

BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS, COMMUNICATION STYLES AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT OF MARRIED ADULTS IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Unhappiness in marriage, incidence of broken homes, several cases of divorce are increasing among married adults in Nigeria. This study investigated behaviour patterns, communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. Descriptive survey design of correlational type was adopted for the study. A total of 1690 married adults in Nigeria was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument entitled "Behaviour Patterns, Communication Styles and Marital Adjustment Questionnaire" The findings revealed that: a higher percentage 65.02% of the respondents displayed Type A behaviour pattern, while 34.9 % of the respondents displayed Type B behaviour pattern; 1554 (92.0%) of the respondents used appropriate communication styles, while 136 (8.0%) used inappropriate communication styles; 92.5% of the respondents had positive marital adjustment, while 127(7.5%) had negative marital adjustment and there was a significant relationship among behaviour patterns ,communication styles and marital adjustment of adults in Nigeria. The study concluded that there was a significant and positive relationship among behaviour patterns, communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. The study therefore recommended, amongst others that marriage counselors should organize married adults' education programme where married adults would be guided on characteristics of different patterns of human behaviours.

Keywords: Behaviour patterns, Adults communication, Adjustment styles

Introduction

Marital relationship is the beginning of family life because it involves the union between a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage Is a component part of culture usually formalized either by the custom, law or solemnized by religion. It is a means by which psychological, social, emotional and security needs of married adults are satisfied (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2008). Esere (2008) viewed marriage from Christian perspective and described it as an institution of divine significance.

Among the cultures, parents of each spouse always have a say on who gets married to their children as well as the performance of marriage rites to ensure the smooth running of the marriage to be a blessed one. In marriage, physical relationship is very essential because there is strength in unity. When spouses are physically, emotionally and spiritually related to each other, they would make positive contributions to the world they live in. The world is full of confrontations and violence; spouses need each other literarily and physically on daily basis in order to survive the crushing experience of life. Better result can be obtained when spouses work together as one. Spouses think more creatively when heads are put together over any given matter (Adeoti, 2002). Marriage is an institution established by God right from the time of creation of the universe.

The Holy Qur'an 30 vs. 21 states "And among his signs is that He creates for you mates from among your selves that ye may dwell peacefulness with them and he has put love and mercy between your hearts. Truly in that are signs for those who reflect" The Holy Bible describes marriage as a union between a man and a woman in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived as husband and wife (Gen: 2:18). Nwoye (1991) described marriage as a partnership contract without an escape clause. This means that marriage should be an everlasting agreement between

the couple. Marriage should be a permanent contract. Marriage has been defined by different authors according to their own perception of its functions (Olayinka, 2000) defined marriage as a social institution for the union of a man and his wife in body and soul. Omari (2009) observed that since marriage involves the coming together of a man and woman to raise a family, the most important aim of this union is to meet the satisfaction of security and enduring affection and companionship, sexual relationship and the building of the home and the family.

Nwoye (1991) noted that the aspiration of all young spouses is to achieve lasting unity in marriage. Establishment of a peaceful home is the desire of most married men and women. Many spouses enter into marriage with love and sincere desire for successful married life — however, in marriage the best of intentions do not automatically translate to fruitful marriage due to challenges and realities of marital life. The adjustment from being single to being married usually turns out to be much more difficult than many married adults ever imagine. In order to cope with these marital challenges the adults need to adjust to stay happily for life.

The incidences of broken homes, unhappiness after marriages and several cases of divorce in court have been on the increase in Nigeria. These result to the married adults' poor attitude to life, maladjusted personality and retrogressive attitudes to society and development (Filani, 1999). According to Akinboye (1998), many young people look forward to their wedding day. They fantasize about what their future marital life would be like, when they start living with their partners, however, many of them wonder why marriages no longer work out. They wonder why marriage does not last over a life time as viewed on wedding day. It should be borne in mind that continuity and satisfaction in marriage depend on their capability to withstand marital challenges. Marital adjustment is closely related to the stability of a given marriage. Well-adjusted marriages are expected to last for a long time, while poorly adjusted ones may end in divorce. According to Phillip (2014), divorce rate in United States and United Kingdom stood at 4.95% per 1,000 marriages respectively. In Asia, Japan divorce rates to date 13.8%, China 10.4% and Korea 10.3% per 1,000 marriages respectively (Premchand, 2014). In Africa the highest rate of divorce is recorded with 1 out of every 4 marriages contracted ending in divorce (Awodele, 2015).

The breakdown in marital relationship has become a global phenomenon affecting both the high and the low class in the contemporary time. The married adult frequently nag, quarrel or fight. The happenings among Nigerian married adults in the present day may eventually lead to separation and divorce in extreme cases. Although divorce may not be the end result of every malfunctioning marital relationship; but fit happens, it has numerous traumatic effects on the society. A close look at the implications shows that family life and marriage are in for serious trouble. According to Oladayo (2015), Christian and Islamic beliefs emphasize the holiness of marriage and discourage divorce, barring extreme situations. In traditional societies, the norms even tend to exalt the institution of marriage, even in polygamies, while discouraging divorce. However, divorce cases are becoming rampant, as spouses usually troop to courts, pressing for the dissolution of their marriages.

Divorce rate is growing. A recent Europe-wide Survey reveals an overall increase in the number of spouses getting divorced. Britain and Finland have the joint highest divorce rate in Europe, while Ireland and Luxembourg have the lowest. The figures have shown an average of 1.8 divorces for every 1,000 people in Europe. However, Britain and Finland have the rank of 2.8 legal dissolution of marriage per 1,000, compared with just 0.6 per 1,000 in Luxembourg and Ireland (The Punch Newspaper, 2016). The trend is not different in Nigeria. Though there may be dearth of authorized statistics, committee on Foreign Relations took the research to the number of divorce cases filled in the different courts in the country over a period of time. Nigeria is said to be among the highest in West Africa with one in three marriages said to fail within the first three years (Adegoke, 2010). The condition could be worse in city areas such as Lagos State where marital relationships are

broken on daily basis (Ofole, 2015). Divorce cases at Grade “A” customary court, Somolu Local Government Area five (5) of the divorce cases i.e. 62.5% ended up in divorce. One (1) of the eight (8) cases i.e. 12.5% did not end up in divorce while two (2) of the eight (8) cases i.e. 25% were yet to be decided (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012).

The registered cases of dissolution of marriage, petition for divorce and judicial separation in the Area Courts 1 number 2 Center Igboro, Ilorin, Kwara State from 2012 to February, 2016 are as follows: 394 in 2012, 432 in 2013, 554 in 2014, 698 in 2015 and 109 as at Feb, 23 2016. This showed an increase in marital disruption in Kwara State. The examples given are in sights to the unsavory fate of marriage in Nigeria. Generally, adjustment period given not long after the day of marriage ceremony; and its result always figure out see the union's survival or its demise.

Soon after wedding, many things begin to unfold, for instance, selfishness in management of funds and ineffective communication (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2008). Readily obtainable information and events have shown that quite a number of married adults fail to realize the marital bliss which they had earlier desired. This is because at marriage, a new and much intimate dimension of the relationship is added. Many married adults may not have tested psychological capability to cope sufficiently in marriage before going into matrimony, and therefore, they cannot adjust to the needs of living together in such intimate relationship. Marital adjustment, according to Osiki (1989) is a process whereby two individuals through consent, become husband and wife and are living in a healthy relationship despite all odds. The husband and wife see each other first as individuals with trait—differentials, different background and orientation, which help them to maintain a “give and take” relationship.

Ebenuwa-Okoh (2008) explained that, marital adjustment simply refers to working out arrangements which exists in marriage. In this marriage relationship, fear of partners' activity and suspicions ‘don't exist, both husband and wife learn how to inculcate and nurture healthy thoughts about each other. Distance does not act as a barrier, reaching out is certain about his or her spouse safety in his or her absence at home. External influences such as the effect of in-laws do not have much influence on the marital relationship because in-laws and family friends are well regarded and their roles are guided so that they may not be judgmental (Ogunsami, 2008). Ogunsami (2008) in an attempt to explain what she viewed as best and realistic indices of marital adjustment presented assumption of a well—adjusted marriage as spouses who are well—adjusted should have agreement on matters critical to maintaining their marital union, sharing of common activities and interest that enhance family growth, sharing demonstrations of affection and mutual confidences help the marital dyad's ability to cope with day to day activities and mundane problems. The married adults who are happy and satisfied with the marital relation have few complaints about their marriage relationship and few doubts about certainty of the marriage's chance of succeeding.

One of the major determinants of marital adjustment is an individual's behaviour pattern which plays a major role in the marital adjustment of married adults. A behaviour pattern is a common organizational term which is usually employed to place human behaviour in a psychological perspective. This implies that the study of the pattern of human behaviour allows for proper understanding for human nature. Behaviour pattern plays a great role in the marital adjustment of married adults. Behaviour pattern can be described as psychological construct that helps in defining an individual's likely disposition towards an event such as at-risk behaviour. Behaviour pattern refers to the unique and distinctive characteristics which sets a person apart from another. Aspects of Behaviour pattern includes one's qualities or attributes, the way a person really is, person's general habitual behaviour, politeness and submissiveness (Olowonirejuaro, 2008).

One way of classifying personality characteristics is through the use of the Type A and B behaviour patterns. According to Sanni (1999) the concept of Types A and B behaviour patterns dated back to the 19th century, when a cardiologist, Sir William Osler. The Type A behaviour pattern is a set of behavioural responses to life or challenges of environment variables more often aggravated by situation which constitutes significant changes of life. The individuals exhibiting the Type A pattern are characterized by impatience, a chronic sense of time urgency, enhanced competitiveness, aggressive drive and often some hostility

Communication is the key to healthy relationship (Esere, 2006). It allows for expression of love and affection between married couples. Skills associated with communication such as empathy, active listening and conflict resolution are generally assumed to have great impact on marital stability and satisfaction (Larson & Kurdek, 2002). Conversely, couples with deficits in the same areas are generally assumed to experience greater instability and less satisfaction in their relationships. Crouch (1996) write that communication training as an attempt to remediate problematic communication has become an important component in many approaches to marital therapy.

Esere (2006) stated that marriage without effective communication is likely to crumble. Communication is a life wire of marriage relationship or any other meaningful relationship. So many problems escalate when there is no communication and many problems are resolved when there is effective communication (Esere, 2006). Certainly, communication is the key to successful marriage and without communication no marriage can survive happily. According to Esere (2008), more than half of the failed relationships (marital) are due to the fact that there was severe lack of communication among couples. Generally speaking, research indicates that increased levels of communication are associated with greater marital satisfaction while communication deficits are associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. For example, communication was identified as a major contributing factor to marital satisfaction in a study that examined marital strengths in enduring marriages. Positive communication processes have also been identified as premarital factors that predict later marital quality.

According to Esere (2008), communication is a critical component of marital life. It is the total self-disclosure of spouses to each other. It is a high degree of negotiating pleasurable and unpleasurable feelings or event with each other by the spouses to a great level of understanding that brings harmony and peace. It also means spouses listening to each other patiently and with empathy. According to Anne (2011), there are four basic communication styles. These are passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive styles. Passive communication styles is one in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. Passive communication style is usually as a result of low self-esteem. Aggressive communication style is one in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the right of others. Thus, aggressive communicators are verbally and/or physically abusive. Aggressive communication is born out of low self-esteem (often caused by past physical and/or temperamental reproach), unhealed emotional wounds, and feelings of impotence. Passive aggressive communication style is one in which individuals appear passive on the surface but are really acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way (Anne, 2011). Assertive communication style is one in which individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocates for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others (Anne, 2011). Assertive communication is born out of high self-esteem. These individuals value themselves, their time and their temperamental, spiritual, and physical needs and are powerful advocates for them while being very respectful of the rights of others.

Communication between spouses is essential. It requires communication to know what definitely polish a spouse's sense of fulfillment. If the two people in the relationship take the time to talk about the expressions of affection that the other spouse could perform to make feel loved (i.e. Increase the in positive moments), they could specifically attempt to meet their spouse's needs in an informal and deliberate manner. This, of course demands certain degree of selfless behaviour by both partners in the marriage, and doing so would increase each person's good moments which in turn, gives the relationship a greater degree of satisfaction which will eventually lead to marital stability. Marital stability set in due to marital adjustment.

In marital life sometimes, instability set in due to maladjustment on the part of one or both partners. Marital instability may be a product of many factors such as level of education of the spouses, religion of the spouses, socio-economic status of the spouses family setting, and pattern of marriage, employment status of one or both partners. In fact, inappropriate behaviour patterns and poor communication styles of the spouses have become major causes of marital instability or maladjustment. Understanding of one's behaviour patterns types and the behaviour pattern types of one's spouse facilitates interpersonal relationship; create intimacy, togetherness and understanding among married adults. Adopting appropriate communication styles increase the level of understanding and togetherness which lead to marital adjustment. This research deemed it necessary to investigate Behaviour patterns, Communication Styles and Marital Adjustment of Married Adults in Nigeria.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the behaviour patterns of married adults in Nigeria?
2. What are the communication styles of married adults in Nigeria?
3. What is the marital adjustment level of married adults in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship among behaviour patterns, communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design employed for this study is the descriptive survey of the correlation type. In this study, two key variables of behaviour patterns and communication styles, which are the independent variables, were measured and their relationship with marital adjustment of adults in Nigeria was sought. Then population forth is study comprised all literate married adults in Nigeria. The target population forth is study consisted of all literate married adults who were civil servants in six states drawn from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The National Bureau of Statistics (2012) estimated married adults in Nigeria who presented themselves for counting to be 48,924,317. The sample forth is study was drawn from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria to ensure geographical representation.

Using the sample size determination table of Research Advisor (2006), at 95% confidence interval, and 2.5% Margin of error, a sample size of 1,690 was determined for the study. The multi-stage sampling method was adopted in selecting respondents for this study. At stage one, simple random sampling technique was used in selecting one state from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, using deep-hart method. The names of states in each of the geo-political zones were written on a sheet of paper, neatly wrapped and then placed in an opaque container. Thereafter, a state was randomly picked from the container. This process was repeated for the remaining geo-political zones. This is done to give all the states equal chance of being selected. Simple random technique is a subset of a statistical population in which each member of the sub set has an equal probability

of being chosen. At stage two, literate married adults who were civil servants were purposively selected for the study because only literate married adults who are civil servants are expected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is an expressly chosen sample because it fulfils certain criteria needed for the study. It specifies elements which satisfy some predetermined criteria for selection, the sample must possess certain characteristics relevant to the study (Nworgu, 2006). The purposive sampling technique, also called judgmental sampling is an on -random technique. It is characterized by the use of judgment and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples from a study population & Popoola, 2006).

At stage three, stratified random sampling technique was used to classify variables in to group of desired characteristics of gender, age, educational qualification, length of years in marriage and religion. At stage four, Proportional sampling technique was employed to select the number of respondents from each of the state selected. This method was chosen by the researchers because all the states did not have equal number of married adults. Hence, using the proportional sampling procedure, the researches got the appropriate sample size selected from the six states. A questionnaire entitled "Behaviour Patterns, Communication Styles and Marital Adjustment Questionnaire" was used for data collection. The instrument consisted of four (4) sections; A, B, C, and D. Section A contained information on demographic data of the respondents. Section B comprised of 20 items on Behaviour patterns. Section C comprised of 20 items on Communication styles and Section D comprised of 20 items on Marital Adjustment, making a total of 60 items altogether. The instrument was content validated by experts in the Department of Counsellor Education. The reliability of this instrument was ascertained by using test- retest reliability method. The two sets of scores obtained from the two administrations were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to obtain the correlation Coefficient. A reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained, which was satisfactory to measure stability. Anon the sport filling and retrieval of the questionnaire was encouraged.

In analyzing the data, both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: *What are the behaviour patterns of married adults in Nigeria?*

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Behaviour Patterns

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Behaviour Patterns		
Type A	1099	65.0
Type B	591	35.0
Total	1690	100.0

The finding indicates that most married adults in Nigeria have Type A and others have Type B behaviour patterns.

Research Question Two: *What are the communication styles of married adults in Nigeria?*

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Communication Styles

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Communication Styles		
Appropriate Communication	1554	92.0
Inappropriate Communication	136	8.0
Total	1690	100.0

Table 2 shows that most married adults in the study use appropriate communication

Research Question Three: *What is the marital adjustment level of married adults in Nigeria?*

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Adjustment

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Marital Adjustment		
High Marital adjustment	1563	92.5
Low Marital Adjustment	127	7.5
Total	1690	100

In Table 3, it is shown that most (92%) of the respondents have high marital adjustment

Hypothesis one: *There is no significant relationship among Behaviour patterns, communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria?*

Table 4i: Summary of Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable

Variables	MA	BP	CS
Marital Adjustment	1.000		
Behaviour Patterns	.032*	1.000	
Communication Styles	.257	.049	1.000

The results from Table 4i indicates that behaviour patterns had significant relationship with marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria ($r=0.032$, $p<0.05$). This shows that behaviour patterns had a marginally significant influence on marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. The table also shows that communication styles of married adults did not significantly relate with marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria ($r=0.257$, $p>0.05$). This shows that communication styles of the respondents did not significantly influence their marital adjustment.

The findings indicated that behaviour patterns whether Type A or Type B influenced marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria but communication styles did not influence marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria.

4ii: Model Summary

Model	R	R Squares	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.257	.66	0.605	11.613
2	.257	.66	0.605	11.614

. Predictor: (Constant), CS

b. Predictor: (Constant), CS, BP

Table 4iii: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p	Remark
Regression	16045.777	1	16045.777	118.976*	.000 ^a	Sig
Residual	227653.416	1688	134.866			
Total	243699.193	1689				
Regression	16139.361	2	8069.681	59.824 *	.000 ^b	Sig
Residual	227559.832	1687	134.890			
Total	243699.193	1689				

* **Significant, $p < 0.05$**

a. Predictors: (Constant), CS

b. Predictor: (Constant), CS, BP

c. Dependent Variable: MA

Table 4ii (Model 1) shows a Multiple R of .257, an R square of .066 and Adjusted R square of .605. The Multiple R of .257 represents the degree of association among measured variables. This result revealed that the independent variable (communication styles) and marital adjustment when combined did indicate a significant relationship. The adjusted R square of 0.605 translates to 60.5% and this implies that communication styles relate with marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. The Multiple R was tested for significance with an F-ratio statistics. The result of the ANOVA table indicates an F- value of $F(1, 1688) = 118.976$, $P < 0.05$. This further implies that the relationship between the independent variable and the outcome variable are statistically significant.

Table 4iii (Model2) also shows a Multiple R of .257, an R square of .066 and an Adjusted R square of .605. The Multiple R of .257 represents the degree of association among measured variables. The result revealed that the independent variables (Communication Styles and Behaviour Patterns) and marital adjustment of married adults when combined did indicate a significant relationship. The adjusted R square of 0.605 translates to 60.5% and this implies communication styles and behaviour pattern related with marital adjustment of married adults. The Multiple R was tested for significance with an F-ratio statistics. The result of the ANOVA table indicates an F- value of $F(2, 1687) = 59.824$, $P < 0.05$. This further implies that the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable are statistically significant. Therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the analyzed data revealed that a higher percentage of the respondents displayed Type A behaviour pattern, while 591 which form 35.0% of the respondents displayed Type B behaviour pattern. This study revealed that most married adults who displayed Type A behaviour pattern used the positive communication style and had high marital adjustment. This is not farfetched due to the fact that to a Type A individual, there is 'no dull moment'. Type A individuals are energetic, think out aloud,

and give a lot of information in trying to explain there as on for their actions (Pamela, 2009). Several studies have shown positive correlations between Type A behaviour pattern and marital adjustment (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar & Rooke, 2010) while other studies have shown non-significant correlations between these variables (Schmitt Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007). Thus, research on Type A behaviour pattern and marital adjustment has produced inconsistent results. The finding of this study also revealed that most married adults in Nigeria who displayed Type B behaviour pattern used appropriate communication styles and had high marital adjustment. This may be as a result of the fact that Type B individual is a person who is more “relaxed”, in his/her approach to life. Type B individual is not in a hurry.

The only hypothesis postulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level was rejected. The result revealed a relative contribution of the variables (behaviour patterns and marital adjustment) relating with marital adjustment of married adults. Communication Styles and Behaviour Patterns had a relationship with marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. Communication Styles and Behaviour Patterns influenced marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria. This is in support of the study conducted by Luckey (1994) which revealed that personality traits of spouses are important prediction of marital adjustment. Luckey maintained that these factors determined the ways spouses react to stressful and disagreeable conditions in their marriage. The finding of this study is also in support of Murstein (1973) which stressed that there were some relationship between negative personality characteristics and unhappiness in marriage. The result found support in Noller and Fitzpatric (1990) who found out that there is a strong link between communication styles and satisfaction (adjustment) with family relationship. Poor communication is also associated with an increased risk of marital maladjustment and marital separation. The finding of this study is also in support of Lee (2018), who found a positive strong association between marital communication and marital adjustment. Husbands' marital adjustment positively correlated with that of wives.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: most married adults in Nigeria who displayed Type A behaviour pattern used appropriate communication styles and had high marital adjustment. Most married adults in Nigeria who displayed Type B behaviour pattern used appropriate communication styles and had high marital adjustment. Most of the respondents that participated in the study had high marital adjustment in their marriage. Most married adults in Nigeria who used inappropriate communication styles had low marital adjustment. There was a significant relationship among behaviour patterns, communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this research, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON) should mount up enlightenment programmes through workshops and seminars in Schools, Religious Organizations and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to create awareness about the significant roles behaviour patterns and communication styles can play in marital adjustment of married adults. Knowing the roles each can play will provide married adults the ability to move forward in their relationship.
2. Marriage counsellors should counsell married adults on how to understand their own behaviour pattern type and the behaviour pattern type of their spouses. By so doing, they will appreciate their individual differences which will enhance marital adjustment.
3. The Counsellor Education Department in all Nigerian Universities should build a strong Counselling Unit into counselor education programmes where couples and would be couples can come for training about how to communicate and how the communication styles adopted can ensure positive change in ones marital life. Through appropriate communication style, couples can achieve a

better understanding and have high marital adjustment.

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