and stakeholder participation are required to address these concerns and implement reforms that increase police responsiveness, accountability, and transparency.

According to Briere and Scott (2013), rape is the second leading cause of post-traumatic stress disorder, and women who have been raped are six times more likely to experience this catastrophic condition. In India, rape and sexual violations are infamously underreported. Disbelief in the police and investigation system leads to underreporting of crimes. The patriarchal attitude of the police system towards women, particularly in rape cases, makes it difficult for survivors to approach the police. The majority of rapes are committed by individuals known to the victim (e.g., neighbors, friends, relatives, acquaintances, and partners), in the victim's or perpetrator's home, with the use of alcohol or drugs, without the use of weapons, and using verbal threats to exploit the victim's vulnerability. It includes, loneliness, intoxication, physical, emotional, or mental handicap, cultural minority status, youth. Immurement, or homelessness. Majority reported rapes are committed by men. All persons, regardless of gender or sexual orientation are vulnerable to violence against women and girls.

Understanding the impact of stress on crime victims is crucial in offering a response that takes into consideration their trauma rather than exacerbating it. Victim-centered interactions focus on the victim's personal needs and concerns, ensuring that services are delivered in a nonjudgmental, empathetic, tailored, needs-based, and sensitive manner. Using a victim-centered,

trauma-informed, strength-based, and culturally safe approach not only helps victims heal, but also keeps them involved in the criminal justice system. Inconsistent provision of integrated victim assistance and trauma-informed responses to sexual assault might make it difficult for victims to get justice. Improvements in this area will necessitate close collaboration with the health sector, both at the policy and regional service delivery levels. The health sector is in charge of the majority of counselling and mental health programs utilized by victims of sexual assault, and rapid and ongoing access to trauma counselling enhances victims' experiences throughout the court system.

In Bangladesh, there is a scarcity of resources for the necessary items required to begin the investigation. Police stations lack human resources, as the remaining officers must work 14 hours per day; this also has an impact on investigations, as there is a delay in arriving at the crime scene due to understaffing. Following that, there is a shortage of stationary cars, as well as a scarcity of fuel to power them. In numerous cases, officers have had to pay for fuel or stationery out of their own pocket. There is also a lack of equipment required to preserve the crime scene, collect evidence from the crime scene, and transmit it to laboratories for analysis such as DNA testing, ballistic testing, serology, and so on. These resources are quite limited in the country; not every district has this equipment and facility, thus the investigating officer must call the forensic team from wherever they are available. Also, pending test, which has been ongoing for years, and by the time the reports arrive, the case has taken much too long to be tried. There is a dearth of training and specialization in modern procedures for collecting evidence, such as fingerprints, which are still done in rudimentary ways. This impedes the inquiry and makes it impossible to hold quick trials.

In India, Wahab noted in his study that political meddling poses a serious threat to the independence of police investigations, jeopardizing decision-making and case management. Such intervention weakens impartial law enforcement and lowers public trust in the justice system, as individuals may perceive a lack of responsibility and neutrality. Maintaining investigative independence from political influence is critical to the integrity of the criminal justice system. Furthermore, witnesses' fear of revenge severely hinders investigations. Threats of intimidation dissuade them from revealing critical information, compromising evidence collecting and the court system's integrity. This unwillingness undermines accountability for offenders. To address this issue, strong witness protection programs, legal safeguards, and community engagement measures are required. Such measures seek to foster confidence and reassure witnesses that their safety would be emphasized, so encouraging open and successful investigations.

Furthermore, law enforcement officers should guarantee that victims receive consistent information and services throughout the investigation and legal processes, beginning with the initial reaction. Officers must also be conversant with state and local laws governing victim rights, as well as their agency's victim response protocols. Developing positive professional relationships with a wide range of victim and social care



providers will offer officers with resources that, if accessed, will help them handle all of the victim needs. Maintaining a professional reputation is crucial for building a positive relationship between officers and victims. Victims must believe that the officer and organization's actions are without reproach. Honesty and secrecy are essential qualities that crime victims want in law enforcement officers. Crime victims are concerned that revealing their victim status to the public may harm their personal reputations and professional ties. Therefore, police should preserve the victim's privacy whenever possible and provide clear expectations for the victim regarding the agency's ability to manage information. Victims need to trust that the criminal justice system will hold the offender accountable.

Objectives

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the systemic issues that can hinder access to fair legal processes, impacting societal stability, public trust in the legal system, and, ultimately, the ability to deliver justice effectively. By identifying these challenges, researchers and policymakers can pinpoint areas where improvements are needed, leading to policy changes and procedural adjustments to address these issues and develop solutions to improve the overall quality of justice delivery while addressing issues such as inequity, delays, and corruption within the system.

METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the research design, participants, instruments, and data collection procedures of the study.

Research Design

In this study, the researchers will use a qualitative approach through phenomenology, which will involve collecting, analyzing, and non-numerical data provided by responses and related literature, studios, theories, and concepts that are closely related to the research topic titled "Challenges Faced by the Law Enforcement of Mountain Province in the Administration of Justice". The main feature of qualitative research is that it is best suited for small samples, and its results are not measurable or quantifiable. Its primary advantage, which also serves as its primary distinction from quantitative research, is that it provides a comprehensive description and analysis of a research subject without limiting the scope of the research or the nature of participant responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

Locale and Population of the Study

This study was conducted in various police stations in Mountain Province that handled numerous rape cases, specifically: Bontoc, Bauko, Sabangan, Sagada, and Tadian Municipal Police Stations. The participants were ten police officers assigned to the Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) Unit, with two participants from each station.

The researchers used purposive sampling to select the participants. According to Alchemer.com, purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys.

Data Gathering Tool

To collect and analyze data, a variety of methodologies can be used. Since the researchers are using a qualitative approach, the tools that will be used to collect data are questionnaires, an interview guide, and a phone to record the interviews, all of which must be fully transcribed verbatim. All participants had the freedom to conduct one-on-one interviews where they felt more at ease in their surroundings and thus allowed them to speak. The researchers can also write each participant's responses, which may include observations, textual or visual analysis, and will conduct it via Zoom depending on the participants preference, whether they prefer a one-on-one or group interview.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sent letters to the Provincial Director of Mountain Province requesting approval to use online platforms and in-person interviews. The researchers personally sent formal message and consent form requesting for their participation in the said research. The consent form contains the study's purpose, confidentiality, and the participants' rights regarding the data collected.

Participants are provided with private links via zoom and will conduct face-to-face interviews. The interview will last approximately 10 to 20 minutes per participant. The participants are allowed to decline or withdraw if they are not comfortable. After completing the interview, the researcher will be debriefed by the participants prior to the nature of the study. Finally, the participants were acknowledged and appreciated for participating in the study.

Treatment/Analysis of Data

This research takes a qualitative approach, which means that the collection methods are primarily focused on gaining insights, reasoning, and motivations, so the research is more in-depth. Following the informant interviews, the researchers consolidated the gathered data for review, analysis, and interpretation.

The collection of data is the first part of the data analysis that includes the answer of the targeted participants in the interview. Data gathered will be analyzed and interpreted on how it is answered in accordance with the research objective. The researcher should explain clearly the tools and measures used to enhance and establish the accuracy, reliability, and authenticity of data collection and data analysis.

In the process of the data obtained through the questionnaire, the researcher utilized the following as thematic analysis. By using the thematic content analysis method, outcomes have been processed. Ezzy (2000), describes this type of data analysis method as a bridge of analyzing data by sorting its classification through themes, concepts, or similar features. In reducing and classifying a large amount of data into a more meaningful unit for interpretation, the procedures employed are primarily designed (Singleton, 1997). Marshall & Rossman (1989) in De Vos (1998) informed the steps of this method used in developing themes and included the following procedures.



Ethical Consideration

The researchers sent letters and consent forms outlining the study's objective, confidentiality, and participants' rights to the data obtained. Participants can decline or withdraw from the study if they feel uncomfortable.

The data collection conducted follows ethical procedure wherein the identity of the participants will be considered anonymous. The confidentiality of personal information about the participant will be strictly observed. This will assure the participants that no one will be able to identify them or associate their answers with their identity. Likewise, no data will be published or disseminated, no individual information will be disclosed. Only the researchers can handle the sensitive information that will be revealed by the participants, not even the member of panel and adviser will know about it.

Data will be collected using questionnaires, an interview guide, and a phone to record interviews, all of which must be transcribed verbatim. The researchers will conduct interviews via online platforms as well as face-to-face interviews, depending on the preferences of the participants.

RESULTS

The following themes were derived from the Challenges Faced by the Law Enforcement of Mountain Province in investigating rape cases:

CHALLENGES THAT MOUNTAIN PROVINCE LAW ENFORCEMENT FACES IN INVESTIGATING RAPE CASES

Late or delay in reporting the incident. Late or delayed reporting of an occurrence can take one to three years, making it difficult to recollect the details. A delay in reporting an occurrence can jeopardize safety and result in erroneous investigations. This is related to the victim/s' feelings of shame, threats to their lives, and the community's established traditions and practices.

Victims' delayed reports of incidents can result in crucial details being forgotten, compromising the accuracy of reports and potentially leading to ineffective corrective actions, the medical examination being unable to establish accurate injuries, and the investigation taking longer to establish the elements of the crime and ensure the conviction of the suspects.

Reluctance due to fear, shame, stigma and pressure. Fear, shame, stigma, and pressure from family and community cause the victim to be reluctant to reveal vital facts. According to Stigma, Prejudice, and Discrimination (2022), this reluctance may be motivated by fear of judgment, social isolation, or the negative repercussions of expressing or addressing these feelings. Shame and stigma can cause people to internalize negative attitudes about themselves and others, making it more difficult to seek treatment or have meaningful conversations about mental health or other sensitive topics.

The participants stated that reluctance due to fear, shame, stigma, and pressure has negative consequences. According to the Mayo Clinic (2017), reluctance to seek aid or treatment leads to a lower likelihood of completing treatment, as does

social isolation and a lack of understanding by family and friends. Also, Yanos (2023) and McLean (2023) stated, family members and friends who frequently provide vital help and support to people may internalize stigma and shame themselves, or they may be afraid that people would blame them for causing a loved one's disease or reject the family socially. This stigma can result in decreased emotional support, social isolation, and an unwillingness to seek help.

Emotional Exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is the experience of being exhausted and depleted of emotional resources, which is frequently a symptom of burnout. According to the Mayo Clinic (2014), when stress from bad or challenging life events occurs on a regular basis, you may feel emotionally exhausted and depleted. Emotional tiredness is a gradual buildup of emotional, physical, and performance symptoms.

The statements of the two participants contribute to the study undertaken by Cafasso, J. (2023), Emotional exhaustion is a sensation of being emotionally worn out and exhausted as a result of accumulated stress from your personal or professional lives, or a mix of the two. Emotional tiredness is one of the symptoms of burnout. People who are emotionally exhausted often believe they have little authority or control over their lives. They could feel "stuck" or "trapped" in a scenario. Overcoming emotional weariness can be challenging due to a lack of energy, poor sleep, and decreased motivation. This prolonged, stressed-out state might have long-term consequences for your health.

Psychological case study. A psychological case study is required for victims. Jarret, C. (2024) claimed that many of their stories continue to evolve when new evidence is discovered or new technologies are applied, affecting how the instances are read and understood. It addresses several of psychology's persistent debates, including personality and identity, nature and nurture, and the relationship between mind and body.

The findings of the Pragmatic case studies in psychotherapy study, as reported by participants. (2025), Results indicated that many variables contributed to successful versus unsuccessful treatment outcomes, including but not limited to the child's spontaneity, active participation and emotional expression throughout treatment, child play themes, the therapist's countertransference, the child and parental defense mechanisms, and parental attachment styles.

IMPACTS/EFFECTS OF THESE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LAW ENFORCEMENT IN MOUNTAIN PROVINCE IN INVESTIGATING RAPE CASES

Lack of immediate reporting. Delays in reporting frequently result in the loss of important evidence or forensic evidence, such as DNA or physical markings, which are required to create a compelling case. As a result, the chances of conviction are diminished, or the case cannot be pursued in court. The longer the wait in reporting, the more difficult and complicated the investigation gets. Police officers/investigators may have fewer



leads to pursue, making it more difficult to track down suspects or verify victim testimony.

Burnout and emotional exhaustion. Cafasso, J. describes burnout and emotional exhaustion. (2023), it can feel as if individuals have no control over their lives. They could feel "stuck" or "trapped" in a scenario. Overcoming emotional weariness can be challenging due to a lack of energy, poor sleep, and decreased motivation.

Another issue that law enforcement officers in Mountain Province face when dealing with emotional exhaustion is that victims who experience a loyalty conflict become unresponsive or evasive during interviews, making it difficult for investigators to gather reliable testimony, and victims who face financial hardship are torn between pursuing justice and maintaining their family's livelihood. This places a significant emotional weight on the victim, making it difficult to focus on the healing process or pursue legal action. If a complaint or case is dropped at the prosecutor's level or in court, there is a perception that investigators are incompetent or are not carrying out their duties correctly, resulting in a loss of community trust. The pressure of ensuring justice is served without bias, while enduring public scrutiny and handling a flood of cases, can be mentally and emotionally.

Criminal and Administrative Charges. Criminal and administrative law govern interactions between the state and an individual, group, or company. According to Snader Law Group. (2023), In a criminal case, the state brings and prosecutes the defendant on behalf of the citizens. Prison term as a form of punishment is only available in criminal instances. An administrative law proceeding can be initiated by either the state or an individual.

Another issue that law enforcement officers in Mountain Province face when dealing with criminal and administrative accusations is that when justice is not administered properly, offenders are empowered to commit more crimes, creating a system in which injustice goes unpunished. Victims who have experienced injustice or been traumatized by justice systems may refuse to assist in the future, deterring other victims from seeking help.

COPING MECHANISMS AND STRATEGIES THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT IN MOUNTAIN PROVINCE USES TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN INVESTIGATING RAPE CASES

Open Communication. It entails freely sharing information, ideas, and sentiments in an open and honest way. According to Comcare (2024), it encourages a two-way discussion in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves, listening to others, and contributing to a greater understanding. It is critical for fostering trust, increasing collaboration, and improving problem-solving in a variety of contexts, including the workplace and relationships.

According to the participants' statements, the first step toward solving a problem is to be open; victims and their families should trust law enforcement, and law enforcement should

comprehend the victim's perspective. Be upfront and honest about your ideas. It gives employees the ability to express their opinions and contribute to decision-making, which has unquestionable benefits for organizations. Importantly, it promotes teamwork, builds trust, and increases transparency.

Build Rapport. Everyone wants to have a positive relationship with the people they work with. However, developing a healthy level of camaraderie, rapport, and comfortable talks requires effort. Martin, J. (2024) stated that rapport is an important soft skill for helping you build trust, establish good communication, and generate wonderful relationships with your teammates. Sometimes it appears as if people are born with this skill. And it is true that certain people are inherently skilled at establishing rapport. Even if you're not good at making small chat or creating relationships, you can still generate rapport.

The participants have taken steps and attempted things; in order to move forward, they must handle and regulate the challenges in a positive manner. Hanne (2025) stated that when you have a solid rapport with individuals, it is simpler to collaborate, build trust, and communicate successfully. It is significant because it enables you to form strong, supportive connections based on shared ground and mutual understanding.

Effective Collaboration. It entails team members working together to achieve a common objective, sharing ideas, communicating openly, and making decisions together. According to Effective Collaboration (2025), people who collaborate on activities are more engaged for longer, feel less exhausted, and achieve higher results than those who work alone.

SUGGESTIONS

Mountain Province law enforcement is determined to show themselves by doing everything possible to overcome any obstacles or hurdles encountered while investigating rape cases. The Mountain Province Police Stations do their best to ensure the safety of all victims, recognize their mental suffering, and provide reassurance and resources.

The researchers recommend that more programs and lectures be delivered by police officers in each Barangay in a community. This helps to remind everyone that dealing with sexual cases is not simple. Furthermore, the researchers recommend that the organization hire more psychiatrists to help them comprehend and be patient with victims.

Furthermore, as the key source of motivation for victims, their family should always support and encourage them, giving them the fortitude to face their problems and challenges.

CONCLUSION

Mountain Province Law Enforcement faced and overcame a variety of challenges in investigating rape cases, particularly in rape cases; it came and went unexpectedly, it took a thousand steps to reach the milestone they are now at, and it took efforts and tears to show and prove that they can and could do such to help their community. It releases a lot of pressure for them to know they have a lot on their hands, and it takes some time for



them to breathe in and out without thinking about their priorities and ambitions.

The challenges that Mountain Province Law Enforcement has when investigating rape cases are classified into four main categories: late or delayed reporting of the incident, reluctance owing to fear, humiliation, stigma, and pressure, emotional weariness, and psychological case study. While the ramifications or results of these issues are classified into three major categories: lack of immediate reporting, burnout and emotional weariness, and criminal and administrative charges.

Research Paradigm (Figures)

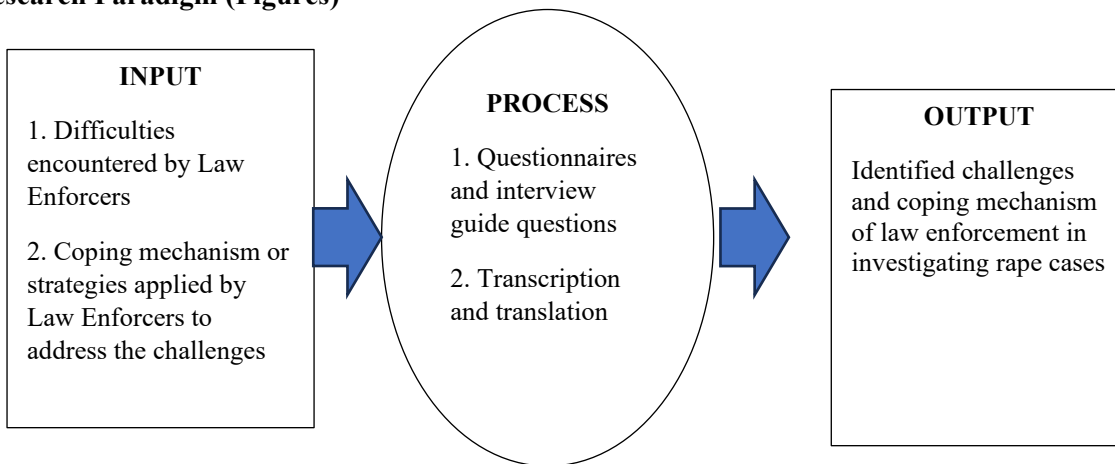


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

This study is focused on the challenges faced by the Law Enforcement of Mountain Province in investigating rape cases. To better understand, the researchers used their own model, which is divided into three parts, specifically the Input-Process-Output. The input section describes the challenges that the Law enforcements of Mountain Province faced in investigating rape cases. It covers the impacts faced in investigating rape cases. The output section depicts the solutions and strategies used by the Law enforcement of Mountain Province in investigating rape cases.

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