



# Are Co-Curricular Activities Useful for Diversity Management? Evidence From Secondary Schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## Abstract:

Promoting diversity management in educational settings is crucial for creating inclusive environments, and co-curricular activities have emerged as a valuable tool for achieving this goal. This study aimed to investigate the role of co-curricular activities in diversity management specifically in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. The study addressed two primary research questions. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a mixed-methods approach was employed. This involved integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from interviews. The survey was administered to the research sample, while interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information. This combination of methods allowed for a more robust analysis. The research sample consisted of 375 participants, including 187 males and 188 females. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive impact of co-curricular activities on diversity management. These activities provided opportunities for students to engage with peers from diverse backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and respect. However, the study also identified several barriers and challenges. This study is unique in its investigation of how co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools, offering valuable insights for fostering inclusive environments. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended to address the identified barriers and challenges to enhance the effectiveness of co-curricular activities in promoting diversity management. Strategies and interventions should be developed to increase awareness of diversity management among stakeholders.

*Keywords: Co-curricular, Contribution, Challenges, Diversity Management.*

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity management is a critical aspect of creating inclusive educational environments that value and celebrate the differences among students (Ordu, 2015; Yamada, 2011). It involves implementing strategies and practices that promote positive interactions, intercultural understanding, and the breakdown of stereotypes within school communities (Phantasoot, & Wangthanomsak, 2021). Co-curricular activities, which encompass sports, clubs, cultural events, and community service initiatives, have emerged as a potential strategy for diversity management (Saifi, 2023; Mancha, & Ahmad, 2016). These activities provide students with opportunities to engage in extracurricular pursuits beyond the traditional academic curriculum (Kelbiso, 2019; Ab Ghani et al., 2020).

Ethiopia is a country known for its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, with numerous ethnic groups and languages represented among its population (Mengesha, 2017; Belay, et al., 2005). Ethiopian secondary schools encounter the challenge of effectively managing this diversity to create inclusive and harmonious learning environments (Adugna, 2017; Heugh, 2014). Co-

curricular activities have the potential to play a significant role in addressing this challenge and promoting diversity management (Keser et al., 2014; Charles, 2012). By providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to interact, collaborate, and learn from one another, co-curricular activities can foster inclusivity and intercultural understanding (Clegg, et al., 2009).

One potential benefit of co-curricular activities for diversity management is the opportunity for students to engage in meaningful interactions with peers from different backgrounds (Dumin, 2011). Through participation in sports, clubs, or cultural events, students can develop relationships, build trust, and gain a better understanding of diverse perspectives (Demissie, & Seneshaw, 2013). These interactions can foster empathy, respect, and open-mindedness, which are essential for navigating a diverse society (Milem, 2003). Additionally, co-curricular activities provide platforms for students to showcase and celebrate their cultural heritage, promoting a sense of pride and belonging among diverse student populations (Ratanakarn, 2011).

Co-curricular activities also offer the potential to break down stereotypes and challenge biases (Sims, et al., 2017). By engaging in collaborative projects or team activities, students from different backgrounds can challenge preconceived notions and learn to appreciate each other's strengths and talents (Wilson, 2009). These experiences can help dispel stereotypes and promote a more inclusive and equitable school environment (Woldetsadik et al., 2023). Moreover, co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, teamwork, and effective communication, which are essential for success in diverse communities (Yemini, & Addi-Racah, 2013).

However, despite the potential benefits, there are challenges associated with implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools (Wondimu, & Gonfa, 2019). Limited resources, lack of infrastructure, and logistical constraints pose barriers to offering a diverse range of co-curricular activities (Haydamo & Amdemeskel, 2022; Wondemetegn, 2016). Additionally, cultural norms and expectations within the Ethiopian context may influence the participation and involvement of students from certain backgrounds (Sefisa, & Yuya, 2021). Understanding these challenges and identifying strategies to overcome them is crucial for effective diversity management through co-curricular activities (Dimbie et al., 2021; Rockenbach et al., 2015).

The lack of specific evidence and research on the effectiveness of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools is a notable issue. Although there is a general understanding of the potential benefits of such activities, it is crucial to explore their impact within the unique context of Ethiopian schools (Assefa, 2016). By examining the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of respondents from diverse backgrounds in relation to co-curricular activities, valuable insights can be gained regarding the effectiveness of these activities for promoting diversity management.

The absence of studies specifically focused on co-curricular activities and their role in diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools specifically in the context of Addis Ababa creates a research gap. Existing literature on co-curricular activities primarily originates from Western contexts, highlighting the need to explore the applicability and effectiveness of these activities within the Ethiopian educational landscape. By addressing this research gap, a deeper understanding can be gained regarding the potential benefits and challenges associated with implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools.

By conducting research specifically focused on co-curricular activities and their impact on diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools, this study aims to fill the research gap and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The research will involve exploring the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of students, teachers and administrators from diverse backgrounds in relation to co-curricular activities. By gathering comprehensive data, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of these activities for promoting diversity management.

The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of co-curricular activities for diversity management within the Ethiopian context. The study will shed light on the experiences of students, teachers and principals identify any barriers or challenges faced, and highlight successful practices and strategies. The results will be relevant not only to educators and school administrators but also to policymakers and stakeholders involved in shaping educational policies and practices in Ethiopia. The evidence-based recommendations derived from this research can inform the development of inclusive educational programs and initiatives that effectively utilize co-curricular activities to promote diversity management. The aim of this study was to investigate the contribution of co-curricular activities to diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools, specifically in the context of Addis Ababa. The study addressed the following two primary research questions

1. To what extent do co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in in Addis Ababa's secondary schools?
2. What are the potential barriers and challenges faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management in in Addis Ababa's secondary schools?

### **THEORETICAL FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY**

The Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel (1974) and John Turner (1986), explores how individuals' sense of self and identity is shaped by their membership in social groups. According to the theory, people strive to maintain a positive self-concept by identifying with and favoring their in-group while exhibiting bias or discrimination towards out-groups (Hogg, 2016). This theory emphasizes the importance of social categorization, social comparison, and the need for positive distinctiveness within a group (Ellemers, & Haslam, 2012). Individuals tend to derive a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and purpose from their group memberships, which can influence their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019).

In the context of the current study, the Social Identity Theory can provide valuable insights. Co-curricular activities have the potential to foster a shared sense of identity and belonging among students from diverse backgrounds (McLeod, 2008). By engaging in activities that promote intergroup contact, cooperation, and collaboration, students can develop a broader and more inclusive social identity that encompasses multiple groups (Williams-Gualandi, 2020). This expanded social identity can positively impact their attitudes towards diversity, reducing prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (Borg, 2009). Through participation in co-curricular activities, students may develop a greater appreciation for different cultures, perspectives, and experiences, leading to increased acceptance, understanding, and respect among diverse groups (Martinez et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the Social Identity Theory can help explain how co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools (Stuart et al, 2009). By providing opportunities for students to engage in positive intergroup interactions, co-curricular activities

can challenge and reshape existing social categorizations and intergroup dynamics. (Feldman, & Matjasko, 2005) Through shared goals, common experiences, and collaborative problem-solving, students can develop a sense of common identity that transcends individual differences (Darling et al., 2005). This can create a more inclusive and supportive school environment where diversity is valued and celebrated (Shulruf et al., 2008). The Social Identity Theory suggests that co-curricular activities can play a crucial role in promoting positive intergroup relations, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing diversity management efforts in Ethiopian secondary schools (Williams-Gualandi, 2020).

In summary, the Social Identity Theory highlights the significance of social group memberships and their influence on individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Applying this theory to the study on the usefulness of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools reveals how these activities can promote a shared sense of identity, reduce intergroup biases, and create a more inclusive school environment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a mixed methods research design to investigate the effectiveness of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Addis Ababa's (Ethiopia) secondary schools. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and generate robust evidence (Gelo et al. 2008). The quantitative phase involved surveys and questionnaires to measure the impact of co-curricular activities on various aspects of diversity management. The qualitative phase included interviews to explore potential barriers and challenges in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. By employing this mixed methods design, the study sought to provide a thorough examination of the usefulness of co-curricular activities in promoting diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools.

### **Sample Selection**

To ensure a representative sample, a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques was employed in selecting secondary schools, students, teachers, and school principals for the study. In Addis Ababa there are 11 sub cities. Four secondary schools and four school principals were randomly selected from each of the five sub-cities selected for this study within Addis Ababa, resulting in a total of 20 schools and 20 principals (4 schools and 4 principals multiplied by 5 sub-cities). This random selection of schools and principals aimed to capture a diverse representation of secondary educational institutions and their leadership across the city.

From each selected sub-city, a specific number of participants were randomly selected. This included 4 school principals, 25 teachers, and 46 students, resulting in a total of 75 participants from each sub-city (4 principals + 25 teachers + 46 students = 75 participants). Therefore, the total number of participants for the entire study would be 375 with 187 males and 188 females' participants (75 participants multiplied by 5 sub-cities). By incorporating a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques for schools, principals, and participants, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of co-curricular activities and diversity management practices within the Addis Ababa secondary school system.

### **Data Collection**

To assess the impact of co-curricular activities on diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools, both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 utilized quantitative data collected

through paper-based surveys/questionnaires. The surveys consisted of Likert scale items, employing a five-point scale, to gauge participants' perceptions of how co-curricular activities influenced intergroup relations, cultural understanding, and inclusivity. Additionally, demographic questions were incorporated to gather relevant background information. Research Question 2 specifically aimed to identify barriers and challenges in the implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management. The surveys were administered in a paper-based format and included clear instructions to ensure consistency in responses. Participants were provided with a specific timeframe to complete the surveys, and reminders were sent to maximize the response rates.

To ensure triangulation and enhance the depth of the study, qualitative data was also collected in addition to the quantitative data. Both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 were addressed through the use of semi-structured interviews. These interviews involved engaging teachers, administrators, and key stakeholders who had a direct involvement in the planning and implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. This comprehensive approach allowed for a holistic exploration of their perspectives, experiences, and insights regarding the barriers and challenges encountered in promoting diversity management. Prior consent was obtained from the participants, and to ensure accuracy, the interviews were audio-recorded while detailed notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information. The data collection process was conducted in a comfortable and private setting, fostering an environment conducive to open and honest discussions.

### Validity of the Tools

The validity of the survey and interview methods used in the study on the usefulness of co-curricular activities for diversity management in secondary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is a crucial consideration. To ensure validity, both the survey and interview protocols were carefully designed, incorporating relevant and reliable measures to capture the necessary data. The survey questions were constructed based on established theories and previous research in the field, while the interview guide was designed to elicit rich and detailed responses from participants. Additionally, the survey and interview processes were conducted using standardized procedures to enhance reliability and minimize bias. Overall, the rigorous methodological approach employed in this study enhances the validity of the findings and strengthens the credibility of the conclusions drawn regarding the role of co-curricular activities in diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. Here is the Cronbach alpha value of the survey tool.

**Table 1: The Reliability of the Scales**

Instrument	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items	Acceptability
Contribution	0.853	5	Acceptable
Barriers and Challenges	0.721	5	Acceptable

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through surveys/questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine the frequency, distribution, and central tendencies of the participants' responses. Inferential statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis, were used to explore the relationship between co-curricular activities and diversity management outcomes. These statistical analyses provided insights into the extent to which co-curricular activities contributed to diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools.

The qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed. The transcripts were reviewed and coded to identify patterns, themes, and recurring ideas related to the potential barriers and challenges faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. The codes were then grouped into themes to capture the main findings and recurring patterns across the qualitative data. The thematic analysis provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by various stakeholders, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research question.

### **Integration of Findings**

During the interpretation phase, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The results from the quantitative analysis and thematic analysis were compared and contrasted to identify converging or diverging patterns. This integration enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings by providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the usefulness of co-curricular activities for diversity management and the associated barriers and challenges.

The triangulation of findings was conducted by examining the convergence, expansion, or divergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings. This process involved comparing the quantitative results on the extent of the contributions of co-curricular activities to diversity management with the qualitative findings on the barriers and challenges. Triangulation strengthened the overall findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study to ensure the protection of participants' rights and maintain the highest standards of research ethics. The study obtained ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board, demonstrating a commitment to conducting the research in an ethical manner. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants were strictly maintained. All data collected, including survey responses, interview recordings, and focus group discussions, were anonymized and securely stored, with access limited only to the research team. Participants' identities were protected through the use of unique identifiers instead of personal information in any reports or publications. The research team ensured that participants' responses and personal information were treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

Furthermore, steps were taken to minimize any potential psychological or emotional harm to the participants. The research team created a safe and comfortable environment for interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring that participants felt at ease and willing to share their perspectives. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and were provided with resources for support or counseling if they experienced any distress while discussing sensitive topics.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The section on findings and discussion presents the results and analysis of the study exploring the extent to which co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in Addis Ababa's

secondary schools. Additionally, this section addresses the potential barriers and challenges encountered in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. By investigating the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders within the Addis Ababa’s secondary school system, the findings provide valuable insights into the impact of co-curricular activities on promoting inclusivity and managing diversity. The discussion delves into the implications of these findings, highlighting both the successes and obstacles faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. By examining these aspects, this section aims to inform educational practices and policies that foster a more inclusive and diverse learning environment in Addis Ababa’s secondary schools.

- RQ1: To what extent do co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in Addis Ababa’s secondary schools?

**Table 2: The co-curricular activities contribution to diversity management**

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	Co-curricular activities play a significant role in promoting diversity management in Addis Ababa’s secondary schools.	375	3.98	0.72
2	Co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to interact and learn from each other.	375	3.75	0.68
3	Co-curricular activities help foster a sense of inclusivity and acceptance among students in Addis Ababa’s secondary schools.	375	3.99	0.93
4	Co-curricular activities contribute to breaking down stereotypes and promoting understanding among students from different cultural backgrounds.	375	4.2	0.74
5	Co-curricular activities enhance students' appreciation for diversity and cultural differences.	375	4.1	0.82
	<b>Overall Average</b>	375		

### Co-curricular Activities for Diversity

The finding from item number 1 highlights that the integration of co-curricular activities is essential for effectively managing diversity within Addis Ababa’s secondary schools. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory as it acknowledges the significance of group dynamics and intergroup interactions in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By engaging in co-curricular activities that promote diversity, students have the opportunity to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, which can challenge stereotypes, biases, and prejudices that may exist within the school community.

Co-curricular activities are also presented as a means to create an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. This resonates with the Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of positive intergroup contact in reducing prejudice and promoting positive attitudes towards outgroup members. By participating in diverse co-curricular activities such as cultural events, clubs, and community service initiatives, students have the chance to develop a deeper understanding, appreciation, and empathy for different cultures, traditions, and perspectives. These experiences can foster respect and acceptance among students from various backgrounds, promoting a sense of unity and shared values. Moreover, the finding suggests that co-curricular activities enable students to challenge stereotypes, biases, and prejudices within the school community. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's proposition that positive intergroup contact can lead to the reduction of prejudice and the development of a more inclusive mindset.

By actively engaging with diverse peers, students are more likely to overcome prejudices and develop a greater appreciation for diversity. This, in turn, can contribute to the creation of a school culture that celebrates diversity and values the contributions of all students. Similarly, one of the interviewees said:

*I believe co-curricular activities play a significant role in promoting diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. These activities provide students with opportunities to interact with peers from different backgrounds, cultures, and social groups. By participating in co-curricular activities, students can develop a greater appreciation for diversity and learn to respect and value different perspectives. It creates a more inclusive environment where students can collaborate, learn from one another, and celebrate their unique identities. Overall, co-curricular activities help foster a sense of unity and prepare students to thrive in a diverse society.*

(Interviewee number 2, December 2022)

Additionally, the finding highlights those co-curricular activities serve as vehicles for developing skills and competencies related to diversity management. This relates to the Social Identity Theory's emphasis on the role of intergroup contact in promoting cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, and the appreciation of diverse perspectives. Through collaborative projects and teamwork in co-curricular activities, students learn to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, resolve conflicts peacefully, and appreciate the value of diverse perspectives. These skills are crucial in today's interconnected and multicultural society, where individuals must navigate diverse environments and work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds.

### **Interacting and Learning through Co-curricular Activities**

The finding from item number 2 emphasizes that co-curricular activities offer valuable platforms for students from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful interactions and mutual learning. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory as it recognizes the importance of positive intergroup contact in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By participating in co-curricular activities such as clubs, sports teams, cultural events, and community service initiatives, students have the opportunity to come together, share experiences, and gain insights from one another. These interactions go beyond the confines of the traditional academic curriculum and facilitate a sense of inclusivity, understanding, and appreciation for diversity among the student body.

Furthermore, the finding highlights those co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to broaden their horizons, challenge stereotypes, and expand their knowledge and understanding of the world. This relates to the Social Identity Theory's proposition that positive intergroup contact can lead to the reduction of prejudice and the development of a broader worldview. By interacting with peers from different backgrounds, students have the chance to gain a deeper understanding of different cultures, challenge stereotypes, and develop empathy and cultural sensitivity. These experiences enable students to navigate diverse environments and develop essential skills for success in an interconnected global society. Similar to the quantitative data, one of the interviewees said:

*In my opinion, co-curricular activities serve as a valuable platform for students from diverse backgrounds to come together, interact, and mutually learn. Through these activities, students have the chance to collaborate, exchange ideas, and gain*



*insights from peers with different perspectives and experiences. This interaction not only promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation for diversity but also enables personal growth by fostering important interpersonal skills and preparing students to thrive in a multicultural society.*

(Interviewee number 4, December 2022)

Moreover, the finding emphasizes that co-curricular activities create spaces for students to learn from each other's unique experiences and perspectives. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the significance of intergroup interactions in fostering mutual respect and celebration of diversity. By sharing their cultural traditions, languages, and customs, students contribute to an environment of mutual respect and appreciation. These interactions allow students to gain a deeper understanding of different cultures and develop a broader worldview.

Additionally, the finding highlights those co-curricular activities promote collaboration and teamwork among students from diverse backgrounds. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's emphasis on the role of intergroup contact in enhancing interpersonal skills, cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and cooperation. By working together towards common goals in co-curricular activities, students develop important skills for navigating diverse environments and fostering positive intergroup relations.

### **Fostering Inclusivity with Co-curricular Activities**

The finding from number 3 highlights those co-curricular activities help foster a sense of inclusivity and acceptance among students in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory as it recognizes the importance of positive intergroup contact in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By providing opportunities for students to engage in diverse activities and interact with one another, co-curricular activities contribute to the development of an inclusive school environment. The collaborative aspect of these activities promotes a sense of unity and acceptance among students from different backgrounds.

Moreover, the finding suggests that co-curricular activities provide a platform for students to learn about and appreciate the diversity present in their school community. This relates to the Social Identity Theory's emphasis on positive intergroup contact leading to the reduction of prejudice and the development of a greater understanding and acceptance of others. By engaging in activities that celebrate different cultures, traditions, and perspectives, students have the opportunity to break down barriers, develop empathy, and cultivate respect for one another. One of the interviewees said similar to the numeric data as follows:

*Co-curricular activities have a powerful impact on fostering a sense of inclusivity and acceptance among students in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. Through my participation in these activities, I have witnessed firsthand how they create a supportive environment where students from diverse backgrounds can come together and form meaningful connections. By engaging in co-curricular activities, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with my peers, work towards common goals, and build strong relationships. These interactions have taught me the value of teamwork, empathy, and understanding. Whether it's through sports teams, clubs, or other extracurricular programs, I have seen how students learn to appreciate and respect each other's differences, ultimately fostering a culture of acceptance within the school community. Furthermore, co-curricular activities*

*provide a platform for me to showcase my unique talents and abilities, regardless of my background or academic performance. This has given me a sense of belonging and acceptance, knowing that my contributions are valued and celebrated. It has also allowed me to learn from others who bring different perspectives and experiences to the table, expanding my understanding of diversity and creating a more inclusive mindset.*

(Interviewee number 6, December 2022)

The finding implies that co-curricular activities create spaces where students can challenge stereotypes and prejudices. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's proposition that positive intergroup contact can lead to the reduction of prejudice and the development of empathy and respect. By interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds, students have the chance to break down stereotypes, develop a deeper understanding of different cultures, and foster a more inclusive mindset.

Furthermore, the presence of co-curricular activities in Addis Ababa's secondary schools indicates that schools recognize the importance of fostering inclusivity and acceptance among their students. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the role of the school environment in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Co-curricular activities serve as catalysts for promoting positive interactions, cultural exchange, and the development of a welcoming and inclusive school environment.

### **Breaking Stereotypes with Co-curricular Activities**

The finding from item number 4 emphasizes that co-curricular activities play a crucial role in breaking down stereotypes and promoting understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory as it recognizes the importance of positive intergroup contact in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful interactions and challenge preconceived notions about different cultures, co-curricular activities create a space for students to interact, collaborate, and learn from one another. Through these interactions, stereotypes can be dismantled, and a more accurate and nuanced understanding of different cultures can emerge.

Moreover, the finding suggests that co-curricular activities allow students to experience firsthand the richness and diversity of various cultures. This relates to the Social Identity Theory's emphasis on positive intergroup contact as a means to counter stereotypes and misconceptions. By engaging in collaborative projects, cultural events, or intercultural clubs, students have the chance to immerse themselves in different cultural practices and gain a deeper understanding of the diversity within their school community. These experiences help replace stereotypes and misconceptions with a more informed and empathetic perspective. One of the interviewees stated:

*As I have witnessed, co-curricular activities have been instrumental in breaking down stereotypes and promoting understanding among students from different cultural backgrounds. These activities provide a unique platform where students can come together, interact, and develop a deeper appreciation for each other's cultures. Through my active involvement in co-curricular activities, I have witnessed the power of firsthand interactions in challenging stereotypes. By engaging with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, I have been able to go beyond surface-*

*level assumptions and truly understand the richness and diversity of their cultures. This direct engagement has helped break down barriers and foster a more inclusive and accepting environment. Furthermore, co-curricular activities often offer opportunities for cultural exchange and celebration. Whether through cultural festivals, performances, or workshops, students have the chance to share and showcase their traditions, customs, and values. These experiences not only promote dialogue and understanding but also allow for the recognition and appreciation of the unique contributions that each culture brings. By participating in co-curricular activities, I have had the privilege of learning from my peers and gaining a broader perspective on different cultural practices and perspectives. This exposure has helped me develop empathy, respect, and a genuine curiosity to learn more about the experiences and backgrounds of others.*

(Interviewee number 8, December 2022)

The finding highlights those co-curricular activities foster empathy and promote intercultural understanding. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the role of positive intergroup contact in developing empathy, respect, and acceptance. By engaging in collaborative projects and working alongside students from different cultural backgrounds, students gain insights into the unique perspectives and experiences of their peers. This firsthand understanding of different cultures can lead to increased empathy, respect, and acceptance as students recognize and appreciate the challenges and strengths associated with different cultures.

Furthermore, co-curricular activities provide a platform for students to share their cultural traditions, customs, and values with their peers. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the importance of cultural exchange in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By actively engaging in cultural exchange within co-curricular activities, students can deepen their understanding of different cultural practices and develop a greater appreciation for the diversity within their school community.

### **Appreciating Diversity with Co-curricular Activities**

The finding from question number 5 emphasizes that co-curricular activities have a positive impact on enhancing students' appreciation for diversity and cultural differences. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory as it recognizes the importance of positive intergroup contact in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. By providing valuable opportunities for students to engage with diverse perspectives, traditions, and experiences, co-curricular activities foster a deeper understanding and respect for cultural diversity. The exposure to different cultural backgrounds and traditions within these activities allows students to actively engage with different cultures, breaking down barriers and promoting a sense of curiosity and appreciation for the richness of diversity.

Moreover, the finding suggests that through their involvement in co-curricular activities, students have the chance to explore and celebrate various cultural differences. This relates to the Social Identity Theory's emphasis on positive intergroup contact as a means to foster a greater appreciation for diversity. By participating in activities such as international clubs, cultural festivals, or language exchanges, students gain firsthand experiences and insights into different cultural practices and beliefs. These experiences enable students to develop a deeper

appreciation for the diversity that exists within their school community. Similarly, one interviewee said:

*To the best of my understanding, co-curricular activities have played a significant role in enhancing my appreciation for diversity and cultural differences. Through my active participation in these activities, I have had the opportunity to engage with students from various cultural backgrounds, which has deeply enriched my understanding of different traditions and perspectives. By actively collaborating with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds in co-curricular activities, I have gained firsthand insights into their unique experiences and values. These interactions have broadened my perspective, challenged my assumptions, and fostered a genuine appreciation for the diverse tapestry of our world. Additionally, co-curricular activities often provide platforms for cultural showcases and exchanges. Through events, performances, and workshops, I have been able to immerse myself in the richness of different cultures, learning about their art, music, cuisine, and customs. These experiences have not only deepened my understanding of cultural diversity but also ignited a sense of curiosity and admiration for the uniqueness of each culture. Moreover, engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds in co-curricular activities has helped me break down stereotypes and overcome biases. By working together towards shared goals, I have come to appreciate the diverse strengths, talents, and perspectives that individuals from different cultures bring to the table. This has fostered an environment of mutual respect, empathy, and understanding.*

(Interviewee number 10, December 2022)

The finding implies that co-curricular activities provide platforms for students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the role of intergroup interactions in fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity. By collaborating on projects, participating in discussions, and sharing personal stories, students develop a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of cultural differences. This engagement promotes empathy and cultural sensitivity as students learn to recognize and value the unique contributions and perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, co-curricular activities often involve the exploration of art, music, literature, or cuisine from different cultures. This aligns with the Social Identity Theory's recognition of the role of cultural expressions in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors. The exposure to various forms of cultural expression within co-curricular activities cultivates a sense of wonder and appreciation for the diversity of human creativity. Students develop a broader worldview and a more nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of cultures, fostering a sense of respect and admiration for cultural differences.

- RQ2: What are the potential barriers and challenges faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools?

**Table 3: Barriers and challenges faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management**

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	Lack of financial resources hinders the implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management.	375	3.93	0.72

2	Limited availability of trained staff or facilitators poses a challenge to implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management.	375	4.11	0.61
3	Insufficient support or recognition from school administration and stakeholders is a barrier to the successful implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management.	375	3.76	0.88
4	Cultural and societal norms create obstacles for implementing co-curricular activities that promote diversity management.	375	4.05	0.89
5	Limited awareness and understanding of the importance of diversity management among students, teachers, and parents present challenges to the implementation of co-curricular activities.	375	3.92	1.02
	Overall Average	375		

### Financial Constraints

The finding from item number 1 suggests that a lack of financial resources can create disparities between different groups of students. Students from marginalized or economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional barriers in accessing or participating in these activities due to financial limitations. This can perpetuate existing inequalities and impact students' sense of group identity and inclusion within the school community, as outlined by the Social Identity Theory.

Moreover, the Social Identity Theory highlights the importance of positive intergroup contact in reducing prejudice and improving intergroup relations. Co-curricular activities for diversity management provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds to interact, collaborate, and learn from one another. However, the finding indicates that limited financial resources can restrict the scope and quality of these activities, reducing the opportunities for positive intergroup contact. This limitation hinders the potential of co-curricular activities to promote understanding, appreciation for diversity, and the development of inclusive attitudes among students, as suggested by the Social Identity Theory. One exemplary response is given by an interviewee as follows:

*I have encountered the challenges posed by the lack of financial resources in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. As someone who values and appreciates diversity, I strongly believe in the power of these activities to foster inclusivity and understanding. However, the availability of adequate funding plays a crucial role in their successful execution. I have personally witnessed how limited financial resources can hamper the range and quality of co-curricular activities aimed at promoting diversity. Without sufficient funding, I have seen my school struggle to provide the necessary resources, such as materials, equipment, transportation, and venue rentals. This lack of resources significantly limits the types of activities that can be organized, thereby restricting students' exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives. Furthermore, the financial constraints often hinder the involvement of external speakers, performers, or experts who could contribute valuable insights and experiences to enhance diversity management efforts. I have seen instances where the school was unable to bring in these external contributors due to the associated costs, depriving students of valuable learning opportunities that could have deepened their understanding of different cultures. Moreover, the lack of financial resources can adversely affect the accessibility of co-curricular activities for students from marginalized backgrounds, including myself. I have personally experienced barriers to participation due to costs such as event fees,*

*required uniforms, or specialized equipment. These financial challenges created obstacles that prevented me and others facing similar hardships from fully engaging in the activities, limiting our ability to benefit from the diversity management initiatives.*

(Interviewee number 1, December 2022)

The Social Identity Theory recognizes that individuals derive their sense of self and identity from the groups they belong to. Co-curricular activities for diversity management aim to create an inclusive environment where individuals from different backgrounds feel valued, respected, and included. However, the finding suggests that the lack of financial resources hampers the implementation of these activities, resulting in limited or under-resourced programs. This limitation restricts the opportunities for students to engage in meaningful interactions with diverse peers and experiences, impacting their sense of group identity and inclusion, as emphasized by the Social Identity Theory.

To address this challenge, it is crucial for educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders to recognize the importance of allocating sufficient financial resources to support the implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management, in line with the principles of the Social Identity Theory. By overcoming financial constraints and ensuring equitable access to diverse co-curricular activities, schools can promote inclusivity, reduce prejudice, and foster positive intergroup relations, as advocated by the Social Identity Theory.

### **Staff Shortage**

The finding from item number 2 suggests that the limited availability of trained staff or facilitators poses a significant challenge to the implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management. This challenge can be understood within the framework of the Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the role of group dynamics in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

According to the Social Identity Theory, individuals derive their sense of self and identity from the groups they belong to. In the context of co-curricular activities for diversity management, the presence of trained staff or facilitators is crucial for creating an inclusive environment where students from different backgrounds can come together, learn from one another, and develop a sense of respect and appreciation for diversity. These trained professionals possess the knowledge and skills necessary to guide discussions, foster dialogue, and navigate potentially sensitive topics related to diversity, thereby promoting positive intergroup relations and reducing prejudice. The following is an exemplary finding from one of the interviewees:

*The limited availability of trained staff or facilitators has posed a significant challenge in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. As someone who values the importance of fostering inclusivity and understanding, I have observed firsthand how the success of these activities depends on the expertise and guidance provided by trained professionals. However, I have often encountered a shortage of staff or facilitators who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively lead these initiatives. This scarcity has hindered the organization and sustainability of impactful activities that promote appreciation for diversity. Without the support and guidance of trained staff or facilitators, I have found that the full potential of co-curricular activities for diversity management may not be realized,*

*limiting students' opportunities to engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives and cultures.*

(Interviewee number 3, December 2022)

The finding suggests that the scarcity of trained staff or facilitators hampers the successful implementation of co-curricular activities. Without their expertise, the activities may lack the necessary guidance and facilitation to address the complexities of diversity management effectively. This limitation can undermine the development of inclusive attitudes and the promotion of intergroup understanding and appreciation, as advocated by the Social Identity Theory.

Furthermore, the Social Identity Theory highlights the importance of positive intergroup contact in reducing prejudice and improving intergroup relations. Trained staff or facilitators play a crucial role in facilitating meaningful interactions between students from diverse backgrounds during co-curricular activities. Their presence and guidance can create a safe and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves, sharing their experiences, and engaging in critical conversations about diversity. However, the finding indicates that the limited availability of trained personnel restricts the opportunities for positive intergroup contact, potentially hindering the goals of diversity management.

To address this challenge, it is essential to invest in training programs and professional development opportunities for staff and facilitators, aligning with the principles of the Social Identity Theory. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools, educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of co-curricular activities in promoting understanding, respect, and appreciation for diversity. Additionally, collaborations with external organizations, partnerships with community leaders, or utilizing existing resources within the school community can help expand the pool of trained staff or facilitators, facilitating a more comprehensive approach to diversity management.

### **Support Challenges**

The finding from number 3 suggests that insufficient support or recognition from school administration and stakeholders poses a significant barrier to the successful implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management. This challenge can be understood within the framework of the Social Identity Theory. In the context of co-curricular activities for diversity management, the support and recognition from school administration and stakeholders are crucial for creating an inclusive environment where students can develop a positive social identity that values diversity. Diversity management involves creating an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of individuals and cultures. Co-curricular activities serve as a means to achieve this by providing opportunities for students to engage with diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. However, the finding indicates that without adequate support or recognition from school administration and stakeholders, the potential impact of these activities may be hindered.

According to the Social Identity Theory, individuals derive their sense of self and identity from the groups they belong to. When individuals perceive that their social group's identity is valued and supported, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that align with that identity. In the context of co-curricular activities, the support and recognition from school administration and

stakeholders signal that diversity management is an important aspect of the school's identity, encouraging students to actively participate and support these activities. Similarly, one of the interviewees said:

*There is the barrier of insufficient support or recognition from school administration and stakeholders when it comes to implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management. I have witnessed how the success of these activities heavily relies on the backing and involvement of key decision-makers and influential stakeholders within the school community. However, I have often faced challenges in receiving the necessary resources, attention, and support for these initiatives. The lack of support may manifest in limited funding, inadequate time allocation, or a lack of prioritization within the school's overall agenda. This lack of recognition and support has hindered the planning, organization, and execution of co-curricular activities aimed at promoting diversity and fostering inclusion. Without the commitment and endorsement of school administration and stakeholders, I have found that these activities struggle to gain momentum and may not have the desired impact on enhancing students' understanding, appreciation, and celebration of diverse cultures and perspectives.*

(Interviewee number 5, December 2022)

The finding suggests that the lack of support or recognition may lead to a mismatch between the school's espoused identity and the perceived identity by students. If diversity management and co-curricular activities are not seen as priorities by school administration and stakeholders, students may perceive them as less important or optional, reducing their motivation to participate. To address this challenge, it is crucial for school administration and stakeholders to recognize the significance of diversity management and its integration into co-curricular activities, aligning with the principles of the Social Identity Theory. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, professional development opportunities, and ongoing dialogue to foster a shared understanding of the benefits of promoting diversity and inclusion. Additionally, involving students in the decision-making process and seeking their input can help create a sense of ownership and increase their motivation to engage in co-curricular activities for diversity management.

### **Cultural Obstacles**

The finding from item number 4 suggests that cultural and societal norms create obstacles for implementing co-curricular activities that promote diversity management in secondary schools in Ethiopia. These cultural and societal norms, which encompass traditions, beliefs, and values held within the Ethiopian context, may pose challenges to the successful integration of co-curricular activities aimed at fostering diversity, inclusion, and understanding.

In the context of the Social Identity Theory, cultural and societal norms play a significant role in shaping individuals' social identities and behaviors. These norms provide a framework for how individuals perceive themselves and others within their social groups. In the case of co-curricular activities for diversity management, cultural and societal norms influence the formation of students' social identities and their attitudes towards engaging in activities that promote diversity.



One potential challenge is the prevalence of traditional gender roles and expectations in Ethiopian society. Cultural norms may assign specific roles and responsibilities based on gender, which can limit opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular activities that promote diversity management. Certain activities may be perceived as more suitable for boys or girls, leading to gender disparities in access and participation.

Religious and cultural practices also shape the implementation of co-curricular activities. Ethiopia's diverse religious landscape, with Christianity and Islam as major religions, influences the norms and boundaries of certain activities. Cultural and religious norms may restrict the scope or content of diversity management initiatives, hindering the exploration of diverse perspectives and challenging societal norms.

Moreover, social hierarchies and power dynamics within Ethiopian society can impact students' willingness and ability to engage in co-curricular activities that promote diversity management. Students may face pressure to conform to prevailing societal expectations, limiting their motivation to explore diverse perspectives or engage in conversations that challenge the status quo. The following qualitative interview response is exemplary:

*I have seen challenges in implementing co-curricular activities that promote diversity management due to cultural and societal norms. These norms often reinforce stereotypes, biases, and resistance to change, making it challenging to introduce and sustain activities that challenge the status quo. Cultural and societal expectations can limit the topics that can be discussed and restrict open dialogue about sensitive subjects related to diversity. Moreover, these norms discourage individuals from stepping out of their comfort zones and engaging with people from different backgrounds, hindering participation and genuine exchange of ideas. Overcoming these obstacles requires a deliberate effort to challenge cultural and societal norms, promote inclusivity, and educate individuals about the benefits of diversity. By fostering a culture of acceptance and respect, co-curricular activities can play a crucial role in breaking down these barriers and promoting effective diversity management.*

(Interviewee number 7, December 2022)

The finding implies that, according to Social Identity Theory, the cultural and societal norms significantly impact the implementation of co-curricular activities aimed at promoting diversity management. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their membership in social groups, and these groups are guided by established norms and expectations. In the context of diversity-focused co-curricular activities, the prevailing cultural and societal norms act as barriers by influencing individuals' perceptions of their own group and other groups.

These norms can reinforce ingroup biases and stereotypes, making it challenging for individuals to engage in activities that challenge or deviate from the established norms. The fear of social identity threat or the risk of being seen as disloyal to their cultural or societal group can discourage individuals from actively participating in such activities. Furthermore, cultural and societal norms often promote conformity, resulting in individuals feeling pressure to align with the dominant norms and values of their culture or society. This conformity can discourage exploration of diverse perspectives and limit engagement in activities promoting diversity management.

### Limited Awareness

The finding from number 5 suggests that limited awareness and understanding of the importance of diversity management among students, teachers, and parents present challenges to the implementation of co-curricular activities in the secondary schools of Ethiopia. The lack of awareness and understanding about the significance of diversity management can hinder the successful integration of co-curricular activities aimed at fostering inclusivity, understanding, and appreciation for diversity.

When examining these challenges through the lens of the Social Identity Theory, it becomes evident that individuals' social identities and group memberships influence their attitudes and behaviors. In this case, limited awareness and understanding of diversity management among students, teachers, and parents can affect their social identities and, consequently, their engagement with co-curricular activities promoting diversity.

Limited awareness among students can result in a lack of interest or motivation to participate in co-curricular activities that promote diversity management. Without a clear understanding of the benefits of engaging with diverse perspectives and addressing issues such as discrimination, bias, or exclusion, students may not recognize the value of these activities. As a result, they may be less inclined to actively engage in initiatives that aim to foster inclusivity and understanding.

Similarly, teachers may face challenges in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management due to limited awareness and understanding. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding and facilitating these activities, but if they lack awareness of the importance of diversity management, they may not prioritize or effectively integrate them into their teaching practices. This can lead to missed opportunities for creating inclusive learning environments and promoting cross-cultural understanding among students.

Moreover, limited awareness and understanding among parents can pose obstacles to the successful implementation of co-curricular activities. Parents significantly influence their children's educational experiences, and if they are not aware of the importance of diversity management or fail to understand its benefits, they may not actively support or encourage their children's participation. This lack of support can limit the resources, engagement, and overall impact of co-curricular activities. Similarly, one of the interviewees said,

*There are obstacles in implementing co-curricular activities that promote diversity management due to the limited awareness and understanding of its importance among students, teachers, and parents. When individuals are not fully aware of the significance of diversity management, they may not prioritize or actively engage in these activities. This lack of awareness can result in reduced enthusiasm, limited participation, and a diminished impact of the co-curricular initiatives. To address these challenges, I have taken proactive measures to raise awareness and enhance understanding among all stakeholders. By organizing informational sessions, workshops, and discussions, I aim to educate students, teachers, and parents about the benefits of diversity management. Through these efforts, I hope to foster a more inclusive environment and encourage active participation in co-curricular activities that promote diversity management.*

(Interviewee number 9, December 2022)

To address these challenges using the Social Identity Theory, it is crucial to enhance awareness and understanding of diversity management among students, teachers, and parents. By providing targeted educational campaigns, workshops, and awareness programs, schools can highlight the benefits of diversity, inclusivity, and understanding. These initiatives can help shape students' social identities by fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation for diversity, leading to increased motivation to participate in co-curricular activities promoting diversity management.

Engaging with parents and the wider community through open dialogues, cultural events, and collaborative initiatives is also essential. By involving parents in discussions and activities related to diversity management, schools can create a supportive environment that encourages their active involvement and support for co-curricular initiatives. This can help shape parents' social identities by emphasizing the importance of diversity and its positive impact on their children's education.

Additionally, integrating diversity management into the curriculum and providing professional development opportunities for teachers can enhance their understanding and capacity to implement co-curricular activities effectively. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, they can serve as advocates for diversity management and provide guidance and support to students, further strengthening their social identities aligned with the value of promoting diversity.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the contribution of co-curricular activities to diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools, specifically in the context of Addis Ababa. The study addressed the following two primary research questions: 1) To what extent do co-curricular activities contribute to diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools? and 2) What are the potential barriers and challenges faced in implementing co-curricular activities for diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools?

The evidence from secondary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia suggests that co-curricular activities were useful for diversity management. These activities contributed to fostering diversity, inclusion, and understanding among students, aligning with the principles of social identity theory. The extent to which co-curricular activities contributed to diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools depended on various factors, including the design, implementation, and engagement levels of these activities.

When properly planned and executed, these activities provided opportunities for students to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, engage in dialogue, and develop empathy and respect for different cultures, values, and perspectives. This aligns with social identity theory, which posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from the groups they belong to. By engaging in co-curricular activities that facilitate positive intergroup contact, students had the opportunity to transcend their in-group biases, form cross-cultural friendships, and build a shared identity that encompasses diversity.

However, the implementation of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools faced potential barriers and challenges. Limited awareness and understanding of the importance of diversity management among students, teachers, and parents hindered the

effectiveness of these initiatives. Additionally, cultural and societal norms reinforced stereotypes, biases, and resistance to change, making it challenging to introduce and sustain activities that challenged the status quo. These barriers can be understood through the lens of social identity theory, which highlights the role of social categorization, in-group favoritism, and intergroup conflict in shaping attitudes and behaviors.

To address these obstacles, efforts were made to raise awareness, challenge norms, promote inclusivity, and educate stakeholders about the benefits of diversity. By acknowledging and addressing the social identity processes at play, such as the need for positive distinctiveness and the role of social comparison, interventions were designed to foster a sense of shared identity that transcended individual group affiliations. This approach aimed to reduce intergroup biases and promote a collective recognition of the value of diversity.

By addressing these challenges and promoting a culture of inclusivity and understanding, co-curricular activities played a significant role in fostering diversity management in Ethiopian secondary schools, leading to more inclusive and harmonious educational environments. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the potential of co-curricular activities as a tool for managing diversity in educational settings, aligning with the principles of social identity theory.

One gap that could be explored further by future researchers is the long-term impact and sustainability of co-curricular activities for diversity management in Addis Ababa's secondary schools. While this report highlights the positive contributions of such activities, it would be valuable to examine the lasting effects on students' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions over an extended period. Additionally, investigating the factors that facilitate or hinder the sustained implementation of these activities, such as institutional support, teacher training, and community involvement, would provide insights for designing effective and enduring diversity management programs. Understanding the long-term impact and sustainability of co-curricular activities would enhance our knowledge of their effectiveness and guide the development of evidence-based practices in promoting diversity and inclusion in educational settings, taking into account the complex dynamics of social identity processes.

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