

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Employee commitment (EC) has received much attention by scholars in recent times. The reason being that every organization seek to achieve set goals and objectives. Organizational justice is about employees perceptions associated with, rewards, outcomes, decision making and participation in decision making process which is one of the prominent factors in the life of an organization. Both organizational justice, and employee commitment are variables directly linked with organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to identify the impact of distributive justice on employee commitment. The study reviewed related literature to find the relationship between the two variables. The results of the study revealed that distributive justice is strongly related to employee commitment. Therefore, distributive justice is a strong predictor of employee commitment. The relationship between distributive justice and the measures of employee commitment (affective, continuance or normative commitment) were identified as very strong. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that organizations should increase the level of justice so as to increase the commitment of employees in the organization.

Key Word: Organizational justice, Employee commitment, Distributive justice, Affective commitment, Continuance commitment, Normative commitment.

Introduction

According to Baldwin in Ajala (2015), organizational justice is the extent to which employees perceive workplace procedure, interaction and outcomes to be fair in nature. Ajala (2015) stated that justice is the personal evaluation about the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct. Justice is a very fundamental issue in modern organization. Whenever the subject of justice is put on the front burner in any organization, the fundamental thing that comes to mind is fairness. Ajala (2015) simply stated that fairness is often the central point of discussion in organizational justice. Cagliyan et al (2017) posited that treating employees fairly and creating a climate of justice has become a major challenging issue in today's organizations. Employees are keen in paying attention to the issue of justice in their daily work life. They have a perception towards workplace interactions, procedures and outcomes. Baldwin in Ajala (2015) posits that these perceptions can influence employee attitude and behavior for good or bad which in turn have negative or positive impact on organizational performance.

The concept of organizational justice has been categorized by existing literature into three dimensions namely distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Martinez-tur el at. 2006). The pattern of relationship between these dimensions of organizational justice and employee commitment is an extensively studied area which emphasizes the vitality of all forms of organizational justice for organizational productivity. Extant literature has shown that distributive justice is first in the dimensions of organizational justice which largely consider the employees' perception about the fairness perception of outcomes (Greenberg, 1987). The distributive dimension of organizational justice is a very important factor for any types of organization for their effective functioning.

Employees with high degree of distributive justice perception will show dedication to the development of organizations, pay attention on self development, and pay attention to their work. Such situation may enhance or boost the employees to put more effort for organizational effectiveness. When employees perceive that they are treated based on fair procedures in determining outcome, they may tend to show better performance. Employees may feel they are rewarded fairly based on their actual performance.

High levels of employee satisfaction in an organization are related to employee commitment to their organization. Employee commitment results in superior business performance, which in turn results in increased profitability, productivity, employee retention and overall improvement in the work environment.

A very important reason of employee commitment is that it allows an organization to meet its goals and stick to its vision. Without a committed and motivated workforce an organization could lose all they have earned over the years, its respect or market position. Organizational commitment is an individual's identification with and extent of involvement in the organization, which is characterized by a strong belief and acceptance of the firm's goals and values, the readiness and willingness to exert enormous efforts on behalf of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 2017).

Meyer & Allen (2017) posit that such commitment takes the form of affective, continuance or normative commitment. Meyer & Allen in Gamage (2014) opine that employee commitment is a psychological state that influences an employee desire to remain a member of the organization. When employees are committed to their work and organization, they are more likely to be happy and productive. Committed employees take ownership of their work and are ambassadors for their organization, both inside and outside of office doors.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Equity Theory

The equity theory was developed by Adams in 1963. The major components of this theory are inputs and outcomes. Adams in Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013), posits that inputs are what employees perceive their contributions to the exchange, for which they expects a just return. Outcomes are the rewards employees receive from the exchange which include pay and intrinsic satisfaction (Cohen & Greenberg, in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013). The equity theory argues that social behaviour is influenced by beliefs that rewards allocation within the same level should be equitable i.e. outcomes should be distributed proportional to the contributions of employees in the same level. The theory further argues than an employee is satisfied when his or her input-output ratio is equal to the input-output ratio of others in comparison (Adams in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013); while perceived inequity through this comparison feels unpleasant, and motivates employee to reduce those unpleasant feelings (Folger & Cropanzano, in Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013).

The equity theory explains that an employee usually judges equity or inequity based on what he or she contributes to the organization and what he or she receives as outcomes in comparison to what his or her colleagues in the same level receive (Gichira, 2016). Here, what the employee contributes to the organization connotes the knowledge, experience, time, energy and efforts which he or she puts to ensure that the organization achieves its goals while the outcomes refer to the pay, benefits and recognition he or she receives for the contributions (Gichira, 2016). If what the employee receives from the organization is equitable with what his or her colleagues in the same level receive, then the employee will judge the organization to be fair but where the employee receives less of what his or her colleagues receive, the employee will judge the organization to be exhibiting injustice.

Equity theory tends to explains why management should ensure that there is justice in their organization. The theory emphasized that an employee will always compare his or her efforts and outcomes (pay, benefits and recognition) with the efforts and outcomes of their colleagues (Ponnu & Chuah, 2010). This result of this comparison will produce a perception of justice or injustice. The equity theory explains that if the comparison indicates that the efforts and outcomes are equal, the employee will be satisfied and exhibit a good behaviour by increasing his or her productivity and job commitment. However, the employee will be unsatisfied and behave negative if he or she perceives that her colleagues work less and receive more outcomes (rewards) from the organization (Karriker & Williams, 2009). Berneth, et al (2007) argued that equity comes into play when an employee's comparison of input-outcome ratio with other employees is equal.

The equity theory is very useful in explaining the relationship between organizational justice and workers behaviour. The theory explains that employees will exhibit good behaviour at work if there is equity and justice in the organization. This implies that if workers are treated equally and fairly, there will behave sensibly at the workplace and put in more efforts and time to ensure that the organization achieves its set goals and objectives. But where workers are treated unfairly, they will put in less efforts and time to ensure that the organization does not realize its goals (Blakely et al, 2005).

The Concept of Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to the perception of an employee regarding the suitability and fairness of what he or she receives in the organization (Fuchs & Edwards, 2012). It is concerned with an employee's perception of fair treatment with respect to outcomes allocation after comparing his or her input-outcome ratio with those of his or her colleagues (Rahman et al, 2016). This is why Cropanzano et al (2007) defined distributive justice as the perceived degree of fairness in the rewards and benefits received by an employee in an organization.

Distributive justice occurs when there is a congruency of actual and expected outcomes (Jawad et al, 2012). Employees expect certain outcomes based on their inputs (skills, experience, ability, time and efforts) to ensure that their organization achieve its set goals. The outcomes include salary, pay rise, promotion, fringe benefits (bonuses and allowances), incentives and recognition (Hassan, 2002). If the allocation decisions are perceived to be fair, the employee will exhibit good work behaviours such as organizational citizenship behaviour and job commitment, but where the employee perceives the outcomes or allocation decisions to be unfair and unjust, he or she is likely to react negatively by increasing absenteeism, late coming, non-commitment to work and increased tendency to leave the organization (Hassan, 2002). Fuchs and Edwards (2012) agreed with Hassan's point of view when they stated that an employee is less likely to perform, produce and remain committed to the organization if he or she perceives unfair compensation.

The behavioural implication of distributive justice calls for the need for decision makers to take the issue of distributive justice more serious than ever. This is because employees will always compare their outcomes with those of their colleagues (referents within the organization) and make judgment on the equitableness of the outcomes. If an employee perceives outcome he or she receives to be similar to those of the referents (colleagues), he or she will conclude that there is distributive justice in the organization. However, if the employee perceives outcomes he or she receives to differ with those of the referents (colleagues) i.e. under-compensation or over-compensation, he or she can say that there is distributive injustice in the organization (Hassan, 2002). In the case of under-compensation, the employee will retaliate, demonstrates a negative behaviour and generates tension in the form of anger or resentment. However, in the case where the employee is overcompensated, he or she will develop a feeling of guilt (Hassan, 2002). If there is distributive injustice, managers need to take urgent steps to correct the discrepancy. This requires a cognitive action to change the perceived outcomes to ensure that there is equality in the distribution of outcomes. The action taken by management may result in behavioural change in the form of increase or decrease in inputs of the concerned worker.

Meanwhile, Cropanzano et al (2007) spelt out three allocation rules that need to be applied in order to appropriately establish distributive justice in modern organizations. First, management needs to ensure that there is equality in the distribution of outcomes to each worker in the same level. Secondly, establish equity in outcomes allocation to each worker in accordance with their contributions, and thirdly, address the specific needs of each worker in accordance with the most urgency.

This is the notion of fair distribution. It is concerned with the fair allocation of resources among diverse members of the organization. According to the theory of relative deprivation, a sense of individuals come to believe that their outcome is not in balance with the outcomes received by people like them in similar situations. When people have a sense that they are at an unfair disadvantage relative to others, or that they have not received their "fair share", they

may wish to challenge the system that has given rise to this state of affairs. This is likely to happen if a person or groups' fundamental needs are not being met.

According to Hegtvedt, (2018), individuals perceive a sense of justice when the amount of reward received corresponds to the amount regarded as just based on distributive justice principles.

Equity in Pay Level

Equity in pay level simply means that workers in the same grade level should be given equal pay to ensure that there is distributive justice in the organization. Pay refers to the amount of money which an employee receives from his or her employer for a job done (George et al, 2016). It is the compensation or financial reward which an employee get from his or her employer for work done (Kazaz et al, 2008). Pay is important to both employer and employee. To employers, pay enables them to improve their competitiveness in the labour market and attract more talented and skilled persons to their organization (Negash et al, 2014). Employers also use pay to place value on individual employees based on their skills, knowledge, experience and contribution to the organization (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Pay is also important to employers because it has a great influence on employees' morale, retention and turnover rate (Quartey & Attiogbe, 2013). It also affect employees' attitude to work as well as their level of commitment to the organization (Jean et al, 2017).

To employees, a good pay enables them to meets their needs and improve their standard of living (Feraro-Banta & Al-Shaikh, 2017). Masca (2016) stated that employees use pay to evaluate their organization's financial strength and the value that they placed on the organization. Employees also use pay to assess the value which their organization placed on them (Osibanjo et al, 2014). Pay differentiates employees' social status in the society.

In Nigeria, many employees switch from one organization to another in search for better pay. A survey conducted by Adewale (2014) revealed that seven out of every ten Nigerian employees are interested in changing their job and the main reason cited by these employees for such move is due to poor pay structure in their present job. However, Idemobi (2011) opined that an average employee is only willing to remain with his or her current organization if the pay he or she receives commensurate with his or her contribution (input). He further stated that poor pay is the major reason why most employees in Nigeria move from one organization to another. They added that poor pay and inequality in pay structure have been the major factors that make many Nigerians to move to other cities and countries in search for a well aid job.

Equity in pay covers wages, salaries as well as overtime pay. According to Mabaso and Dlamini (2017), wages refer to the amount of money paid to workers on an hourly, daily or weekly basis. Larbi (2014) stated that workers who are paid on hourly, daily or weekly basis are known as wage earners. An employee's wage rate is calculated based on the unit of output produced per day, hour or week (Njoroge & Kwasira, 2015). Wages decisions are important decisions which every organization must make. Employers must decide the wage level and wage structure. However, the wage structure of an organization is affected by a number of factors which include: the nature of job to be performed, compensation policy of the organization, the ability of the organization to pay, the condition of the labour market, the cost of living in the country, collective bargaining, government regulations, level of productivity, quality of the workforce, and technological change (Masea, 2016). Employers must consider these factors when fixing their wage structure for workers.

An organization can decide to pay a higher wage to motivate and retain its productive and talented workforce. Kuster and Canales (2011) stated that the advantage of paying a higher wages in not only to motivate and retain the most productive and skilled workforce but also to attract top talents to the organization. Although paying a higher wages increases the operational costs of the organization, it also has the benefits of boosting the capacity of the organization to compete for quality labour in the labour market (Jean et al, 2017). However, the decision of an organization to pay lower wages makes it difficult for the organization to compete for top quality labour in the labour market. Although, an organization that pay lower wages may save money from the cost of labour but it stands the risk of losing productive and valuable labour to its competitors (Negash et al, 2014).

Equal Promotion Opportunity

Equal promotion opportunity simply means that workers in the same grade level should be given equal promotion opportunity irrespective of their tribe, race, religious affiliation and ethnic nationality to ensure that there is distributive justice in the organization. Promotion is the advancement of an employee from one job position to another job position that has a higher salary range, a higher job title and often more and higher level job responsibilities (Neil, 2000). Ali and Ahmad (2017) defined promotion as the advancement of an employee from one rank or position to the next one in the hierarchy system. It involves climbing the corporate ladder or when an individual move from one designation to a higher one (Ali & Ahmad, 2017).

The purpose of promotion in any business organization is to motivate the workers towards increasing their productivity. Certain job positions with excellent promotion prospects have been the objects of hot pursuits and desires of workers in any business organization. Sometimes a promotion results in an employee taking on responsibility or managing or overseeing the work of other employees. Decision making authority tends to rise with a promotion as well. Visually, a promotion moves an employee's job up one level on an organizational chart (Heathfield, 2011).

Promotion is seen as a way of recognition for employees who make significant and effective work contributions. Promotion is desirable by employees because it comes with higher pay, authority, responsibility and the ability to influence broader organizational decision making (Heathfield, 2011). Promotion raises the status of the employee who receives a promotion which is a visible sign of esteem from the employer (Heathfield, 2011). It comes with a higher compensation, internal and external status, greater autonomy, interesting challenges and the like. Other things attached to the promotion of workers include incentives, increased allowances, accommodation, drivers, messengers and company cars. For some employees the key to job continuity is promotion. When the promotion expectation is not met there is this tendency to leave the organization for a better job offer.

Most of employees when promoted feel that their status has improved which gives them power and even additional paid. The reason why employee wants promotion vary from person to person. Some want promotion because they are bored with their current job and feel like that their expertise are not utilize properly, some want to be promoted because they may not be having good relationship with their supervisor or simply they want to have a higher status job. All these factors lead to motivation which enhance employee's performance and boost organizational survival (Mayhew in Ali & Ahmed, 2017).

People will be persuaded to give their best in their jobs if they are motivated through promotion. To be motivated means to be moved to do something. Excitement, interest and

enthusiasm towards are the primary components of high performance and to motivate those rendering better services to the organization. However, newly appointed employee may find an attractive prospect, but his expectancy of gaining promotion could be low, if he perceives that promotion is attained primarily on length of service. In such a situation, performance does not lead to rewards, so effort in that direction is not seen as worthwhile (Allen & Helms, 2001).

Employees that perceived promotion decisions as fair are more likely to be committed to the organization, experience career satisfaction, perform better and subsequently have a lower intention to leave the organization. Upholding the same argument, many employees will consider leaving the organization where they work if they do not have equal promotion opportunities as offered by other firm in same industry, particularly young employees who are looking for more work experiences from various firm before deciding to remain with a particular firm. Employees in private multinational oil servicing industry were more satisfied with their promotional opportunities than in public multinational oil servicing industry (Ali & Ahmad, 2017).

Concept of Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is the strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization. Commitment is the bond employees experience with their organization. Broadly speaking, employees who are committed to their organization, feel that they fit in and, feel they understand the goals and objectives of the organization. The added value of such employees is that they tend to be more determined in their work, show relatively high productivity and are more proactive in offering in offering their support.

According to Meyer and Allen (1991) "Commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employees' relationship with the organization and has implication for the decision to continue membership in the organization" Meyer and Allen (1991); Iverson and Roy (1994) Indicated three correlate but distinguish dimensions of employee commitment namely, affective, continuance affective commitment.

This represents the individuals' emotional attachment to the organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1991) affective commitment is the employee's emotional attachment to identification with, and involvement in the organization. Organization members, who are committed to an organization on an affective way, continue working for the organization because they simply want to link closely with the same organization. Employees who are committed on an affective manner stay with the organization because they see their personal employment relationship as congruent to the goals and values of the organization. The organizational commitment model of Meyer and Allen (1991) indicates that affective commitment is influenced by factors such as job challenge, role clarity, goal clarity, goal difficulty, receptiveness by management, peer cohesion, equity, personal importance, feedback, participation, and dependability.

Employee commitment in an organizational setting has been defined in various ways. For instance, Porter et al in Cagliyan et al (2017) defined employee commitment as the degree of intensity with which an employee identifies with his or her organization and engage in it. It could as be defined as employees' belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values, their willingness to work towards accomplishing the organization's goals, and their strong desire to continue as member of the organization (Porter et al in Hassan, 2002). Meyer and Herscovitch in Rahman et al (2016) defined commitment as the blinding force that push an employee to a particular course of action with the purpose of achieving set goals.

Employee commitment is the likelihood of an employee to remain with his or her organization and become attached to the values and goals of the organization (Rusbuit in Rathore & Sen 2017). Meyer and Allen in Gamage (2014) conceptualized employee commitment as a psychological state that influences his or her desire to remain member of the organization. It is the relative degree with which an employee identifies himself/herself with the organization, participates and gets involved in the organization (Javanmard et al, in Khaleh & Naji, 2016). Mowday et al in Guha and Chimote (2012) defined employee commitment as an employee's belief in the organization's goals and values, demonstrate the desire to remain as a member of the organization and remain loyal to the organization. It is the readiness of an employee to apply elevated levels of hard work on behalf of the organization, accept its goals, values, ethics, principles and standards, and show aspiration to stay with the organization (Porter, in Mohammed & Anisa, 2012).

Given the increased competition in the global market place and technological advancement, it becomes imperative for the employee to be encouraged and trained to perform efficiently and increase their level of job commitment. Rathore and Sen (2017) posited that high productivity level of an organization depend largely on increased level of worker's commitment. Tyler in Rahman et al (2016) noted that employees demonstrates high level of commitment when they feel that the decision making process is based on fairness. Meanwhile, Ohbuchi in Rahman et al (2016) argued that if all the employees in an organization are treated in a fairly manner by addressing their needs and interests without any favouritism, managers can be able to extract commitment from them and achieve organizational goals.

Employee commitment is very crucial to the growth and survival of any organization. According to Rathore and Sen (2017), committed workers demonstrate high level of motivation, reduce absenteeism, and increase their work productivity. Balei in Karim and Rahman (2012) stated that workers who are highly committed to their organization are more productive, compatible, loyal, more dedicated to work, and given more responsibility in the form of promotion. Bartlett in Rahman et al (2016) postulated that employees who are highly committed to their organizations are considered to be precious and more valuable than those with low commitment level. Williams and Anderson in Azizi et al (2014) added that employee who demonstrates high level of commitment stays in the organization, accepts its goals and put adequate efforts and even make sacrifices to ensure that the organization achieves its goals. Azizi et al (2014) opined that the presence of highly committed employees in any organization reduces absenteeism and lateness to work.

Several factors accounts for employee commitment in an organization. Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian in Cagliyan et al (2017) stated that three factors accounts for workers' commitment which include a conviction to accept the values and goals for the organization; the ability to contribute meaningful efforts to ensure that the organization achieve its goals; and the intention to remain a member of the organization. Bragg in Veronica and Indradevi (2014) posited that the key drivers of employee commitment are fairness (that is, the removal of impartiality, bias and ensure equality in the treatment of all workers), trust (that is, workers having confidence in those heading position of authorities that they are going to do the right things), and concern for workers (i.e. the needs and interests of workers should be taken seriously).

Therefore, it is important for owners of organisations and their managers to find out those factors that increase the level of workers' commitment. Mowday et al in Karim and Rehman (2012) posited that employees will be commitment to their organization under three conditions. First, if they own and retain conviction related to goals, values, principles and mission of their organizations; Secondly, if they are jointly prepared to put in more efforts for

the attainment of organizational goals; and lastly if they have the desire to continue to serve their respective organizations. Karim and Rahman (2012) added that employees will remain committed to their organization if there is sustainable justice in the distribution of outcomes, processes leading to outcomes distribution and interpersonal treatment. Mathieu & Zajac in Rahman et al (2016) noted that positive attitudes and behaviours such as organizational citizenship behaviour, regular work attendance, creativity, increased productivity, and openness to change are the products of high level of commitment. On the other hand, a low level of commitment brings about absenteeism, absent of mindedness during working hours, high turnover rate, reduced productivity and other negative behaviour (Cotton & Tuttle, in Rahman et al, 2016).

Relationship between Distributive Justice and Continuance Commitment

Durrani et al (2015) carried out a study to determine the relationship of organizational justice, employee satisfaction and employee's commitment in Pakistan banking sector. Their study concentrated on distributive justice and procedural justice and related them to organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative commitment). Their data were collected from 350 employees in forty (40) different branches of different banks in Pakistan. The data were collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire. After analyzing the data collected using Pearson correlation and regression analysis, the researchers found out that distributive justice has a significant positive relationship with workers' commitment. The study also reported a significant positive relationship between procedural and employee commitment.

Akanbi and Ofoegbu, (2013) empirically examined the impact of organizational justice on organizational commitment. The researchers carried out their study in Nestle Nigeria PLC in Lagos State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research was adopted by the researchers. A structured questionnaire was used by the researchers to collect data from 250 employees in Nestle Nigeria PLC. The data collected were statistically analyzed using the percentage and frequency tables, mean and standard deviation while their hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that distributive justice is positively and significantly correlated to workers' commitment. The study also revealed that procedural justice has a positive and significant impact on workers' commitment. The study however concluded that organizational justice (perceived distributive and procedural justice) significantly impacts on organizational commitment.

Mendryk (2017) carried out a study to determine the impact of distributive and procedural justice on the commitment of age diversified employees. The study adopted the descriptive and positivism research approach. The data for the study were collected from 1,075 employees in United States of America. The researcher used the percentage and frequency tables, mean and standard deviation to analyze the data collected from the field and used the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test his formulated hypotheses. The findings showed that distributive justice has a positive and significant impact on organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) of age diversified employees.

The relationship between distributive justice and employee commitment is observed to be positive. The findings indicate that distributive justice significantly predicts and also explains workers' behaviour when it comes to outcomes of employee affective, continuance and normative commitment. The findings of this study corroborate the views of Herman and Armani (2013) on the significance of justice and equity in demonstrating management's sincerity in driving performance and commitment levels and that way stabilizing the organizations system. Greenberg (2010) also identified participative decision-making as a

necessary approach toward building transparency and trust in the organization. The study emphasizes a more decentralized approach toward workplace relationships, advancing the need for inclusivity and increased participation.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research (Mahmut, 2011; Gim and Desa, 2014) which identify workers expectations of equality and equity in the workplace. This echoes the psychological contract on the unwritten expectations from the employment relationship, with most union actions and development in recent decades anchored more on addressing the unfair or unjust treatment of workers and the inequitable distribution of resources in the organization.

Conclusion

The concept of distributive justice as presented above and its impact on employee commitment in the organization is a very important and contemporary subject of interest amongst management scholars. Distributive justice which is generally regarded as the first dimension of organizational justice is about the perception of an employee regarding the suitability and fairness of what he or she receives in the organization. The concept of distributive justice is a proven organizational practice that enhances employee commitment and improves organizational performance as discovered from other studies reviewed. Various researchers indicate the existence of a strong and positive relationship between distributive justice and employee commitment (Durrani et al. 2015; Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013; Mendryk, 2017).

Based on the examination and empirical review of the works of other scholars, one can conclude that organisations with distributive justice culture will without doubt increase employee commitment in the workplace. Therefore, drawing inference from the position of other scholars, the study concludes that distributive justice has a very strong impact on employee commitment.

Recommendation

Based on the result of the study, we highly recommend that owners and managers of organisations should give adequate attention to distributive justice within the organization as a means of improving the commitment of employees in the workplace. so as to instigate a positive employee work behaviour.

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