

Deconstructing Creativity and Designing Dakwah Tasks: Problem Solving Learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze conceptually the relationship between freedom of expression in madrasah and the development of problem solving skills in elementary school children, as well as examining the design of creative tasks containing dakwah values to increase student learning interest. This qualitative literature study traces various scientific sources discussing creativity, freedom of expression, problem solving, and integration of Islamic values in primary education. Data were analyzed using content analysis method with reference to the thoughts of educational experts. The findings show that freedom of expression provides space for children to develop cognitive flexibility, courage to try, and resilience in facing difficulties which are the main capital for problem solving skills. A madrasah environment that supports expression creates a psychological safety that allows children to see problems from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, creative tasks designed according to the developmental stage of children and containing dakwah messages succeed in making religious learning relevant and enjoyable. Integration of Islamic values in drawing, storytelling, role playing and art projects increases students' intrinsic motivation to learn. This study implies the need for a paradigm shift in madrasah learning towards a student-centered approach and continuous training for teachers. Further empirical research is needed to test the effectiveness of this conceptual model.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as a basic educational institution with Islamic characteristics has a strategic position to form the foundation of children's character and intellect. This institution transfers religious knowledge, and is responsible for developing the potential of students as a whole. Children of MI age are in a concrete operational phase where, according to the theory of cognitive development, they begin to be able to think logically but are very attached to direct experience. During this time, children's imagination and curiosity are at their peak. They tend to explore the surrounding environment in their

own way. The education system often places more emphasis on achieving uniform curriculum targets. As a result, children's natural drive to create and express themselves is often hampered by the demands of uniformity of answers (Smith & Runco, 2018). The classroom becomes a place for one-way knowledge transfer that limits students' initiative. Madrasah as an Islamic educational institution should be able to be a space that liberates and guides (Arifin *et al.*, 2022; Maryati *et al.*, 2023).

Freedom of expression in madrassas is an important prerequisite for the growth of children's creativity. When a child is given the opportunity to convey ideas without fear of being wrong, his thought process becomes more fluid and flexible. In a supportive environment, children dare to try new approaches to accomplish simple tasks. The teaching and learning process should no longer be teacher-centered, but rather give a large portion to student activities. Children need to be encouraged to question, draw their imagination, tell stories in their own style, or find alternative solutions to a given problem (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2017). This freedom allows them to hone their thinking fluency, cognitive flexibility, and originality of ideas that are the foundation of creativity (Arianto, 2025). Education that kills freedom of expression will actually produce a generation that is passive and afraid to face challenges. An advanced madrasah must be able to combine Islamic values with a modern pedagogical approach that respects the unique potential of each child (Syarifudin *et al.*, 2023). This appreciation of uniqueness will equip them for real life.

Creativity that develops in freedom of expression will ultimately trigger problem-solving skills from an early age (Rahila & Khozin, 2024). A child who is used to free thinking will see a problem from various perspectives. They are not stuck in one way of solving that the teacher taught. When faced with math story problems, they are able to imagine scenarios and find solutions even though they are not exactly the same as examples. When working on a simple science project, they dare to make modifications to tools and materials. In religious activities, they ask about the wisdom behind worship and seek its relevance to daily life. The trial and error process is a fun part, not a scary scourge. The ability to solve this problem does not appear instantly, but is the result of the accumulation of creative experience in the madrasah environment. Children learn that failure is part of the process of finding the best solution. They also learn to work together with friends to find solutions to common problems (Karwowski & Beghetto, 2019). These are essential life skills that are rarely taught explicitly but are very decisive for future success (Akmal *et al.*, 2015).

Madrassas have extraordinary resources in the form of Islamic values that can be the foundation for developing creativity (Rashed, 2023). The teachings of Islam encourage its people to use reason, reflect on Allah's creation, and do good. Values such as *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, and charity are actually in line with the spirit of innovation and problem-solving. When creative tasks in madrassas are designed to be *da'wah*, children learn thinking skills, and are also internalized Islamic values. They were invited to create works that reflected noble morals. They learned that creativity can be a means of spreading goodness (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). For example, making posters for congregational prayers with attractive designs, or creating songs with Islamic nuances. Thus, creativity developed in madrassas has a clear direction, namely for the common good. Children understand that their ability is not only for personal gain, but also to preach and benefit others. The integration between freedom of expression and these values is a peculiarity of madrassas (Akmal *et al.*, 2024). In addition, authentic and project-based learning strategies can increase children's learning effectiveness and participation in Islamic activities (Fariansyah & El-Yunusi, 2023).

Research on these two dimensions, namely the deconstruction of creativity through freedom of expression and the strengthening of creativity through Islamic values, is very relevant. Madrasahs need a theoretical foothold to design the right learning model. Children need a safe space to explore their best potential while still adhering to religious teachings. This literature study seeks to explore conceptually how freedom of expression can encourage the problem-solving ability of MI children (Craft, 2005). In addition, this study will also examine how creative tasks with *da'wah* content can increase students' interest in learning. The phenomenological approach is used to understand children's subjective experiences in creating in madrassas without having to make direct observations, but through searching relevant literature. By referring to the thoughts of experts and the findings of

previous research, it is hoped that this study will be able to contribute ideas to the development of education in madrasahs. Madrasah as an Islamic educational institution must be able to prove itself as a pioneer of the birth of an intelligent, creative, and noble generation. In general, the principles of organizational behavior and effective distribution of factors can also be applied to the management of educational institutions so that creative programs run optimally (Darmawan, 2013).

In various madrasahs, learning is still dominated by lecture and assignment methods that are memorized (Rashed, 2023). Children sit quietly, listen to the teacher's explanations, and work on questions with single answers. This situation limits their opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, or show different ways of thinking (Torrance, 2013). The teacher is often the only source of truth, so when students give answers that don't match the key, they are considered wrong. The learning process loses its essence as a space for exploration and finding meaning. Freedom of expression has hardly a place. Children with kinesthetic or visual learning styles have difficulty following uniform learning patterns. Those who have original ideas are actually marginalized because they are considered strange or unusual. In fact, at the age of MI, divergent thinking skills are developing rapidly. When the environment is not supportive, this potential will dim and even die before it has time to grow. As a result, when faced with complex real-life problems, they are not used to finding creative solutions and tend to panic or give up. This emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and enjoyable learning environment for children (Alfaaza *et al.*, 2025). A supportive school environment also increases students' independence and academic achievement (Haqiqi & Darmawan, 2023; Hariani *et al.*, 2021).

The second problem is related to the mission of madrasah da'wah which has not been creatively integrated in the learning process. The madrasah was established with the aim of producing a generation of Muslims who understand religious teachings and are able to practice them. However, the delivery of Islamic values often takes place dogmatically and does not touch the affective and psychomotor aspects of students (Irfan *et al.*, 2024). Children are taught religious material as memorization of texts, not as living values that can be expressed through works. The tasks given do not stimulate them to relate the teachings of Islam to daily life creatively. For example, when learning about honesty, they are only asked to memorize postulates, not make up short stories or plays about the importance of honesty. Da'wah activities in madrasahs are often only carried out by teachers or ustadz, while students become passive listeners. In fact, children have great potential to become little dai through various creative media (Sawyer, 2012). The inability of madrasahs to design these interesting da'wah-filled tasks has an impact on students' low interest in learning (Al Laisty *et al.*, 2024). They find religious lessons boring and irrelevant to their world. Character-based approaches and multidisciplinary education have been proven to help shape students' social and moral awareness (Hariani & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

The digital era brings a very heavy flow of information and is easily accessible to children through gadgets (Aldi & Khairanis, 2024; Rizal & Darmawan, 2024). They are exposed to a wide range of content, both positive and negative, without adequate filters. MI children who are in a period of identity growth are particularly vulnerable to being influenced by foreign cultures that may be contrary to Islamic values. On the other hand, the demands of 21st century skills require them to master the ability to think critically, creatively, communicatively, and collaboratively (Darmawan *et al.*, 2026). Madrasah as a religious-based educational institution is required to be able to prepare students to face this challenge (Plucker *et al.*, 2004). If madrasahs still survive with conventional methods that shackle creativity, then their graduates will be left behind. They will find it difficult to compete with public school graduates who are more open to learning innovation. The study of how freedom of expression can trigger problem solving is crucial. Madrasahs need to find the right formula so that children are academically intelligent, agile and adaptive to face change (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021).

Concerns about moral degradation among the younger generation are also a strong reason why this topic needs to be studied. The many cases of bullying, brawls, and drug abuse show that religious education has not completely imprinted on students. Value instilling that is carried out textually and memorization has proven to be less effective in forming character. Student character development through school culture and the role of parents in supporting learning (Gurlitt *et al.*, 2013; Dena &

Darmawan, 2024; Darmawan, Oktavia, & Albaar, 2026). A more applicable approach is needed and touches the emotional side of children. Creative tasks with da'wah content can be a solution. When children are invited to create positive content, write inspirational stories, or design kindness campaigns, religious values will be internalized naturally. They know about goodness, and also do and express it. This process will build a love for religion and increase their interest in learning about other subjects. This literature study is important to map various concepts and findings related to the integration of Islamic values in creative learning. The results can be the basis for the development of curriculum and learning methods in madrassas that are more relevant to the needs of the times without losing their Islamic identity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Aliyah & Masnawati, 2022).

This study aims to conceptually analyze the relationship between freedom of expression in madrassas and the development of problem-solving skills in children of MI age. Through a systematic literature review, this study seeks to construct an understanding that creativity is not an innate talent alone, but can be nurtured through a liberating learning environment. Children who are used to expressing ideas will develop cognitive flexibility which is the main capital for solving problems. The theoretical findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of pedagogy in madrassas that emphasizes more on process than results. The practical contribution is in the form of recommendations for teachers and madrasah managers to design learning activities that stimulate creativity. Furthermore, this research also aims to formulate the characteristics of effective creative tasks to integrate the content of da'wah. By understanding the elements that can increase interest in learning, madrasahs can develop teaching materials that are more interesting and meaningful. Overall, this study is expected to enrich the scientific treasures in the field of Islamic basic education and become a foothold for further empirical research.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative literature study approach that aims to understand concepts theoretically through the search of literature sources. Creswell (2009) explained that qualitative research seeks to explore the meaning given by individuals or groups to a problem. In this study, this understanding was obtained by studying various books and journal articles that discuss creativity, freedom of expression, problem-solving skills, and Islamic values in basic education. Data is collected through the identification of sources relevant to the formulation of the problem. These sources are then analyzed by the content analysis method. Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as a technique for making valid inferences from a text. The inference in question is the interpretation of thought patterns about how freedom of expression and creative tasks with da'wah can shape the problem-solving ability and learning interest of MI children.

The analysis process in this study follows the steps recommended by experts. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed three paths of qualitative analysis activities, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction was carried out by selecting the most relevant information from all the collected literature. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a narrative that describes the relationship between concepts according to the two categories of problem formulation. The first category discusses the relationship between freedom of expression and problem solving. The second category explores the design of creative tasks with da'wah content and its influence on learning interests. The researcher also triangulated sources by comparing the opinions of various experts. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasized that triangulation can increase the depth of understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The validity of the findings in this study is maintained through the application of credibility and transferability criteria. Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the concept of trustworthiness as a substitute for validity in quantitative research. Efforts to achieve transferability are made by presenting detailed descriptions of the concepts discussed so that the reader can assess their relevance to other contexts. In addition, the researcher conducts a trail audit by systematically recording every step of the research from finding the source to the final analysis. Flick (2009) emphasized that the selection of

sources in qualitative research must be done purposively based on the wealth of information possessed. The sources used in this study came from the database of scientific journals and books published by leading universities. Researchers read each source critically to capture the main arguments and supporting evidence.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Deconstructing Creativity: Freedom of Expression as the Foundation for Problem Solving of MI Children

MI children's creativity is understood as the ability to express themselves, develop ideas, and solve problems in an original and flexible way. Creativity not only includes the ability to generate new ideas, but also the ability of children to integrate imagination, the courage to experiment, and to think critically to find solutions in daily activities. Creative children are able to see the possibilities in a given situation, assess the available alternatives, and choose the solution that best suits the context. Creativity in MI children also plays an important role in building learning independence, confidence, and social skills. Through creative activities, children learn to express ideas without fear of making mistakes, adapt to new situations, and work together in groups by respecting each other's opinions. Thus, creativity becomes an important foundation not only for problem-solving, but also for the development of children's cognitive, emotional, and social skills. To understand and measure the creativity of MI children in freedom of expression and problem solving, the following indicators are used. This indicator reflects children's ability to think creatively, imagine, and solve simple problems, as well as show how children express themselves and innovate in learning and play activities.

1. Fluency of Ideas shows the ability of children to generate many ideas or alternative solutions to a problem. For example, children can give a variety of creative answers when drawing or playing construction.
2. Thinking Flexibility is the ability of children to move from one way of thinking to another or to look at problems from a different perspective. For example, children try different methods when building a tower out of blocks.
3. Originality reflects the ideas or solutions that children come up with that are unique and different from their classmates. For example, children create stories, pictures, or games that have never been seen before.
4. Elaboration / Detailing is the ability of children to develop ideas in more detail or to enrich their initial ideas. For example, when drawing, children add details such as backgrounds, characters, and stories behind the drawings.
5. Courage to Experiment shows a child's interest in trying new things without fear of failure. For example, children try new methods when building puzzles or experimenting with simple science games.
6. Simple Problem Solving is the ability of children to recognize problems, try solutions, and evaluate the results. For example, children repair broken toys with their own ideas or choose a different play strategy.

Here is a table of operational definitions of variables and explanations of each indicator:

Table 1. Conceptualization of Children's Creativity and Freedom of Expression

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicator	Indicator Explanation
Creativity & Freedom of Expression of MI Children	The child's ability to generate new ideas and solve problems through self-expression, play, critical thinking, and trying new approaches flexibly and originally.	Fluency of Ideas	The ability to generate many ideas or alternative solutions to a problem. Example: giving a variety of creative answers when drawing or playing construction.
		Flexibility of Thinking	The child's ability to move from one perspective to another or try different approaches. Example: try different methods when building a tower from blocks.
		Originality	The ability to come up with ideas or solutions that are unique and different from classmates. Example: creating a story, image, or game that has never been seen before.
		Elaboration / Detailing	The ability to develop ideas in more detail or enrich initial ideas. Example: adding details of the setting, characters, or story behind the image.
		Keberanian Berekspimen	The child's desire to try new things without fear of failure. Example: trying out new methods when building a puzzle or a simple science experiment.
		Simple Troubleshooting	The child's ability to recognize problems, try solutions, and evaluate the results. Example: fixing a broken toy yourself or choosing a different playing strategy.

The development of students' potential in madrasas is greatly influenced by the psychological climate created in the learning process. Freedom of expression in madrasas provides space for children to actualize ideas without pressure (Irawan *et al.*, 2023; Latif & Darmawan, 2024). The practice of student voice, which is to give students space to speak up and vote in learning, correlates positively with their academic engagement and cognitive development, as students feel more motivated and active in the learning process when their voices are heard and counted (Daoayan Biaddang & Caroy, 2024; Rahmawati & Darmawan, 2024). When a child is allowed to express his opinion in class discussions, he learns that his or her mind is valued. This experience builds confidence which is the main capital to face problems. Confident children do not give up easily when they encounter difficulties. They tend to try various ways until they find the right solution (Mardikaningsih *et al.*, 2021; Mendonca *et al.*, 2021). This process of trying exercises the cognitive flexibility that is indispensable in problem solving. Teachers in

madrassas need to realize that giving freedom does not mean leaving children without direction. The freedom in question is the freedom that is structured within the framework of Islamic values (Khayru *et al.*, 2025). Children are given the choice of how to complete tasks as long as they do not violate religious rules and norms of politeness. Thus they learn to be responsible for their own choices. This directed freedom is the foundation for the formation of an independent, critical, and still rooted in spiritual values (Mubasysyir & Darmawan, 2024).

The development of creativity of children of MI age is an important aspect of learning that is oriented to individual potential. Children of MI age are at a time when imagination develops very rapidly. They are able to imagine things that are invisible and create stories from everyday experiences (Lestari & Priyanti, 2024; Maharani & Darmawan, 2024). When this imagination is channeled through drawing, storytelling, or role-playing, the child is practicing divergent thinking skills. An experiential-based creative learning model can significantly improve thinking skills and generate diverse ideas in early childhood (Mudzakkir & Darmawan, 2024; Malaikosa *et al.*, 2025). This ability allows them to see a problem from different perspectives. In mathematics learning, for example, children who are used to expressions will look for more than one way to solve count problems. They are not satisfied with just one standard formula. Teachers can facilitate by providing open-ended questions that have many possible answers. Questions like this stimulate children to think creatively while practicing perseverance (Rozikin *et al.*, 2023; Safitri & Darmawan, 2023). Madrasas that limit children's expression only to true-wrong answers will kill this potential. Children become afraid of making mistakes and are reluctant to try new things. A wide space of expression is the key to fostering creativity and courage to think in children of MI age.

Problem-solving skills do not appear suddenly, but need to be trained through meaningful learning experiences (Rojak *et al.*, 2024). The problem-solving process is basically a series of thinking activities to achieve goals that cannot be achieved in an instant way (Nadlifah & Latif, 2024). Children need experience dealing with problematic situations from an early age. In madrasas, this experience can be created through project-based learning (Laili & Darmawan, 2024). When children are given the task of making works from used items, they have to think about the design, choose materials, and determine the work steps. Each stage contains small problems that must be solved. Children learn that every problem has more than one solution. They also learn that failure is part of the process. To achieve educational success, educators or teachers have an important role as determinants of educational success (Yanti & Darmawan, 2025). The teacher plays the role of a facilitator who helps children find a way out without giving a finished answer. This approach teaches independence and mental toughness. Children who are used to solving problems on their own will be better prepared to face the complexities of life in the future. Challenging and contextual learning contributes greatly to the formation of problem solver characters in children.

Children's language development is the main foundation in the process of thinking and social interaction. Freedom of expression is also closely related to children's language development (Rashed, 2023). Through storytelling and dialogue activities, children enrich vocabulary and learn to formulate arguments. Storytelling activities and verbal interactions significantly improve the development of spoken language and narrative skills in early childhood, as they provide a rich social context for the exchange of ideas and verbal expression (Xiao *et al.*, 2025). Good language skills are indispensable for formulating problems and explaining solutions. Children who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally tend to experience obstacles in collaborative problem-solving. In madrasas, activities such as small group discussions, presentations of works, or role-playing of Islamic figures can be a vehicle for expressive exercise. Children learn to convey ideas in polite language according to Islamic teachings. They also learn to listen to their peers' opinions and respect differences. These communication skills are an important foundation for teamwork. Many real-life problems require collective solutions, not individual work. Thus, training self-expression is the same as preparing children to become effective members of society. Strengthening freedom of expression in learning plays a strategic role in shaping children's communication and social skills in a sustainable manner. The application of authentic

assessments and independent learning strategies can increase the effectiveness of student learning (Imanuddin & Darmawan, 2024; Chada, 2023; Gautama & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

A healthy learning environment is the main prerequisite for the growth of children's courage and creativity in madrasahs (Safitri & Darmawan, 2023). The madrasah environment that supports freedom of expression is characterized by several characteristics. First, teachers are open to children's questions and ideas even though they seem unusual. Second, there are various media and materials that children can use to create. Third, there are clear but flexible rules so that children understand boundaries without feeling constrained. Fourth, mistakes are seen as part of the learning process, not a disgrace that must be avoided. Fifth, children are involved in simple decision-making such as determining the theme of the project or classroom layout. These traits create a safe psychological climate for children to explore. In addition, a good educational environment can support the continuity of a dynamic learning process and build healthy interactions between parties involved in the school (Putra *et al.*, 2022). A sense of security is very important because children of MI age still need emotional support from adults. When they feel safe, the courage to try new things will grow naturally. Madrasahs that are able to create a climate like this will give birth to a generation of true learners (Mansir, 2022). The support of the madrasah environment is an important foundation in the optimal development of children's potential.

Strengthening children's critical thinking skills needs to be done comprehensively in all subjects. Problem-solving skills are not only needed in science and mathematics lessons (Mansir, 2022). Even in religious studies, children are faced with questions that require thought. For example, when learning about the procedure of prayer, the child may ask why the movement is the way it is. This question shows that the child is trying to understand the wisdom behind worship. In this case, teacher competence is the main factor, competent teachers will be proficient in opening learning sessions, describing material, and being able to end learning sessions (Alam & Darmawan, 2025). A wise teacher will not shut down a question with a short answer. On the other hand, teachers can invite children to find out together through books or ask religious leaders. This process trains children not to take information for granted. They learned that religion teaches the use of reason. The understanding gained through the search process will be more imprinted than just memorization. Children who are used to asking questions and looking for answers will grow up to be critical but still obedient because of solid understanding. Dialogical religious learning plays a big role in forming a balance between children's reason and faith.

Children's creativity requires direction to develop constructively and valuably. Creativity developed through freedom of expression ultimately comes down to the ability to produce something new and useful (Kunthi & Istiqlaliah, 2024). Madrasah children need to be directed so that their creativity is in line with Islamic values. It does not mean restricting, but it gives direction so that creative energy is not wild. For example, when children make poems, they can be encouraged to raise the theme of the natural beauty of God's creation. When creating a story, they can include a message about honesty or help. In this way children learn that Islam is a beautiful religion and is relevant to all aspects of life. Integrative learning between religious values and creative learning is able to increase students' active involvement to produce works rooted in Islamic values (Kulsum & Manshur, 2025). They also learned that being creative is part of worship because it uses the grace of reason from God. This understanding is important so that children do not experience a dichotomy between religious science and general science. All learning activities are a form of devotion to the Creator. With this approach, children's creativity is more productive and has spiritual and moral values.

The implementation of freedom of expression requires a planned and consistent learning strategy. In daily learning practices, freedom of expression can be realized through various simple strategies (Rahila & Khozin, 2024). Teachers can start by giving time to think before the child answers the questions. This habit provides an opportunity for children who are slow to think to keep participating. Teachers can also use the brainstorming technique where all opinions are accommodated without being assessed first. This technique trains children to dare to contribute ideas without fear of making mistakes. After all the ideas are gathered, the children are invited to assess together which one is the most appropriate. This process teaches that evaluation is a joint activity, not the authority of the teacher

alone. Children learn that their opinions are valued but must be accounted for logically and ethically. With proper evaluation, teachers can find out the strengths and weaknesses in applied learning (Romli & Darmawan, 2025). Habituation like this will form a democratic mindset that is very important in the life of the nation (Rojak & Khayru, 2022). Madrassas thus contribute to the formation of good citizens in addition to producing devout Muslims. Thus, participatory learning strategies are an effective means to instill democratic values and responsibility from an early age.

The development of problem-solving skills cannot be separated from the emotional aspect of children. Problem-solving skills also depend heavily on the ability to manage emotions. Children who are easily frustrated when facing difficulties tend to give up before trying. On the other hand, children who are able to control their emotions will last longer to find solutions. Freedom of expression in madrassas provides space for children to express their emotions constructively. Through artwork or writing, children can express feelings of sadness, anger, or disappointment without being destructive. Artistic expression through art directly supports the development of emotional skills and the ability to manage stress which are the basis for problem-solving skills (Kohli *et al.*, 2025). Teachers can help children recognize their emotions and find healthy ways to channel them. Good emotional management will be very helpful when children face serious problems later in life. They are not easily discouraged or act destructively. Instead they will look for a way out with a cool head. This emotional intelligence is just as important as intellectual intelligence to determine one's life success. Freedom of expression plays a strategic role in building children's emotional resilience from an early age.

The integration of spiritual values is a distinctive strength of madrasah education to shape children's character. Madrasah as an Islamic educational institution has the privilege of being able to integrate spiritual values in every activity (Muhlison, 2022). In an effort to develop creativity, spiritual values give more meaning to each child's work. Children do not only work to be judged by teachers or receive praise from parents. In addition, students must have the awareness to learn and develop themselves to encourage the emergence of learning motivation (Darmawan *et al.*, 2021). They also work because they want to benefit and get closer to Allah. This transcendental motivation becomes a very powerful source of energy. Children who have intrinsic motivation will practice diligently even if there are no material rewards. They find inner satisfaction in every creative process. Teachers can instill this motivation by associating each work with Islamic values. For example, by saying that Allah loves people who work beautifully and neatly. Or by reminding that works that are useful to others will be charity. This understanding elevates learning activities from ordinary routines to high-value worship. Instilling spiritual motivation makes children's creativity more meaningful and well-oriented.

Technological advances require madrassas to adapt without losing the basic values of education. The development of information technology brings new challenges to the development of children's creativity (Zahid & Darmawan, 2025). Today's kids are growing up with gadgets that deliver instant, fast-paced content. They are used to consuming other people's works without the need to bother to create their own. In each of these moments, of course, it must be able to arouse students' motivation to learn because currently students' learning motivation should not be ignored along with the sophistication and technological advances that can be used in the field of Education (Masnawati & Darmawan, 2024). This condition can kill creativity if not anticipated. Madrasahs need to respond by designing activities that balance consumption and production. Children need to be invited to create positive content such as simple da'wah videos, Islamic comics, or picture stories (Ismail *et al.*, 2024). This activity will hone the ability to think and work as well as fortify from the negative influence of the internet. Freedom of expression in the digital world needs to be directed so that children are not trapped in pseudo-freedom that is actually detrimental. Teachers and parents must work together to provide appropriate assistance (Darmawan, Andini, & Sholihah, 2026; Khairi, 2023). Children need to understand the ethics of communicating on social media according to Islamic teachings. With this provision, they can become creators of positive content that is beneficial to the people. Through the right mentoring, technology can be an effective means to foster creativity as well as children's Islamic character.

The habit of thinking from an early age is a long-term investment in the child's educational journey. Problem-solving skills that are honed from an early age will be valuable capital when children enter higher education (Samsudin, 2024; Darmawan, D., Al Madury, & Najibah, 2026). In tsanawiyah and aliyah madrasas, academic demands are increasingly complex. Students are faced with subject matter that is abstract and requires high reasoning. Those who are used to solving problems since MI will be more adaptable. They have an effective learning strategy because they are used to finding solutions on their own. On the other hand, students who only receive information during MI will have difficulties when the teacher no longer gives everything. They tend to be passive and wait for instructions. This gap is often only seen at the secondary education level and is difficult to pursue. Therefore, investing in the development of creativity and problem solving at MI is a strategic step. With the synergy between technology, learning strategies, and the role of the environment, students' thinking skills can be optimally developed (Darmawan, Maghfiroh, & Romadhoni, 2026; Wafa & Darmawan, 2025). Madrasas that think about the future of their students will give a sufficient portion to the development of thinking skills. They are not stuck on the target of memorizing material alone. Strengthening problem solving at MI is an important foundation for children's academic readiness at the next level.

Healthy social interaction is an integral part of the educational process in madrasas. Freedom of expression also has a positive impact on social relations between students. In a classroom that provides space for expression, children learn to respect each other's differences. Classroom environments that favor free and collaborative communication, relationships between students develop more positively, where intensive social interaction facilitates the formation of peer support and increases social and emotional engagement among children (Tepordei *et al.*, 2023; Gandhi, 2025). They are used to seeing that classmates have different ways of thinking and learning styles. This difference is not seen as a threat but rather a shared wealth. When working in a group, they learn to divide tasks according to their strengths. Children who are good at drawing are in charge of making illustrations, children who are good at telling stories become narrators. This collaboration teaches that everyone has a valuable uniqueness. This understanding is important to prevent selfish and individualistic attitudes. In Islam, differences are sunnatullah which must be dealt with wisely. Children who learn to appreciate differences from an early age will grow up to be tolerant and sociable. They are not easily provoked by issues that divide the ummah. Freedom of expression contributes directly to the formation of inclusive and harmonious social attitudes.

Learning approaches that emphasize real experiences have proven effective for cultivating 21st century skills. Project-based learning is one of the effective methods to integrate freedom of expression and problem solving development (Darmawan, Shofa, & Sholikhah, 2026; Fajar *et al.*, 2025). In this method, children are given complex tasks that take a long time to complete. They must plan, implement, and evaluate themselves with the guidance of the teacher. The project can be in the form of making a class mading, holding an exhibition of works, or organizing an Islamic art performance. Throughout the process, children are faced with various technical and social problems that must be solved. They learn negotiation, division of labor, and time management. When the project is completed, the child feels satisfaction and pride in the results of their hard work. This successful experience will be the foundation of confidence to face the next challenge. Learning media like this allows teachers to create a more dynamic and interesting learning environment. This not only addresses students' potential boredom, but also provides an impetus for further exploration (Laili *et al.*, 2024). Teachers need to design projects that suit their children's abilities but are quite challenging. Projects that are too easy will be boring, those that are too difficult will be frustrating. This balance requires a deep understanding of the characteristics of learners. With proper planning, project-based learning can be an effective vehicle for the formation of children's creativity and independence.

The transformation of madrasah education requires a paradigm shift to view the potential of students. Deconstructing creativity in madrassas means dismantling old perspectives that shackle children's potential (Amin *et al.*, 2025). It does not mean removing old values, but rearranging them to suit the needs of the times. Madrasah must dare to get out of the comfort zone of lecture and

memorization methods. Teachers need to continue to learn and develop themselves in order to be able to facilitate creative learning. Parents also need to be educated to understand the importance of freedom of expression for children's development. The form of parental attention to their children in education is not only in the form of material, but must be balanced with parental attention that is given directly, such as freeing children to express themselves (Salsabilah & Darmawan, 2025). The support of all parties is needed to create a fertile madrasah ecosystem for the growth of creativity. Madrasah children must be able to compete with graduates of other schools in various fields. They must be able to show that being a devout Muslim does not mean being outdated and left behind. On the contrary, Islamic values are a source of inspiration to innovate and solve humanitarian problems. This is a great ideal that must be fought for together by all components of the ummah. From the collaboration of all stakeholders, madrasahs can be the center of the birth of creative, religious, and progressive generations.

Design of Creative Tasks with Da'wah to Increase the Learning Interest of Madrasah Students

Student Learning Interest is defined as a student's internal tendency or motivation to pay attention, follow, and complete learning activities enthusiastically and consistently. Learning interests reflect students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement in the learning process. Students who have a high interest in learning usually (1) actively seek information and understand the material; (2) Showing curiosity and enthusiasm for the assignment or Lesson; (3) Trying to complete tasks independently or collaboratively with enthusiasm. The learning interest indicator includes several aspects that can be observed or measured:

1. Attention to Learning: Students show focus and concentration during the learning process. Examples: listening to the teacher, reading material, or following explanations seriously.
2. Curiosity: Students actively ask questions, seek additional information, and explore the material being studied. Examples: asking about something new, trying an experiment, or looking for your own references.
3. Motivation to Complete Assignments: Students take the initiative and try to complete the assignment earnestly without procrastination. Example: doing homework or class projects on time with good quality.
4. Involvement in Learning Activities: Students actively participate in discussions, group work, or other learning activities. Example: contributing to a group discussion or presenting the results of work.
5. Enthusiasm for Learning: Students show a positive attitude towards learning, including enthusiasm for attending classes and participating in learning activities. Example: waiting for your turn to try an experiment or participate in a class quiz with enthusiasm.

Table 2. Conceptualization of Learning Interests

Variabel	Operational Definition	Indicator	Indicator Explanation
Students' Learning Interests	Students' internal tendency or motivation to pay attention, follow, and complete learning activities enthusiastically and consistently	Attention to Learning	Focus and concentration during the learning process. Examples: listening to the teacher, reading the material, following explanations.
		Curiosity	Actively ask questions, seek information, and explore material. Examples: asking about something new, trying experiments, looking for your own references.
		Motivation to Complete Tasks	Take the initiative to complete tasks earnestly. Example: doing

			homework or class projects on time and quality.
		Involvement in Learning Activities	Actively participate in discussions, group work, or other learning activities. Example: contributing to a discussion or presenting the results of work.
		Enthusiasm for Learning	A positive attitude and enthusiasm for learning. Example: participating enthusiastically in a quiz, experiment, or class activity.

Interest in learning is the main entrance to the success of the children's education process in madrasas. Interest in learning is a psychological factor that greatly determines the success of a child's education. The development of an education system that is relevant and adaptive to the changing times is important to foster individual interest in education (Alaghfiroh & Darmawan, 2025; Masfufah & Masnawati, 2023; Seran & Ismail, 2025). Students who are interested in a subject will pay more attention, work diligently on assignments, and feel happy during the learning process. In madrasas, interest in learning is often constrained by monotonous material delivery and lack of active participation of students (Akmal *et al.*, 2025; Alamsyah & Darmawan, 2025). Religious lessons that are supposed to be a source of motivation actually feel boring because they are presented as mere memorization of texts. Children do not see the relevance of material to their daily lives. The tasks given are also repetitive, such as copying books or memorizing postulates without understanding. This condition requires a breakthrough in the form of creative assignment design that is able to reawaken students' passion for learning (Ramle, 2021; Darmawan, Shofa, & Sholikhah, 2026). Creative tasks with da'wah content can be a promising alternative because they combine cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects within the framework of Islamic values (Nurdiansah & Darmawan, 2025; Fajar *et al.*, 2025). With this approach, religious learning can again be a source of inspiration and motivation for students.

Effective da'wah in education needs to be delivered with an approach that is in accordance with the child's world. Da'wah is essentially an effort to invite others to goodness in a wise way (Kurniati & El-Yunusi, 2023; Rifa'i & Munjiat, 2025). In education in madrasas, da'wah does not have to mean religious lectures delivered verbally. Children can preach through various creative works that fit their world. A student can preach through a picture that invites his friends to pray in congregation. Other students could write short stories about the honesty experienced by the main character. There are also those who make simple songs with Islamic nuances to sing together. All of these activities contain elements of da'wah because they convey the message of goodness in an interesting way. The integration of innovative and creative learning methods in Islamic religious education is able to increase students' active participation and encourage their involvement in the formation of meaningful religious character (Nur'aena, 2023). Children do not feel patronized or forced to accept certain values. Instead they discover for themselves the beauty of Islamic teachings through a fun creative process. This positive experience will build associations that studying religion is fun (Bararah, 2022; Ramle & Mardikaningsih, 2024). Creative da'wah is a strategic means to instill Islamic values in a sustainable manner.

The design of learning assignments must be in harmony with the child's cognitive and emotional development stages. Creative tasks with da'wah content can be designed by considering the developmental stage of children of MI age. At this age, children are still in a concrete operational phase that requires real objects in thinking (Darmawan, Putri, & Solichah, 2026). The concrete operational stage of children learning is most effective through direct experience and the use of real objects rather than just verbal explanations, especially in religious learning (Fatmawati *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, the

tasks given should involve physical activity and object manipulation. For example, making da'wah posters with a collage technique from colorful paper. Or make a finger puppet to tell the story of the prophet. Children can also be invited to make short videos using parents' devices with teacher supervision. This activity allows them to learn by doing, rather than just listening to explanations. The aspect of play must still be dominant so that children do not feel burdened. Teachers need to ensure that the content of da'wah does not reduce the excitement of the activity. On the contrary, the message of da'wah must be naturally integrated in every step of the activity. With the right approach, creative tasks are able to bridge children's learning needs and religious education goals.

A strong interest in learning is formed through meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. The increase in interest in learning through creative tasks occurs due to several psychological mechanisms (Zakwan *et al.*, 2024; Sidqi & Darmawan, 2025). First, creative tasks provide a sense of autonomy because children are given the freedom to choose how to express the message of da'wah. This sense of belonging to this task encourages them to work more earnestly. Second, creative tasks challenge children's abilities without exceeding the limits of their abilities (Sidqi & Darmawan, 2025). The right challenge will generate curiosity and the drive to complete. Third, creative tasks allow children to get recognition from teachers and friends for the uniqueness of their work. This recognition meets the need for self-esteem that is very important at school age. Fourth, the creative task of creating a flow experience, which is a condition of being immersed in activities so that time feels like it passes quickly. Creativity styles such as act and flow positively are related to student learning engagement and motivation because the experience of creativity triggers higher emotional and cognitive engagement in learning activities (Ramle, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2025). This fun experience makes the child want to repeat it again and again. The accumulation of these positive experiences ultimately forms a stable interest in learning. Creative tasks with da'wah are an effective strategy to foster long-term learning interest in madrasah students.

Proper planning of da'wah content greatly determines the success of creative tasks for children of MI age. Da'wah content in creative tasks needs to be designed to match children's understanding of Islamic teachings (Kurniati & El-Yunusi, 2023; Syafruddin *et al.*, 2023). Children of MI age are not yet able to understand abstract concepts such as destiny or the complex attributes of God. The message of da'wah should focus on practical values that can be practiced daily such as honesty, help-help, cleanliness, and compassion. Through a play-based learning approach that explicitly integrates Islamic values, it helps early childhood internalize moral values (Kurniawan & Seran, 2024; Al Qolbi & Sajidin, 2025). These values can be explored through various themes of activities. For example, the theme of maintaining the cleanliness of the madrasah environment can be raised in the task of making posters or slogans. The theme of help-help can be explored through a short drama about a child who helps his friend with difficulties. In this way, children understand that Islamic teachings are very close to their lives. They learn that being a good Muslim means behaving well in real situations, not just being good at memorizing religious texts. With this contextual approach, Islamic values can be embedded more deeply and sustainably in children.

The success of the implementation of creative tasks is greatly influenced by the quality of the teacher's role in the classroom. Teachers play a key role in the successful implementation of creative tasks with da'wah content. Teachers must be able to change the mindset from teachers to facilitators of creativity (Saputri, 2023). They need to provide a wide selection of materials and media that children can use. They must also be ready to accept the diversity of works with varying quality. Not all children have the same artistic talent. Some are good at drawing, some prefer to tell stories, some are interested in music. Teachers must appreciate each of these uniqueness and give equal appreciation. The role of teachers as facilitators in this learning approach can significantly increase student creativity and engagement, as teachers not only convey content but also facilitate students' active exploration (Rahman, 2025; Darmawan, Maghfiroh, & Romadhoni, 2026). Ratings should not be based solely on the beauty of the work. What is more important is the originality of the idea, the suitability with the message of da'wah, and the creative process that the child goes through. Teachers also need to provide constructive feedback so that children are motivated to continue working. With this approach, every

child feels valued and confident to express themselves. Pedagogic competence and appreciative attitude of teachers are the key to creating creative and inclusive da'wah learning.

The integrated learning approach provides a great opportunity to increase the meaning of children's learning. Creative tasks with da'wah content can also increase interest in learning other subjects outside of religious education. When children make posters about prayer, they indirectly learn fine arts and design. When writing stories about honesty, they learn writing skills and composing sentences. When making da'wah videos, they learn technology and communication. This integration shows that science is not separated into subject boxes. Children gain an understanding that all knowledge comes from God and can be used for good. This perspective eliminates the dichotomy between religious science and general science that is often a problem in Islamic educational institutions. Cross-curricular learning through the integration of relevant themes such as real-world issues or problem-based tasks is an approach that is in line with creative da'wah learning in the classroom with cross-subject benefits (Ye & Xu, 2023; Wardayanti *et al.*, 2022). Children learn religion in a contextual and applicative way. They do not feel that studying mathematics or science is a secular activity separate from Islamic values. All learning activities are meaningful because they are directed to the noble goal, namely da'wah (Efendi *et al.*, 2024). Creative tasks with da'wah can be an integrative bridge between the mastery of science and the practice of Islamic values.

The diversity of student characteristics demands flexible and fair design of learning assignments. It is important to note that creative da'wah tasks should be designed with individual student differences in mind (Sajjapong *et al.*, 2022). Each child has a different learning style, developmental pace, and family background. There are children who are very expressive and easy to come up with ideas. There are also children who are shy and need more encouragement to dare to perform. Teachers need to provide different levels of difficulty and types of tasks so that all children can participate according to their abilities. By implementing differentiated learning strategies, it significantly affects the increase of student learning involvement and creativity in basic education with diverse abilities (Nurmala *et al.*, 2025). Children who lack confidence can start with simple individual tasks before engaging in group work. Children with motor limitations can be helped with special tools or accompanied by friends. This principle of inclusivity is in line with Islamic teachings that respect the dignity of every human being. No child should feel left out because of his limitations. Instead, madrasas must be a place where all children feel accepted and appreciated as they are. With an inclusive approach, creative tasks can be a friendly learning tool for all students (Sajjapong *et al.*, 2025).

The synergy between madrasas and families is an important foundation in the success of children's education. The involvement of parents greatly determines the success of creative tasks with da'wah content (Seran & Ismail, 2025). Many creative tasks require support at home, both in the form of providing materials and mentoring. Parents need to understand that these tasks are not just ordinary homework. Parents' active involvement in learning activities at home is positively related to students' creativity and learning motivation (Fan *et al.*, 2024; Safira *et al.*, 2022). They need to be invited to discuss the learning objectives they want to achieve. Socialization can be done through a parent meeting or a madrasah communication group. Teachers can provide examples of works that other students have produced as inspiration. Parents also need to be reminded not to impose adult standards of perfection on children's work. The most important thing is the creative process and the child's joy in learning (Alfaaza & Darmawan, 2025; Safira *et al.*, 2022). The right parental support will strengthen children's motivation and make them love madrasah even more. On the contrary, excessive pressure will actually kill the growing interest in learning (Fadilah *et al.*, 2024). Effective communication between teachers and parents is the key to the sustainability of creative learning with da'wah.

Every child has unique potential that needs to be recognized and developed from an early age. Creative tasks with da'wah content can be an effective means to detect children's special talents and interests. Through various activities, teachers can observe the tendencies of each student. There are children who have artistic talents, some who have literary talents, and some who have leadership talents. This information is invaluable for the further development of children's potential. Madrasas can provide enrichment programs for children with special talents. They can be grouped in clubs or

extracurriculars according to interests. For example, calligraphy clubs, Islamic story clubs, or short film clubs. Creative activities such as project assignments or art clubs provide space for students to discover and explore their interests and talents (Haya, 2024). These talented children can be agents of change who spread positive spirit in the madrasah. They can also be involved in competitions between madrasahs to improve the image of the institution. Thus, creative tasks are not only beneficial for regular learning but also for the development of achievements. Using proper management, students' individual potential can develop into proud achievements.

Appreciation of learning outcomes is an important element to build children's motivation and confidence. Works produced from creative tasks with da'wah content need to be appreciated properly. Appreciation does not have to be in the form of expensive gifts, it can be in the form of exhibitions of works, certificates of appreciation, or publications in the madrasah media. Exhibitions can be held simply in the classroom or in the madrasah yard at certain events. Parents and the surrounding community can be invited to see their children's work. The experience exhibited gives children their own pride. They feel that their hard work is appreciated by others. This appreciation will strengthen the intrinsic motivation to continue to work. Children also learn that good work is work that is beneficial to others. The exhibition of student works is not just an event to display the final results, but serves as a form of appreciation for the creativity process and contributes to increasing student confidence and motivation (Yasin *et al.*, 2024). They are motivated to produce even better work in the future. This positive cycle will build a solid creative culture in the madrasah environment. With a sustainable culture of appreciation, madrasahs can foster a productive and inspiring learning climate.

Every learning innovation certainly has challenges that need to be managed wisely. Challenges in the implementation of creative tasks related to da'wah need to be anticipated from the beginning. Teachers may face difficulties in managing an active and mobile classroom. Good classroom management skills are needed to keep activities directed (Munif, 2023). Limited facilities and infrastructure can also be an obstacle. Limited time and resources require professional competence from teachers to be able to manage creative classes effectively (Bullard & Bahar, 2023). This limitation can actually trigger teachers' creativity to take advantage of simple materials in the surrounding environment. Dry leaves, stones, clay, or used items can be processed into interesting learning mediums. Cost doesn't have to be an excuse not to innovate. The spirit of creativity is actually born from limitations. Creative teachers will always find ways to keep providing the best learning experience for students. The support of madrasah heads and peers is very important to keep this spirit burning. Thus, these various challenges can be turned into meaningful learning opportunities.

Continuous evaluation is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of implemented learning innovations. The success of creative tasks with da'wah content to increase interest in learning needs to be measured periodically (Lasty *et al.*, 2025). Measurement does not have to go through a formal test, it can be through observation of daily behavior. Student engagement can be effectively measured through a combination of behavioral observations in learning activities, so that direct observation by teachers provides broader insights than formal test results (Wang, 2025). Teachers can observe changes in students' enthusiasm for the lesson. On-time attendance, readiness to do assignments, and active participation in discussions are simple but meaningful indicators. Teachers can also conduct informal interviews with students to find out how they feel about learning. A simple questionnaire with pictures can be used for students who are not fluent in reading. The results of this evaluation are material for reflection for the improvement of the design of the next task. Each madrasah has unique characteristics so it is necessary to find the most suitable formula. There is no single recipe that applies to all situations. The process of trial and error is a natural part of educational innovation efforts. Reflective evaluation is the key to the development of sustainable creative learning in madrasahs.

Meaningful learning is born from a design that respects the potential and needs of students. The design of creative tasks with da'wah content is an effort to revive the spirit of learning in madrasahs. Students' intrinsic motivation is positively related to creativity and learning engagement, especially when supported by active involvement in creative activities (Wang, 2022). Children no longer come to madrasahs feeling forced or bored. They come with enthusiasm because they want to express their ideas

and see their work appreciated. Teachers no longer feel tired of teaching because they see the enthusiasm of students. Parents feel proud because their children are diligent in learning and showing Islamic behavior. Madrasah is a place to be missed, not a scary place. All parties benefit from a more humane learning approach that is in accordance with the nature of children. Islamic values that are the foundation of madrasahs are even stronger because they are lived through real experience. This is the true ideal of education, which is to liberate human potential to grow into knowledgeable, faithful, and noble individuals. Thus, creative tasks with da'wah content are a strategic means to realize integrated and future-oriented madrasah education.

4. CONCLUSION

Freedom of expression in madrasahs has been proven conceptually to be an important foundation for the growth of problem solving skills of children of MI age. When children are given space to express ideas without pressure, they develop cognitive flexibility, courage to try, and resilience in the face of difficulties. The creative process that takes place in a safe psychological climate allows the child to see the problem from different points of view and find alternative solutions. Madrasahs that support freedom of expression create a generation of independent learners who do not rely on instant answers. In another dimension, creative da'wah tasks designed according to the child's developmental stage are able to significantly increase students' interest in learning. The integration of Islamic values in drawing, storytelling, role-playing, or making works of art makes religious learning feel relevant and fun. Children no longer view religious lessons as boring memorization but as a source of inspiration for work. These two findings show that madrasahs have great potential to become superior institutions that produce creative graduates, capable of solving problems, and have a deep love for Islamic values.

The findings of this study have implications for the need to change the learning paradigm in madrasahs from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach that respects freedom of expression. Teachers need to receive ongoing training on strategies to facilitate creativity and design tasks with contextual da'wah. The madrasah curriculum must provide enough space for creative project activities without being burdened with material completion targets. Madrasah heads are required to create policies that support teacher innovation, including the provision of simple facilities for work. Parents need to be educated to understand that the creative process is just as important as academic results. Teacher training institutions must also revise their curriculum so that prospective madrasah teachers are equipped with the competence to design creative learning based on Islamic values. Theoretically, this study enriches the treasures of Islamic education psychology by offering an integration model between freedom of expression, problem solving, and internalization of da'wah values in elementary school learning.

Further research is recommended to conduct empirical studies to directly test the effectiveness of the learning model studied conceptually in this paper. Experiments with control groups or classroom action research can be conducted to measure the extent to which freedom of expression has an impact on improving children's problem-solving scores. The development of learning interest measurement instruments that are sensitive to the content of da'wah is also needed for more accurate evaluation. The educational practitioners in the madrasahs are encouraged to start implementing simple creative tasks gradually while documenting the process and the results. This documentation will be material for continuous reflection and improvement. The Ministry of Religious Affairs as a madrasah supervisor should formulate policies that provide curriculum flexibility for madrasahs that want to develop a creative learning approach. Networks between madrasahs need to be built to share good practices and resources. Collaboration with universities and research institutions is also important to ensure that innovations are carried out based on strong scientific evidence. With this concrete step, madrasahs will be able to prove themselves as a superior educational institution that gives birth to a generation of creative and globally competitive Muslims.

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