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Aggression and Latent Social Violence Towards Women in Metropolitan Arequipa, Peru

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women has a long history; however, in recent years, the literature on the subject has identified some signs that allow for an analysis that could uncover subtle, often overlooked experiences. The objective of this research is to analyze dimensions of aggression in its various manifestations—physical, economic, and psychological—relating them to trust in institutions, self-protection, career prospects, and submissive attitudes in socially concealed and accepted everyday experiences. Methodologically, an applied research study was conducted at a correlational level, with a quantitative approach to non-parametric variables. The study was cross-sectional, with 384 surveys administered in metropolitan Arequipa. The results show that high percentages of women across all socioeconomic levels have experienced or are currently experiencing violence in its three forms. Furthermore, levels of distrust in local authorities and institutions dedicated to this task are high. It is concluded that violence against women is latent across all socioeconomic levels, with low percentages of cases escalating to actual violence. In turn, levels of trust in state institutions are limited. Submissive attitudes associated with motherhood reinforce low self-esteem through complicit social behavior.

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1. Introduction

Collective well-being requires the commitment of every member of society. An examination of social statistics reveals an underlying problem: violence against women. When presenting the results of the Demographic and Family Health Survey, the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI, 2024) reported that 53.8% of women said they had been victims of psychological, physical, or sexual violence by a husband or partner at some point in their lives. As this is official information, it should be of concern to academic circles. Quispe et al. (2018) state that “Peru, together with Colombia, ranks second among Latin American countries with the highest percentage (38.6%) of women who have been victims of physical violence by a partner at some point in their lives” (p. 280). Villagrán et al. (2023), meanwhile, note that “intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is widespread in all the countries of Latin America” (p. 30), which is reason enough to examine the issue in some depth.

Among the highly sought-after programs addressing violence against women, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP, 2025) reported that, between January and October 2025, Línea 100 handled 296,925 calls concerning violence against women, family members, and sexual violence. It should be noted that 82% of these calls concerned women and 18% men. A recent publication observes that “older men with higher educational attainment and greater economic stability foster more silent forms of violence” (Uzcátegui Guerrero & Páez Silva, 2025, p. 281), a point of particular concern to our analysis. Social concealment keeps this violence latent and leaves little room for change, since it does not directly affect the economic or social sphere. This shows how men’s violence against women constructs masculinity as a pattern of domination, control, and abuse of authority over women (Iranzo-Domingo et al., 2023). Other studies confirm that in Peru, 55.7% of women aged 15 and over have experienced psychological, physical, and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives (Santi-Huaranca et al., 2025), with the perpetrator identified as a partner or companion.

Recent research shows that technological advances sustain patterns of violence against women. Casagrande and Spaticchia

(2025) state that "the digital dimension of violence against women encompasses a wide range of acts perpetrated online or through technological tools, which form part of the continuum of gender-based acts suffered, including in the domestic sphere" (p. 48). The context of precariousness, insecurity, and violence prevailing in urban settlements cannot be detached from political responsibility (Rousseau et al., 2025), if gender equality is to be achieved (p. 90). This is so even as some authors associate female identity with traits such as weakness, passivity, dependence, submission, and obedience to men, reflected in hierarchical marriages (Stanziola & Araúz-Reyes, 2025, p. 96). In other words, gender-based aggression cuts across digital spaces, perpetuating intimidating and conservative patterns traditionally thought to have disappeared.

In analyses of violence, the concept of latent violence introduced by Galtung (1969) and reaffirmed by Curle (1971) refers to underlying tensions that precede the explicit manifestation of violence. It is the initial stage of violent action; its contributing factors may include systematic discrimination and economic and social inequality. In intimate relationships, this can be understood as the period preceding physical, psychological, or economic aggression.

A problem encountered in everyday life, and one that Latin American governments fail to address responsibly, particularly from a conservative perspective, is described as follows: "Women experience violence in the streets every day; their bodies are violated and catcalling becomes harassment. Why does a sector of society believe it has the right to intrude into another person's space?" (Olguín Lacunza & Rojas, 2023). Culturally, our society retains deep-rooted deficiencies that are difficult to overcome. In Íconos, Jiménez-Pelcastre et al. (2025) carefully analyze how heterosexism, racism, classism, and other vectors of oppression intersect in women's lives and give rise to exclusion, discrimination, inequality, rights violations, and limited opportunities. Most female victims advocate building a society characterized by peaceful coexistence (Martínez Álvarez, 2022, p. 202). In short, many are women with strong convictions who grow through painful life events and continue striving to change reality in favor of peace.

Women's labor practices have interconnected micro- and macro-political dimensions. A study in southern Chile (Vallejos Lamig & Eizaguirre Anglada, 2024, p. 189) shows that shifting attitudes resist and create friction in relation to the sociopolitical context. Gender, in turn, is the variable with the greatest impact: girls experience more situations, in more varied contexts, and with more serious consequences. Despite this harm, they often adopt passive attitudes toward violence (Frezzotti & Tarrullo, 2024).

Another perspective shows how the media contribute to perpetuating gender inequalities. From a feminist perspective, Iglesias López (2024) proposes "deconstructing oppressive systems in order to transform society equitably and bring about structural social change" (p. 295). Communication plays an important role in shaping society, although this remains a theoretical proposal. Under the prevailing view, "the woman's role in the family would be relegated to that of a traditional mother and wife, in contrast with a patriarchal man who embodies the family" (Hidalgo-Marí, 2017, p. 294), a situation that harms the holistic development of both family and society.

Reflecting on the academic treatment of information about aggression against women, Cases Sola (2024) argues that "several concepts continue to be applied without theoretical reflection accompanying their selection" (p. 363). Regardless of ideological, religious, or other positions, it is necessary to consider the extent to which a position may harm individual and social well-being.

2. Materials and Methods

This study forms part of a broader project analyzing the network of effective social action applied to gender-based violence. The present study seeks to identify latent factors that contribute directly to gender-based aggression, which often escalates into violence and at other times reflects only unequal treatment. We used the instrument known as Covert Social Violence, proposed by Vinagre-González et al. (2020), adapting four additional dimensions and modifying the instrument's structure. Ten items addressed forms of aggression; self-protection and trust were also considered as factors that may exacerbate aggression. The study adopted a predominantly quantitative approach, using numerical data on a Likert scale to determine the nature of everyday experiences relating to aggression.

The instrument was developed in accordance with guidelines for constructing psychometric surveys. It included a sociodemographic and personal data section and 40 items distributed across seven analytical dimensions, rated on a 1-to-5 Likert scale. The survey was entitled "Aggression and Latent Social Violence against Women in Metropolitan Arequipa." Its dimensions were self-protection, motherhood, career prospects, trust in institutions, responses to violence, submissive attitudes, and forms of aggression, which are described below.

This is a correlational study examining relationships among the dimensions. This does not imply causal relationships; rather, it considers how changes in one dimension may influence others (Bernal Torres, 2022, p. 144). Research design, as Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014) explain, "is the plan or strategy developed to obtain the information required for a study and address its research question" (p. 128). In this sense, the author suggests that social research is non-experimental. The study is applied, since applied research seeks to solve a problem; the aim here is to understand how decisions and practices related to violence against women could be mitigated, if not eliminated (Hernández-Sampier & Torres, 2018).

To assess the reliability of the information, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, yielding an index of 0.85, which is considered excellent. A normality test was also conducted to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. Since the significance value of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test (N > 50) is below 0.05, all dimensions have a non-parametric distribution. Therefore, correlations should be tested using Spearman's rho.

The study analyzes 40 items distributed across seven dimensions. The dimension of partner self-protection refers to the behaviors, strategies, and boundaries that two people in a stable relationship establish to protect their physical, emotional, economic, and psychological well-being. In this study, it concerns how a woman protects herself against potential risks and what means she uses, such as social networks, staying at another residence, or reporting the matter to the authorities. Patiño-Díe (2020) notes that "female self-defense can be understood as a possible response to various forms of gender-based violence through the modification of certain beliefs, values, and ideologies" (p. 203). Regarding motherhood and the dilemma of prioritizing being a woman or being a mother (Cañas Castellón, 2013, p. 74), we consider how this is socially perceived and constructed, and whether it is inherently burdensome given the way society distributes work, expectations, and responsibilities, placing them almost entirely on women.

Historically, married women were prevented from working. Quispe Ponce (2020) begins by noting that "disparities between men and women are among the most deeply rooted forms of inequality worldwide" (p. 495), a premise that also reveals marked differences in constitutional analysis, as the data collected below will show. Trust in institutions, meanwhile, is assessed by whether people who experience aggression turn to the relevant authorities, such as police stations or women's shelters.

The analysis of trust reveals several trends. Beramendi et al. (2016) distinguish between two forms of social trust. The first, particular or specific trust, arises from known relationships, such as family, friends, and people nearby. The second, general or diffuse trust, concerns a circle of unknown relationships, that is, strangers. Trust in institutions or organizations may also be diffuse; however, in the specific context of intimate partner aggression, the institutions in question are those that support women.

Table 1: *Seven dimensions analyzed using 40 items*

Dimensions	Operational definition	Number of items
Self-protection	Measures taken to protect physical, emotional, and psychological safety when in a relationship involving violence	5 items
Motherhood	A situation that may increase women's vulnerability to a violent partner, whether through childcare or the emotional impact on children	5 items
Career prospects	Different measures that reveal the social concealment of gender-based violence, such as schedules, permissions, and leave	5 items
Trust in institutions	The degree of trust women place in institutions protecting them from violence, current regulations, police officers, and protection services	5 items
Response to violence	The response to intimate partner violence: whether a woman protects herself, reports it, and trusts available shelters	5 items
Submissive attitudes	Actions that socially conceal women's subordination, based on the view that women are weaker, more prudent, and so forth	5 items
Forms of aggression	Different latent forms of aggression experienced by women at psychological, economic, and physical levels and to varying degrees	10 items
Total		40 items

Note: Dimensions based on the instrument developed by Vinagre-González et al. (2020), adapted.

Peru has Law No. 30364 (Congress of the Republic, 2015), the "Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence against Women and Members of the Family Group." Under this law, victims are entitled to information, free legal assistance, specialized public defense, and medical care (including mental health services) at state hospitals. Línea 100 is a free telephone service, available 24 hours a day,

every day, for guidance, emotional counseling, and reporting domestic violence. Chat 100 is a real-time online service providing psychological guidance and support to women who have experienced aggression. Women's Emergency Centers (CEMs) are specialized government offices where women can receive legal, psychological, and social advice. The Urgent Care Service (SAU) provides immediate assistance in high-risk cases to protect physical, emotional, or sexual integrity. Shelters (Temporary Shelter Homes, HRTs) provide women (and children) at risk with protection, accommodation, food, and psychological and social support.

Regarding submissive attitudes, a publication from the Autonomous University of Tabasco states "that older people are less accepting of gender equality and the sexualization of women" (Loving et al., 2020, p. 62). In other words, more conservative attitudes generally have a traditional basis, although this is not an absolute rule. As gender equality norms become institutionalized, machismo tends to decline, though this proposition remains to be tested.

In analyzing forms of aggression, we considered the study by Chávez Cuevas et al. (2024), which notes that abusive men tend to control their female partners' money and productive, occupational, and economic activities (p. 11). This practice covertly subjugates the partner. Other recurring factors include intimidation and aggressive behavior, which together constitute psychological aggression. Finally, physical aggression may involve direct bodily force or the use of an object. This dimension comprises ten items relating to three forms of aggression: economic, psychological, and physical.

Fieldwork was conducted using a representative sample of 384 residents from 16 districts in Metropolitan Arequipa, with a 95% confidence level. According to the Metropolitan Development Plan and the Metropolitan Planning Institute (IMPLA), the Metropolitan Area of Arequipa (AMA) comprises 21 conurbated districts. However, under the sample allocation and multistage sampling process, five districts would have received only one to three surveys, which would not have provided a meaningful representation. The study therefore covered the 16 districts shown in Table 1. Proportional stratified probability sampling was applied using the following formula:

Where n:

$Z^2 = 1.96$ (confidence level = 95%); P = 0.5

Q = 0.5

N = 1,080,635

E = 0.05 (5% sampling error); n = 384

The study established inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The criteria were as follows:

- Women aged over 18 who lived in the 16 districts of Metropolitan Arequipa were included, categorized by sex and age group.
- Male residents, residents of districts outside the 16 selected districts, and minors in Metropolitan Arequipa were excluded.

Table 2:*Sample distribution*

	Districts	Pop.	%	Sample size
	Arequipa (Cercado)	54,262	4.50	17
	Alto Selva Alegre	96,351	8.00	31
	Cayma	115,881	9.62	37
	Cerro Colorado	259,214	21.52	83
	Jacobo Hunter	55,832	4.64	18
	José Luis Bustamante y Rivero	85243	7.08	27
	Mariano Melgar	70,154	5.82	22
	Miraflores	69,725	5.79	22
	Paucarpata	139,513	11.58	44
0	Sachaca	32,152	2.67	10
1	Socabaya	92001	7.64	29
2	Tiabaya	18026	1.50	6
3	Yanahuara	27815	2.31	9
4	Characato	19872	1.65	6

5	Uchumayo	19147	1.59	6
6	Yura	49354	4.10	16
Total		1,204,542	100	384

Source: Prepared by the authors based on information from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI), 2023.

Fieldwork was conducted by Communication Sciences students from the Universidad Nacional de San Agustín de Arequipa, who administered the survey in person, going door to door and using persuasion and empathy.

3. Results

The study shows that aggression by intimate partners against women, in its various forms, remains a latent problem in Arequipa. Although rural areas were not examined, aggressive behaviors in the city appear to be concealed in some cases. Uzcátegui Guerrero and Páez Silva (2025) note that "men with greater economic resources foster more silent forms of violence" (p. 283), referring to this covert form of aggression. Another phenomenon that has received little attention is violence by women against women (Castellano et al., 2024). This does not mean that men have stopped committing violent acts; rather, examining this phenomenon is relevant to better understanding the problem of aggression. New forms of aggression also appear on supposedly more modern social networks. On Twitter, a hostile digital discourse directed at women has been identified (Fernández-Montaño, 2024, p. 5). Alongside the many forms of aggression, these practices are becoming more sophisticated while continuing to reproduce veiled patriarchal attitudes.

The study shows that the different dimensions analyzed are associated, especially when considering "a healthy interpersonal relationship, one in which people interact on equal terms, with reciprocity and respect, and accept the plurality of our society" (Macias-Bowen & Macias-Bowen, 2022, p. 62). The correlation indices suggest that this ideal remains far off. The findings are negative: aggression by a partner continues to go hand in hand with violent acts, while trust in public institutions tasked with at least reducing this problem declines.

Table 3. Correlations between partner aggression and trust in institutions

			Aggression	Trust
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.116
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.192
		N	384	384
	Trust	Correlation coefficient	-0.116	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.192	.
		N	384	384

Note: Data obtained from the survey conducted in 2025.

Spearman's rho indicates that women's trust in institutions dedicated to reducing this problem—including public institutions, NGOs, and the laws and regulations intended to protect them from partner aggression—is not closely associated with aggression. The dimensions are distant from one another; there is a very weak inverse correlation between aggression against women and their trust in the institutions that protect them.

Table 4. Correlations between partner aggression and domestic violence

			Aggression	Violence
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.542**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Violence	Correlation coefficient	0.542**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.

		N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho for partner aggression and domestic violence indicates a moderate relationship. The items directly asked whether a woman had experienced domestic violence, whether she had sought help from the authorities, and whether she had reported the aggressor. In keeping with the criteria used, the non-parametric variables show a relatively weak association.

Table 5. Correlations between partner aggression and women's submissive attitudes

			Aggression	Submission
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.467**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Submission	Correlation coefficient	0.467**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For partner aggression and submissive attitudes, Spearman's rho is lower but still indicates a moderate relationship. The submissive-attitude items considered matters such as who makes household purchasing decisions and whether women prioritize their physical appearance. They also asked whether women are considered more prudent than men and whether women are seen as more accommodating. A moderate correlation means that women's submissive attitudes are moderately associated with partner aggression. Items included statements such as "a woman is usually more submissive to a man" and "it is normal for a girl to behave more prudently than a boy in sexual matters in order to command respect." This covert acceptance points to vulnerability in women's attitudes.

Table 6. Correlations between partner aggression and self-protection

			Aggression	Self-protection
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.132
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.137
		N	384	384
	Self-protection	Correlation coefficient	0.132	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.137	.
		N	384	384

Note: Data obtained from the survey conducted in 2025.

This correlation shows the relationship between partner aggression and women's self-protection. The association is very weak (0.132). The items measured not only social support, whether from family or neighbors, but also the sense of security gained from participating in networks and using technology. Respondents were asked whether they participated in any kind of women's alert network for partner abuse and whether they would report partner aggression to a police station, prosecutor's office, or other authority. The results indicate some distrust and thus contribute to the concealment of violence.

Table 7. Correlations between partner aggression and career prospects

			Aggression	Career prospects
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.375**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Career prospects	Correlation coefficient	0.375**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.

		N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The analysis of career prospects identified the need to give up professional ambitions to care for children, sacrifice positions of responsibility, prioritize family needs, and in some cases reduce working hours to care for children. Overall, the curtailment of professional aspirations is weakly correlated with partner aggression (0.375). Another notable finding is that women gave few unequivocal responses to the question of whether a woman's professional ambition should be subordinate to her family. This suggests indirect acceptance of additional family responsibilities.

Table 8. Correlations between partner aggression and motherhood

			Aggression	Motherhood
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.018
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.836
		N	384	384
	Motherhood	Correlation coefficient	-0.018	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.836	.
		N	384	384

Source: Authors' own data.

Motherhood is analyzed in light of the mother-child bond being far stronger than the father-child bond, as well as the cultural and social perception that having a child is the most significant event in a woman's life, but not a man's. Breastfeeding is also considered a superior source of nutrition, despite its potential effects on the mother's health. The findings show that these aspects are neither associated with nor influential in partner aggression. A correlation index of -0.018 indicates a very weak inverse association between partner aggression and motherhood.

The second stage of the analysis examines the different forms of aggression—physical, psychological, and economic—using a series of indicators to assess their association with aggression itself.

Table 9

Correlations between partner aggression and physical aggression

			Aggression	Physical
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.799**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Physical	Correlation coefficient	0.799**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between partner aggression and physical assault is notable: the correlation coefficient is 0.799, indicating a strong relationship. Key indicators include assault with sharp objects, punching, and kicking. The findings show that social concealment remains latent: respondents may acknowledge having experienced physical assault while also stating that their partners very rarely assault them.

Table 10. Correlations between partner aggression and psychological aggression

			Aggression	Psychological
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.871**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Psychological	Correlation coefficient	0.871**	1.000

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Psychological aggression stands out among the forms of aggression. It includes sexual harassment of a partner and threatening, intimidating behavior, whether through a raised voice associated with threats or by turning others, including family members, against the woman. This clearly creates fear. The association reaches 0.871, indicating significant intolerance. The findings show that psychological aggression plays an important role in intimate partner violence, as reflected in its high correlation.

Table 11

Correlations between partner aggression and economic aggression

			Aggression	Economic
Spearman's rho	Aggression	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.867**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	384	384
	Economic	Correlation coefficient	0.867**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	384	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Economic aggression by a partner is another factor affecting women's personal development. The results show a strong positive correlation (p = 0.867) between partner aggression and economic aggression. A review of the items reveals covert appropriation of household income and restrictions on women's personal development through prohibitions on studying and working, with the aim of creating high levels of dependence. These practices significantly conceal violent attitudes toward women.

4. Discussion

Aggression is theoretically unacceptable, yet it is accepted covertly and in silence. Does this mean there is "consensual" aggression, without sufficient condemnation or action to prevent it? As a society, we continue to conceal it. The analysis therefore seeks to resolve this dilemma by showing Spearman correlation levels between different social aspects of women's lives and the distressing reality of partner aggression. This analysis raises the idea of female misogyny. As Miranda Bustamante and Agudelo Vizcaíno (2021) put it, "she envies what is most valuable to men: their social supremacy. Having entered the workplace, she appreciates men's age-old position as social subjects and, in doing so, despises other women, whom she hates because—like herself—they are confined to a radical otherness" (p. 245). In other words, many women unconsciously reinforce and silently perpetuate different forms of aggression.

The results show that the association of aggression with motherhood and trust in protective institutions is relatively insignificant, thereby contributing to social concealment. Ortiz (2002) describes a culture of domestic violence sustained by marital violence, which is so frequent and difficult to measure. The associations with self-protection and submission are very weak, showing that women are not submissive because of aggression; the attitudes may instead have a cultural origin, a matter that should be examined in further research. One concern is that these forms of coexistence become institutionalized. The premise is that latent violence is evidenced by low institutional trust; because the violence is concealed, it cannot be addressed through legal channels. A cultural perspective is offered by Fonseca et al. (2023), who emphasize that violence is framed by patriarchal discourse and is even perpetrated by women themselves in everyday life. These concealed attitudes need sustained analysis to detect and make them visible; only then can they be substantively addressed through social responsibility.

Another aspect to consider is that sexual aggressors are, in the vast majority of cases, known to their victims, making concealment a family matter and leaving girls vulnerable to abuse in adulthood. Victims have reported sexual aggression in only half of cases (Echeburúa et al., 2014, p. 57). This suggests that the more internal or intrafamilial the aggressive behavior, the more concealed it becomes, thereby contributing to social concealment.

5. Conclusion

The study shows how the social fabric implicitly disguises harmful conservative attitudes in a society marked by inequality between men and women. The covert message is a subtle signal that may not be consciously perceived but is present in women's everyday actions and is often openly accepted. A clear example is when aggression is accepted as consensual because it occurs only

sporadically. The associations between partner aggression against women and motherhood, as well as trust in protective institutions, are moderate; the associations with career prospects and self-protection are more significant. The correlations are especially high for the different forms of aggression. Accordingly, social responses should give greater attention to intrafamilial aggression, since the eventual outcomes may be more consequential.

The associations among the non-parametric dimensions, measured using Spearman's rho and general indicators of partner aggression, show that psychological aggression has a higher correlation than physical and economic aggression. It should therefore receive greater institutional, political, and legal attention and be placed on the social agenda as a factor that undermines social well-being.

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