



STRATEGY FOR INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MADRASAH

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the models and strategies for increasing competitiveness at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Midad Lumajang. Over the years, this madrasa has been in terrible condition. However, it has risen drastically in the last few decades and proved a superior and competitive madrasah. This change is then interesting to study so that other madrasahs can later duplicate the achievements of this madrasa. This research is qualitative research with a case study approach. Observation, interviews, group discussions and document searches were conducted for data collection. This research found that the leading factors of the madrasa head, learning innovation, teachers, and quality madrasa facilities are the main aspects that can improve the quality and competitiveness of this madrasa. These factors have made this madrasa achieve achievements in various fields and made people flock to send their children to this madrasah.

Keywords: *Strategy, Improvement, Competitiveness, MTs Miftahul Midad Lumajang*

INTRODUCTION

The number of madrasahs continues to increase from year to year. Based on statistical data on Islamic education, the number of madrasahs per Even Semester for the 2020/2021 Academic Year is 83,548 madrasahs. Most madrasah levels are at the Raudlatul Athfal (RA) level, namely 30,148 RAs or the equivalent of 36,08%. Then followed by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) with 25,840 MI (30.92%), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) with 18,380 MTs (21.99%) and the rest Madrasah Aliyah (MA) with 9,150 MA (11.01%).

When viewed based on provenance, the distribution of madrasahs is dominated in Java. East Java Province is the province with the most significant number of madrasahs, reaching 20,378 madrasahs. That means the percentage of madrasahs in East Java is 24.39%. The problem is that the level of competitiveness of madrasah education could be more encouraging, except for several madrasahs already in the superior category. This is illustrated by the results of research conducted by the Research and Development Center for Religious and Religious Education that, in general, the condition of madrasahs is seen from the learning facilities, the condition of the quality of educators and educational staff and the condition of madrasah financing, in general, is still apprehensive compared to school education institutions. Primarily education is heavily influenced by global developments. To respond to this situation, all stakeholders in the education sector must manage global change (Abdullah et al., 2023). This apprehensive condition of madrasahs resulted in the competitiveness of madrasahs needing to be stronger, which in turn, madrasahs received less public attention than public schools. Even some madrasahs, due to the few students studying there, have changed their function and identity to become a school.

Among the quite unprecedented challenges of competitiveness for madrasahs is that many schools have made Islamic religious education a prime factor or added value,

which is the main attraction of the Islamic community. The Madrasah leaders assume that the Islamic community around the Madrasah environment will increasingly support madrasahs that can strengthen their children's religious education. For this reason, Madrasahs need to be present and then strengthen religious education material and add other skills directly related to the needs of quality life in society so that they appear to be total day schools. At the madrasa, Islamic identity is very prominent. Religious symbols such as the existence of a mosque, dhuha prayer, congregational dhuhr prayer, istighatsah, tadarus of the Koran in the morning, the commemoration of Islamic holidays, clothing covering the genitals, headscarves (for women's clothing), trousers for men's clothing are things which are common in madrasahs, but also modern skills and technology need to get more attention.

Moreover, providing dormitories as their place of residence, and there are several learning activities that they participate in to maximize them honing their abilities and intelligence and, most importantly, honing a spirit of independence that cannot be obtained in other institutions using direct education. Having this high competitiveness is Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Midad Lumajang. The high competitiveness of these madrasahs can be seen from the increasing number of prospective students who register to enter the madrasa and the large number of prospective students who are refused entry to these madrasahs. On the other hand, several elementary schools near the madrasa were informed that meeting the quota of students enrolling in these schools was difficult. In fact, due to the low number of students enrolling in several schools, the Education Office then made a policy to merge several elementary schools in Lumajang.

This study aims to find out the efforts made by MTs Miftahul Midad Lumajang, to make it a quality and competitive madrasah. The benefits of this research include: 1) as input for madrasah developers in order to increase competitiveness, 2) as input for the madrasah concerned in order to maintain and develop its achievements, 3) as a role model for other madrasahs, especially those whose conditions are still low. Left behind so that they can improve themselves in a better direction.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a case study research with a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out through interviews, focus group discussions and observation. Interviews were conducted with several respondents who were key respondents (key informants) consisting, including the head of the office of the ministry of religion, the head of the madrasah, teachers, supervisors, the madrasah committee, and several parents of students. Group discussions were conducted to triangulate previously obtained data and, at the same time, explore new data that had yet to be conveyed during the interview. At the same time, observations were made to see the conditions and situations of madrasah learning directly, both from the implementation and the teaching process and from the aspect of providing facilities and infrastructure. Documentation is the collection of written data in books, document files and correspondence, and madrasah profiles. The analysis used in the research report is descriptive and narrative analysis, as well as inductive or deductive conclusions drawn from the data, found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Madrasah Profile

Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Midad Lumajang is located in Sumberejo Village, Lumajang Regency. Initially, this madrasah was Madrasah Diniyah, then on January 15 April 1995, founded MTs with several students who became students at the beginning of the course. There was very much that could not be done either with very minimal conditions and minimal experience, but still trying to provide full service with the conditions that existed with the head of the madrasah at that time Abd, Sami, BA in 1995 – 2019, Umar, S. PdI in 2019 now.

The struggle of MTs Miftahul Midad Lumajang to finally become a leading

madrassa took work. As told by the Chairman of the Madrasah Committee, Abdi Munif, S.H, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang, it took much work to get students in several decades. The community preferred that their children attend junior high school. Madrasah leaders, teachers and community leaders who cared about madrasas then conducted door-to-door outreach to the community to find madrasa students. Through recitation forums, taklim assemblies, and approaches to community leaders and mosque congregations, the Islamic community was persuaded and given explanations to enrol their children in MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang. This socialization activity is carried out every year before the acceptance of new students by madrasah leaders and teachers, especially during the principal's period. Until 2010, students who entered MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang were in no more than one class. MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang only started to have competitiveness in 2015, thanks to the hard work and innovation of the madrasa leadership to form the Madrasah development team, which was supported by educators, education staff and the madrasah committee. MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang has become popular, superior, and in demand by the people of Lumajang and its surroundings. During the new school year, registration is only open for one month, and the number of interested parties has exceeded the classroom capacity. Now the situation is reversed. If previously it was difficult to get students, now MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang feels psychologically tricky because they have to refuse the large number of people who register their children to enter this madrasa. Because of that, the madrasa conducts relatively strict selection to be able to enter this madrasa. In 2020, prospective students who registered numbered around 350 people. At the same time, that can be accommodated approximately 300 people.

Among the critical factors that support increasing the competitiveness of madrasas are: First, relatively adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang has 20 classrooms, one principal's room, one teacher's room, 1 TU room, one living room, 1 OSIS room, 1 BK room, one skills room, one computer laboratory, one library, one multimedia, two mashallah, two public canteens, one science park, one science lab, 1 UKS room, one function room, and two sports fields. Some of the classrooms at MTs MiftahulMidad are equipped with LCD/projector media to facilitate the learning process. In the new 2020 school year, there will be an additional two classrooms, which are currently in the process of completion. The computer laboratory contains 80 computers with grade Pentium IV which have been conditioned in a LAN (Local Area Network) and connected to the internet. Through this computer laboratory, learning media for foreign languages, science, social studies, and religious education are being developed.

If spelt out as a deficiency is related to the library. The MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang library is relatively simple. The library system used is still manual, with a conventional cataloguing system. The number of new types of books is around 500, with around 3,000 copies.

The madrasa prayer room also needs to be improved. This prayer room has an area of 25 m² x 25 m², accommodating around 500 students. The mushala is used interchangeably because the number of students is more than 1,000 children. The sports field owned by MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang is quite broad and is used for volleyball, badminton, table tennis, athletics, and ceremonies. Natural Sciences (science). Here students can practice learning activities related to biology, so it is hoped that students will better master the essential competencies that have been set, besides equipping students to have a sense of sympathy and empathy for the natural environment around them.

The Madrasah Health Enterprise (UKM) at MTs MiftahulMidad is a health education learning facility and health services for madrasa residents. Through this facility, students are expected to be able to provide first aid regarding student health problems that occur during the learning process as well as a learning tool for maintaining student hygiene and health. In order to instil entrepreneurial qualities in students, MTs MiftahulMidad has a canteen where students can study shops and

culinary arts by cooking for themselves accompanied by their senior siblings.

Second, there is sufficient power. From a workforce standpoint, MTs MiftahulMidad has been supported by several adequate staff. Almost all have met the national qualification standard, and some have even exceeded it. In detail, when the research was conducted, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang had 35 teachers, consisting of 31 teachers with S1 qualifications and four people with Masters's qualifications.

Third, there is a financing assistance business outside of BOS. Fundamentally, the financing of MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang, like MTs in general, uses BOS funds, the amount of which is highly dependent on approval from the Ministry of Religion in the regions or at the centre. However, to become an independent MTs, the cost of developing education is independent of BOS, the amount of which has been standardized nationally. Due to good cooperation between madrasa leaders and madrasah committees, the financing of madrasah education development is also supported by madrasah committees in collaboration with other parties. In this case, the madrasah committee has become a sponsor to finance madrasah education. Among the funding provided by the committee is actively buying land expansion around the madrasa, making courtyards for ceremonies, creating parks, and helping to pay for the construction costs of classrooms, laboratories and mosques. In addition, each student's parents, especially in the superior class, also provide costs for the benefit of their respective children's achievements. For example, paying for additional activities that are academic and non-academic outside the regular madrasah learning system.

Fourth, there is the carrying capacity of madrasah diniyah and the model of the madrasah, which is in dormitories as a place to live for students who work together with Islamic boarding schools so that the formulation of the diniyah curriculum is also communicated with the MTs, especially extracurriculars which are collaborated so that they mutually reinforce one another, there is much time and human resources available. Owned in this case, the conditions in the learning environment for 24 hours can be controlled and controlled, the learning environment can be set according to needs, the environmental conditions where learning directly intersects with the teachers so that there is continuous guidance, but behind that there is much scientific knowledge that must be taken at the same time as the respective assessment billing system makes students sometimes feel too energized and feel exhausted.

Fifth, there is an increase in the public interest. Public interest in MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang continues to increase yearly. As mentioned in the previous section, until 2010, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang needed help finding students. Overall, student acquisition is less than 100 students. However, starting in 2015, the total number of students began to increase to more than 300 students, and in 2018 the number of students became more than 500 people. In the following years, the addition of students grew significantly. This development indicates that the level of public trust in MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang is getting higher, which also means increasing the competitiveness of madrasahs which is getting better. The following is a table of student improvement from 2020/2021 to 2022/2023.

Table 1: Development of the Number of Students in 2010/2011 – 2021/2022

| YEAR | MAN | WOMAN | AMOUNT |
|-----------|-----|-------|--------|
| 2010-2011 | 50 | 65 | 115 |
| 2011-2012 | 60 | 75 | 135 |
| 2012-2013 | 87 | 80 | 167 |
| 2013-2014 | 90 | 95 | 185 |
| 2014-2015 | 98 | 106 | 204 |
| 2015-2016 | 124 | 176 | 300 |
| 2016-2017 | 125 | 178 | 303 |
| 2017-2018 | 156 | 201 | 357 |
| 2018-2019 | 243 | 267 | 510 |
| 2019-2020 | 230 | 301 | 531 |

| | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| 2020-2021 | 265 | 346 | 611 |
| 2021-2022 | 272 | 355 | 627 |

The table above illustrates that the number of students from year to year has increased drastically. In 2010/2011, the number of students was 115, and in 2021/2022, the number of students was 627. Increased classroom facilities followed the increase in the number, and an acceptance selection was held. According to the head of the madrasa, the average number of prospective students who register is quite large. The amount received from applicants this year is around 60% of applicants. The increase in students who registered and accepted can also be interpreted as increased public interest in madrasas. The table above also illustrates that the number of female students (as many as 2245 people) is greater than that of male students (as many as 272 people).

Table 2: Number of Students and Study Groups at Madrasas for the 2021/2022

| No. | By Class | Man | Woman | Amount | Rombel |
|-------|----------|-----|-------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Class 7 | 94 | 121 | 215 | 8 |
| 2 | Class 8 | 90 | 120 | 210 | 7 |
| 3 | Class 9 | 88 | 114 | 202 | 7 |
| Total | | 272 | 355 | 627 | 22 |

The table above illustrates an increase in the number of study group students. This increase can be seen by comparing the number of students and groups in grades nine and 7. In grade 6, there were 202 students and 7 study groups; in grade 7, there were 215 students and eight groups. Currently, the capacity of MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang is only able to accommodate 23 classes with adequate managerial competence. The management developed at MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang uses a bureaucratic model. The madrasa education unit has a vertical and horizontal command line organizational structure. The madrasa head, who acts as a manager, has the highest authority to determine the substance of the plan, select people, organize resources, and exercise control over the implementation of the plans that have been made. An organizational structure and a clear division of tasks are created to support the implementation of educational development. The relationship between the head of the madrasa and teachers and educational staff is vertical, superiors and subordinates.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the madrasah head and the madrasah committee relationship is horizontal, or a coordinative or consultative relationship. However, the head of the madrasa in the development of the madrasa is not accessible because the head of the madrasa is under the command line of the Foundation. In this case, the Foundation can veto madrasa policies that are considered not by the rules or policies of the Foundation, and even the position of the head of the madrasa is very vulnerable. At any time can be removed by the chairperson of the Foundation. In addition, functionally, the performance of madrasas is also under the supervision of the Ministry of Religion through the madrasa supervisor. Madrasah supervisors are functional officials appointed by the government through the ministry of religion tasked with supervising or supervising the implementation of madrasah education.

Seventh, there are various learning innovations. In 2020/2021, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang implemented 2 (two) curricula: the 2013 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) for grades 8 and 9 and the Independent Curriculum for grade 7. The curriculum is prepared together with all madrasah components, taking into account all the potential that is owned and developed by making Islam the spirit by sharpening the scientific field in order to form individuals who have character, are firm in truth, and have high creativity as a provision for life in society. The curriculum developed in madrasas is the national curriculum, with innovations in strengthening general subjects, Islamic religious studies, local content learning, and institutional

content. Curriculum innovation for general subjects is done by strengthening MIPA and language subjects. This strengthening was carried out to meet the community's demands and the madrasa's image. The image of the madrasa will rise when the madrasa can send its students to participate in competitions and become champions. Strengthening MIPA and language is carried out by forming a special coaching team to handle the Olympics, especially for MIPA, whether the Ministry of Religion or others carries it out. According to madrasah heads, this innovation was quite successful in increasing competitiveness. The many championships in the language field evidence this.

For curriculum innovation in religious subjects focused on Al-Quran subjects. Extra strict guidance is carried out so that every grade 7 student at MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang can write Arabic and recite the Koran with tartil. In the past, the Al-Quran learning method used was the Iqra' method. However, in the last two years, the method of learning to read the Koran used is the Tartila method. The tartila method is considered more precise than the Iqra method. Especially if you look at the teachers with certificates teaching the Tartila method. Tartila's reading method is more fluent and tartil. The Al-Quran reading khatam program is carried out with a particular program so parents know their children in grade 7 can finish reading the Al-Quran. Whereas for grades 8 to grade 9, students are guided so they can memorize short letters in Yasiin's letters, juz one and juz 30

In addition, in religious education, strengthening is carried out to raise children's awareness so they can perform the five daily prayers and obligatory fasting without being told to.

The innovation was carried out to familiarize children with performing sunnah dhuhur prayers five times in congregation at the madrasa mosque and doing extracurricular activities. In addition, madrasahs also monitor students in their dormitories through collaboration using the administrator's monitoring book. This kind of activity had never been carried out by the teachers and principals of the madrasa before. According to the madrasah committee and a student's guardian, the awareness of the children to perform congregational prayers without being told has been going well. In the religious aspect, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang also develops self-habituation, oriented towards building student character, so they are accustomed to karakul karma. Among these activities that stand out are the activities of good morning students, every day with the Qur'an, Duha prayer, Dhuhur prayer in congregation, infaq is beautiful, monitoring the five daily prayers and reading the Qur'an, cultivating aqidah/morals in the morning, memorizing juz 'amma and asmaulhusna.

Leadership Factors in Increasing Competitiveness

The success of MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang in becoming one of the leading educational institutions that have competitiveness for the people of Lumajang and its surroundings must be distinct from the leadership pattern exercised by the head of the madrasa. The head of the madrasa, Umar, appointed by the MiftahulMidadLumajang Foundation in 2019, was felt by the teachers and madrasa committee to be very appropriate to lead MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang. Umar's leadership pattern is quite communicative, democratic, transparent, innovative, and hardworking and can be an example. Viewed as communicative because Umar communicated ideas well to teachers, parents, and the madrasah committee. It is considered democratic because the head of this madrasa can accommodate various aspirations conveyed by parents, teachers, and the madrasah committee.

The reasons put forward by the madrasah committee at that time were: first, even though MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang was already classified as superior, it could have been more optimal. The leadership of the madrasah head in this context was still needed to develop MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang to the fullest. For example, an international class had just been pioneered at that time, which arguably had yet to be completed. The committee and teachers were worried that this innovation program

would wither before it developed if the madrasa principal was suddenly replaced. Second, the committee assessed the change of head of the madrasa as very sudden, as if there was something wrong with the head of the madrasa. The committee wants prior communication before deciding to transfer the madrasah head.

Achievements in Increasing Madrasah Competitiveness

With an increase in competitiveness through the various factors above, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang has had many achievements given on behalf of students, teachers and institutions. Achievements achieved include achievements in academic and non-academic fields. This achievement is marked by the number of trophies or medals won from academic and non-academic competitions that have been participated in since 2010. These competitions were organized by the Ministry of Religion and the non-Ministry of Religion. An overview of the madrasah's level of achievement in participating in championship competitions is as follows:

| No | Competition field | Grand Champion | Champion1 | Champion2 | Champion3 | Contender | Finalist | Total |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Student academics | 1 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 27 |
| 2 | Student art | | | 2 | | | 1 | 3 |
| 3 | Sport | | 6 | 8 | 2 | 4 | | 20 |
| 4 | Teacher Achievement | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | 4 |
| 5 | Institution | | 1 | | | | 1 | 2 |
| Total number | | 1 | 11 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 4 | |

The table shows that MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang at the city level between 2010 and 2022 has shown high competitiveness. This is demonstrated by the trophy, as many as 56 trophies as the competition's winner. This success is not only proof of involvement in the competition, but the spirit of competition awakened is the hope to spur achievements in all fields.

Important Factors Supporting Increasing Competitiveness

According to the author, the efficient and innovative leadership of the madrasah head is an essential factor in increasing the competitiveness of MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang. The leadership of the Madrasah head is the main supporting factor. Islamic characteristics and characteristics at MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang can develop through this madrasa head. Teachers and madrasah committees see MadrasahMadrasah heads as having the ability to mobilize resources within the madrasah environment to support programs to strengthen Islamic character and high competitiveness, at least a lack of competitiveness towards primary education the city level. The previous head of the MadrasahMadrasah needed this kind of leadership ability. The distinctive Islamic character and excellence in MIPA and language developed well after becoming the second head of the madrasa. With the ability to mobilize the Madrasah'sMadrasah's environmental resources, the facilities and various facilities to strengthen the Islamic character in madrasahs can gradually be fulfilled.

The madrasah committee leaders strongly support the fulfilment of these infrastructure facilities. The existence of a good relationship between the head of the madrasa and the head of the madrasah committee has resulted in several educational facilities that strongly support the madrasah excellence program. Until now, the madrasah committee and parents of students have provided educational facilities in the form of 22 classrooms, ceremonial and sports fields, green parks and LCD facilities in

some classrooms. Educators and educational staff also provide strong support for student learning success. The teachers work optimally and are dedicated to delivering students to the gates of success. The achievements of the students are not only shown in the alums' abilities in terms of reading and writing and memorizing short Al-Quran surahs, obedience to prayer services, and polite behaviour but also shown by the many academic and non-academic achievements through competitions at local, regional, and national.

This strong support from teachers and education staff is also inseparable from the influence of a persuasive, communicative, innovative leadership style and the exemplary Madrasah headmaster. The success of the madrasa has increased community support, as marked by many applicants from the Lumajang community and its surroundings, exceeding the capacity of the madrasa, which can only accommodate 21 classes at this time. This generous support from the community has moved the chairman of the madrasah committee, Munif, who in 2010/2011 still found it difficult to find students at MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang then. The current condition has shifted; education units that find it difficult to find students are no longer madrasas but instead elementary schools located around madrasas. According to the head of the madrasah committee, there are many elementary schools around MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang.

However, this madrasa is still experiencing problems. The obstacle that is still felt by madrasah heads is the need for more funds to support more adequate facilities, such as representative classrooms, laboratories and libraries. Another thing that is no less important is the welfare of teachers. According to the data above, this MadrasahMadrasah has much honorary staff (above 45% of the total teachers) with a one-month salary of around IDR 500,000. Another obstacle is the limited funds to support the departure of outstanding students to participate in competitions at the regional, provincial and national levels. Such funds are not provided for in the official madrasah budget. Because of this, madrasa leaders are required to be creative in finding budgets from other sources.

CONCLUSION

Judging from the large number of enthusiasts who attend MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang and from the point of view of achievement, MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang can be categorized as one of the madrasas that have high competitiveness within the Ministry of Religion, not only in Lumajang city but also at the national level. This increase in competitiveness is evident when one sees that for more than 20 years MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang has had difficulty finding students. However, now it is selecting many applicants for reasons of professionalism and limited capacity. Factors that support the competitiveness of madrasas are the existence of effective and innovative leadership from school principals, adequate facilities, the quality of educators who meet standards, and the development of various learning innovations. These various factors have become the driving force and attraction for the community to send their children to this madrasa.

The increase in the number of enthusiasts is accompanied by the stronger distinctive Islamic character of madrasas and the increasing number of student achievements in academic and non-academic competitions at the city, provincial and national levels. MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang innovates by creating superior classes in maximizing madrasah services for the upper middle class. This superior class has proven to be able to increase competitiveness because the number of middle and upper-class people registering to enter madrasas has increased.

However, some weaknesses, such as limited classrooms, laboratory space, and library space, are still visible. Another weakness is the number of teachers in madrasas whose welfare is still a concern. The regional government (Pemda) needs to give adequate attention to madrasas. Even the madrasah community has the impression that the regional government does not support the achievements that these madrasas have achieved shown.

To support the contribution of madrasahs in increasing the absorption of the Gross Enrollment Rate (APK) or Net Enrollment Rate (APM) in Indonesia, the Ministry of Religion needs to increase the support facilities Volume 14, Number 2, August 2016 259 STRATEGY FOR INCREASING MADRASAH COMPETITIVENESS; Case Study of MTs MiftahulMidadLumajang and educational facilities and adequate funding for madrasahs that have high competitiveness. With this support, the participation of madrasahs in providing quality education services will increase. In addition, supporting highly competitive madrasahs can be interpreted as a reward for their hard work and dedication so that it can spur the madrasahs concerned and other madrasahs to become madrasahs of high quality and have high competitiveness.

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