



Gender Roles, Attachment Styles and Perceived Social Support in Interpersonal Relationships

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores the relationships among gender roles, attachment styles (closeness, dependency, and anxiety), and perceived social support (PSS). Using correlation and regression analyses, the study found that attachment closeness and dependency positively correlates with PSS, with coefficients of 0.387 and 0.370, respectively (both with p-values < 0.001). Conversely, attachment-related anxiety shows a moderate negative correlation with PSS ($r = -0.475$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher anxiety correlates with lower perceived social support. Regression analysis reveals that the model explains about 22.9% of the variance in PSS ($R^2 = 0.229$), with significant contributions from attachment closeness, dependency, and

anxiety, but not from gender roles. The lack of a significant relationship between gender roles and PSS could reflect changing societal expectations around gender norms. The findings imply that interventions to improve perceived social support should focus on reducing attachment anxiety and promoting attachment closeness and dependency, while further research is needed to understand the evolving role of gender in social support dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationships are at the core of human experience, shaping our growth, well-being, and overall quality of life. From early childhood bonds to romantic partnerships and friendships, the connections we forge with others profoundly impact our emotional, cognitive, and social development. However, the formation and maintenance of healthy and fulfilling relationships are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including deeply ingrained societal norms, individual attachment styles, and the perception of available support networks. This study delves into the intricate dynamics between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support, exploring their impact on interpersonal relationships across various contexts.

Gender roles, which encompasses the socially constructed norms, behaviours, and expectations associated with being male or female, have a pervasive influence on interpersonal interactions and relationship dynamics (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These roles shape how individuals approach communication, conflict resolution, emotional expression, and the division of responsibilities within relationships (Kray et al., 2017). Societal gender role expectations can also contribute to power imbalances, perpetuating gender-based inequalities and potentially hindering the development of egalitarian and mutually supportive relationships

(Ridgeway, 2011). Understanding the influence of gender roles is crucial for fostering healthy and fulfilling interpersonal bonds.

Attachment styles, rooted in early childhood experiences with primary caregivers, shape individuals' patterns of relating to others and their expectations within close relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Secure attachment styles are associated with greater relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and effective communication, while insecure attachment styles (anxious or avoidant) can lead to difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal bonds (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). These attachment patterns can influence individuals' ability to trust, depend on others, and effectively regulate emotions within relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Perceived social support, the belief that one is valued, cared for, and can rely on others for assistance or emotional support, has been consistently linked to numerous positive outcomes, including improved physical and mental health, better coping strategies, and higher relationship satisfaction (Uchino, 2009; Thoits, 2011). However, the perception and utilization of social support can be influenced by various factors, including gender roles, attachment styles, and cultural norms (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Taylor, 2011). For instance, individuals with insecure attachment styles may have difficulties seeking or benefiting from available support due to their relational patterns and expectations (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

By exploring the interplay between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics that shape interpersonal relationships across diverse contexts. The findings of this research may inform interventions and strategies for fostering healthier and more fulfilling relationships, promoting personal growth, and enhancing overall well-being.

While existing research has explored the individual relationships between gender roles, attachment styles, perceived social support, and interpersonal relationship dynamics, there remains a paucity of studies that holistically investigate the interplay between these critical factors. Specifically, few studies have examined how gender role adherence may interact with attachment insecurity to shape the perception and utilization of social support networks within various types of interpersonal relationships (Shaver et al., 2019). Additionally, the potential moderating or mediating effects of perceived social support on the associations between gender roles, attachment styles, and relationship outcomes such as intimacy, satisfaction, and conflict resolution warrant further exploration (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

Moreover, the majority of existing research has focused on heterosexual romantic relationships, leaving a gap in understanding the unique dynamics of these constructs within other interpersonal contexts, such as same-gender partnerships, familial relationships, and close friendships (Umberson et al., 2015). Furthermore, the influence of cultural factors and intersecting identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) on the interplay between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support remains an understudied area (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

By addressing these research gaps, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support, and their collective impact on the formation, maintenance, and quality of interpersonal relationships across diverse contexts. The findings may inform tailored interventions and support strategies that acknowledge the multifaceted nature of these factors, ultimately promoting healthier and more fulfilling interpersonal connections.

METHODOLGY

Aim

Assess the role of Gender Roles, Attachment Styles and Perceived Social Support in Interpersonal Relationships.

Research Objective

To explore the relationship between Gender Roles, Attachment Styles and Perceived Social Support.

Hypothesis

- The adherence to traditional gender roles will be negatively correlated with perceived social support.
- Secure attachment styles will be positively correlated with perceived social support.
- Insecure attachment styles will be negatively correlated with perceived social support.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support in interpersonal relationships.

Variables

Gender Roles, Attachment Styles and Perceived Social Support.

Sample

A sample of 200 people was taken for this study consisting of adult participants aged 18 years and above from diverse backgrounds. A convenience sampling method was employed to recruit participants. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study, and confidentiality of their responses will be maintained throughout the research process.

Inclusion Criteria

People above the age of 18

Exclusion Criteria

People below the age of 18

Description of Tools

The tools used for data collection will be:

- **Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS):** The Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS) is designed to measure individuals' beliefs and attitudes about traditional gender roles. It assesses the degree to which a person endorses conventional views on gender-specific behaviours, expectations, and roles. The GRBS is a self-report questionnaire that typically contains a series of statements about gender roles to which respondents indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale (e.g., from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). The GRBS evaluates beliefs about how genders should behave and the roles they should occupy. It captures a spectrum from egalitarian to traditional gender role

beliefs. It is often used in studies examining gender dynamics and cultural attitudes toward gender.

- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS):** The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) assesses the perceived support a person feels from various sources, such as family, friends, and significant others. It helps quantify an individual's subjective sense of social support. The MSPSS consists of 12 items divided into three subscales: Family, Friends, and Significant Others. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert scale, typically ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree." The MSPSS measures the perceived social support from three different domains, allowing researchers to understand from where individuals derive their social support. It has been used in a variety of contexts, including mental health studies and research on social networks.
- **Adult Attachment Scale:** The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) assesses attachment styles in adults, based on attachment theory. It examines how individuals relate to others in close relationships, categorizing attachment styles typically into secure, anxious, and avoidant. The AAS is a self-report questionnaire consisting of items that evaluate an individual's feelings and behaviours in interpersonal relationships. Respondents rate statements on a Likert scale, reflecting their attachment-related behaviours and attitudes. The AAS measures attachment styles in adults, indicating whether they tend to have secure, anxious, or avoidant patterns of attachment. This scale is widely used in studies exploring relationships, emotional bonds, and interpersonal behaviours.

Data Analysis

- **Software:** Data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
- **Descriptive Statistics:** Initially, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the sample's characteristics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions.
- **Correlation Analysis:** multiple correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength and direction of these relationships.
- **Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression analysis was performed to investigate the predictive relationships among variables. This analysis assessed the extent to which gender roles and attachment styles could predict perceived social support.

RESULTS

Table 1

Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.387 ^a	.150	.141	14.324
a. Predictors: (Constant), AAS (close), GRB				

The R-squared value of 0.150 suggests that the independent variables explain approximately 15% of the variance in the dependent variable, indicating a weak positive

relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This low R-squared value implies that the model may not be a robust predictor of PSS, suggesting that other factors not included in the model could be influencing the dependent variable.

Table 2*Multiple Regression Analysis*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.496 ^a	.246	.239	13.487
a. Predictors: (Constant), Depend, GRB				

The R-squared value for the regression model is 0.246, indicating that approximately 24.6% of the variance in PSS is explained by the independent variables. While this suggests a weak relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, it also indicates that a significant portion of the variance is due to other factors not included in the model. The standard error of the estimate, 13.487, reflects the average deviation of the residuals from the regression line.

Table 3*Multiple Regression Analysis*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.479 ^a	.229	.222	13.639
a. Predictors: (Constant), Anxiety, GRB				

The regression model yielded an R-squared value of 0.229, indicating that approximately 22.9% of the variance in PSS is explained by the independent variables Anxiety and GRB. This suggests a weak positive relationship between these variables and PSS, indicating that the model may not be a very good fit for the data, and other factors may be contributing to the variability. The standard error of the estimate is 13.639, indicating the average dispersion of the residuals from the regression line.

Table 4

Statistical insights by ANOVA

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7136.855	2	3568.427	17.392	.000 ^b
	Residual	40420.340	197	205.179		
	Total	47557.195	199			
a. Dependent Variable: PSS						
b. Predictors: (Constant), AAS (close), GRB						

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall model is statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 17.392 and a p-value less than 0.001. This suggests that the independent variables, taken together, have a statistically significant impact on PSS.

Table 5*Statistical insights by ANOVA*

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11722.111	2	5861.055	32.221	.000 ^b
	Residual	35835.084	197	181.904		
	Total	47557.195	199			
a. Dependent Variable: PSS						

The ANOVA results, with an F-statistic of 32.221 and a p-value less than 0.001, indicate that the model is statistically significant in explaining variance in PSS. This suggests that, despite the low R-squared value, the independent variables as a whole do have a significant effect on the dependent variable.

Table 6*Statistical insights by ANOVA*

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10912.317	2	5456.158	29.332	.000 ^b
	Residual	36644.878	197	186.015		
	Total	47557.195	199			
a. Dependent Variable: PSS						

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 29.332 and a p-value less than 0.001. This indicates that the independent variables, collectively, contribute significantly to explaining the variance in PSS. However, given the relatively low R-squared value, it's likely that there are other influencing factors not included in this model.

Table 7
Coefficients

Coefficients^a				
Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
B	Std. Error	Beta		
40.898	6.468		6.323	.000
-.039	.103	-.025	-.381	.704
1.283	.219	.391	5.870	.000

The unstandardized coefficient for AAS (close) is 1.283, with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between AAS (close) and PSS. This suggests that for each unit increase in AAS (close), there is an expected increase of 1.283 units in PSS.

The coefficient for GRB is -0.039, with a p-value of 0.704, suggesting a negative relationship with PSS, but this result is not statistically significant. This implies that changes in GRB do not have a meaningful impact on PSS.

Table 8
Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	36.838	5.950		6.191	.000	
GRB	.042	.095	.027	.440	.660	
Depend	1.470	.184	.495	8.005	.000	

The unstandardized coefficient for Depend is 1.470, with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between Depend and PSS. This suggests that for each unit increase in Depend, PSS is expected to increase by 1.470 units.

The coefficient for GRB is 0.042, with a p-value of 0.660. Although this suggests a positive relationship between GRB and PSS, the p-value indicates that this result is not statistically significant. Therefore, GRB does not appear to be a meaningful predictor of PSS.

Table 9
Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	79.163	5.536		14.301	.000
	GRB	.096	.097	.062	.995	.321

	Anxiety	-1.153	.151	-.478	-7.636	.000
Dependent Variable: PSS						

The unstandardized coefficient for Anxiety is -1.153, with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant negative relationship between Anxious attachment style and PSS. This suggests that an increase in anxiety is associated with a decrease in PSS.

The coefficient for GRB is 0.096, with a p-value of 0.321. Although the positive coefficient suggests a positive relationship between GRB and PSS, the p-value indicates that this result is not statistically significant, suggesting that changes in GRB may not have a significant impact on PSS.

Table 10

The Pearson correlation coefficients between three variables: GRB, PSS, and AAS

Correlations				
		PSS	GRB	Close
PSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.037	.387
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.599	.000
	N	200	200	200
GRB	Pearson Correlation	.037	1	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.599		.023
	N	200	200	200
Close	Pearson Correlation	.387	.161	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.023	

	N	200	200	200
. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

The correlation between PSS and AAS (close) is 0.387, with a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates a statistically significant moderate positive linear relationship, suggesting that as close attachment style increases, PSS also tends to increase.

The correlation between PSS and GRB is 0.037, with a p-value of 0.599. This suggests that there is no statistically significant linear relationship between GRB and PSS, indicating that changes in GRB are not associated with changes in PSS.

The correlation between AAS (close) and GRB is 0.161, with a p-value of 0.023. This indicates a statistically significant weak positive linear relationship, suggesting that an increase in close attachment style is associated with a slight increase in GRB.

Table 11

The Pearson correlation coefficients between three variables: GRB, PSS, and AAS

Correlations				
		PSS	GRB	Depend
PSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.037	.496
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.599	.000
	N	200	200	200
GRB	Pearson Correlation	.037	1	.021

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.599		.773
	N	200	200	200
Depend	Pearson Correlation	.496	.021	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.773	
	N	200	200	200
. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

The correlation coefficient between PSS and GRB is 0.496, with a p-value less than 0.001. This statistically significant positive correlation indicates a moderate positive linear relationship, suggesting that as PSS increases, GRB also tends to increase.

The correlation coefficient between PSS and Depend is 0.370, with a p-value less than 0.001. This statistically significant positive correlation indicates a weak to moderate positive linear relationship, indicating that higher levels of PSS are generally associated with higher levels of dependent attachment style.

The correlation coefficient between GRB and AAS (Depend) is 0.021, with a p-value of 0.773. This non-significant correlation suggests that there is no linear relationship between GRB and Depend, indicating that changes in GRB do not predict changes in dependent attachment style.

Table 12

The Pearson correlation coefficients between three variables: GRB, PSS, and AAS (anxiety)

Correlations				
		PSS	GRB	Anxiety
PSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.037	-.475
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.599	.000
	N	200	200	200
GRB	Pearson Correlation	.037	1	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.599		.463
	N	200	200	200
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.475	.052	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.463	
	N	200	200	200
. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

PSS-AAS (anxiety) Correlation: -0.475 (p-value = 0.000) - This statistically significant negative correlation indicates a moderate negative linear relationship between PSS and Anxiety. As PSS increases, anxious attachment style tends to decrease.

PSS-GRB Correlation: 0.052 (p-value = 0.463) - This non-significant correlation suggests that there is no linear relationship between PSS and GRB.

AAS (anxiety)-GRB Correlation: 0.037 (p-value = 0.599) - This non-significant correlation suggests that there is no linear relationship between Anxiety and GRB.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to explore the relationships among gender roles, attachment styles (close, depend, anxiety), and perceived social support (PSS). Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to examine these relationships. The results offer insights into the complex dynamics between these variables, shedding light on how attachment styles and gender roles relate to perceived social support. The correlation analysis revealed several key relationships:

A statistically significant positive correlation between perceived social support and close attachment style ($r = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a moderate positive linear relationship. This suggests that individuals with a higher level of attachment closeness tend to perceive greater social support.

A statistically significant positive correlation between perceived social support and dependent attachment style ($r = 0.370$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a weak to moderate positive linear relationship. This suggests that as dependency in attachment increases, perceived social support also tends to increase.

A statistically significant negative correlation between perceived social support and anxious attachment style ($r = -0.475$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a moderate negative linear relationship. This finding suggests that individuals with higher anxiety in attachment perceive lower social support.

A non-significant correlation between PSS and GRB ($r = 0.052$, $p = 0.463$), indicating no linear relationship between gender roles and perceived social support.

These results suggest that different dimensions of attachment styles relate differently to perceived social support. The positive correlations with closeness and dependency support the idea that secure attachment fosters a stronger social network. In contrast, the negative

correlation with anxiety suggests that high attachment-related anxiety might hinder individuals from forming or maintaining supportive relationships. The regression analysis provided further insights into the relationships among these variables:

The model's R-squared value was 0.229, indicating that about 22.9% of the variance in PSS can be explained by the independent variables (attachment styles and gender roles). Although this suggests a weak relationship, it does indicate some level of explanatory power.

The F-statistic of 29.332 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, suggesting that the independent variables contribute significantly to explaining the variance in PSS.

The regression analysis found that the unstandardized coefficient for close attachment style was 1.283 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant positive relationship between attachment closeness and perceived social support. This result aligns with the correlation findings.

The unstandardized coefficient for dependent attachment style was 1.470 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting a significant positive relationship between dependency and perceived social support.

The unstandardized coefficient for anxious attachment style was -1.153 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant negative relationship between attachment-related anxiety and perceived social support.

The unstandardized coefficient for GRB was -0.039 ($p = 0.704$), indicating no significant relationship between gender roles and perceived social support.

These regression results further validate the correlation findings, showing that attachment styles have significant relationships with perceived social support, while gender roles do not. The positive relationships with closeness and dependency suggest that attachment

security is linked to a stronger support network, while the negative relationship with anxiety may reflect the isolating effect of high attachment-related anxiety. Priel and Shamai's study (1995) examined how attachment styles and perceived social support contribute to levels of anxiety and depression among 328 students. The results indicated that securely attached individuals experience lower levels of anxiety and depression compared to those with insecure attachment styles. Securely attached individuals also perceived more social support and expressed greater satisfaction with their support networks. Furthermore, the study found a significant relationship between perceived social support and affect regulation, suggesting that individuals with higher satisfaction with social support experienced less distress, regardless of their attachment style. This study reinforces the importance of secure attachment in relation to both perceived social support and affect regulation, highlighting that social support can play a crucial role in mitigating anxiety and depression.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings have several important implications. First, they suggest that interventions aimed at improving perceived social support might focus on fostering secure attachment styles, emphasizing closeness, dependability, and reducing attachment-related anxiety. The strong relationship between attachment closeness and perceived social support underscores the importance of fostering secure attachment in relationships to create robust social networks.

Second, the lack of a significant relationship between gender roles and perceived social support indicates that gender-based stereotypes or expectations might not play a critical role in determining social support networks. One reason could be the diversification of gender roles, traditional gender roles, which were often rigid and based on stereotypical expectations, have

diversified or evolved significantly over the past few decades, this diversification might lead to less predictability in how gender roles relate to social support. Increased flexibility in societal norms could be another reason, individuals are less bound by traditional gender roles. This flexibility could mean that men and women feel freer to seek and provide social support outside of traditional expectations. Factors such as individual differences transcend gender roles, personality traits, such as extraversion or agreeableness, might have a stronger influence on perceived social support than gender roles, leading to less predictability based on gender. Changing societal expectations could be a significant factor, society has increasingly recognized and embraced a broader range of gender identities and expressions, moving away from strict binary categories. This shift could contribute to reduced reliance on gender-based stereotypes in determining social support. As society becomes more accepting of diverse gender identities, individuals may find it easier to build social support networks that are not constrained by gender-based expectations.

This finding could inform future studies to focus more on attachment styles and less on gender roles when exploring factors that influence perceived social support.

This result suggests that individuals with high attachment-related anxiety might struggle with forming or maintaining supportive relationships, perhaps due to trust issues or fear of rejection. Future studies in the future could explore interventions to reduce attachment anxiety to improve social support.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the insights gained from this study, there are several limitations to consider. The relatively low R-squared value (0.229) suggests that other factors not included in the

analysis might also influence perceived social support. Additionally, correlation does not imply causation, and these findings should be interpreted cautiously in terms of causal relationships.

Future research with more diverse samples, employing objective measures and experimental designs, could provide more robust findings about the causal relationships between these variables. It could explore additional factors that might influence perceived social support, such as personality traits, diversification of gender norms, changes in societal expectations or more flexibility in adherence to societal norms. Further studies could also investigate non-linear relationships or use longitudinal designs to better understand causal relationships among these variables.

Additionally, qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of individuals with different attachment styles and how they relate to social support. By addressing these limitations and pursuing further research, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships among gender roles, attachment styles, and perceived social support.

The sample size was relatively small ($n = 200$), which limits the generalizability of the findings to larger populations. Additionally, all measures were self-reported, which can be susceptible to bias.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study suggest that attachment styles play a significant role in perceived social support, with attachment closeness and dependency (secure attachment styles) positively related to perceived social support, and attachment-related anxiety (insecure attachment style) negatively related. Gender roles, however, do not appear to have a significant impact.

The positive relationship between attachment closeness and perceived social support suggests that interventions promoting secure attachment could improve social support. The significant negative correlation between attachment-related anxiety and perceived social support indicates a need for strategies to reduce attachment-related anxiety to foster better social connections.

The lack of a significant relationship between gender roles and perceived social support may reflect broader societal changes toward more flexible and egalitarian gender norms. This shift could influence how individuals form and maintain social support networks, emphasizing the role of personal and relational factors over traditional gender expectations.

This study provides valuable insights into how these factors interact and influence each other. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social support and attachment in the context of evolving gender norms.

The study addresses a gap in the literature by examining the role of gender roles in relation to perceived social support and attachment styles, providing evidence that traditional gender roles may have less impact on social support than previously thought.

The findings suggest new avenues for research, such as exploring additional factors that influence perceived social support and examining interventions to reduce attachment-related anxiety. This can guide future studies and inform practices aimed at improving social support and mental health outcomes.

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