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Implementation of the Problem-Based Learning Model in Islamic Religious Education Learning at Cikal Cendekia Islamic Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in Islamic Religious Education learning at Cikal Cendekia Islamic Elementary School. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source triangulation. The findings indicate that the implementation of the PBL model enhances student engagement and active participation in the learning process. The stages of implementation include problem orientation, organization of learning activities, independent inquiry, presentation of discussion results, and learning evaluation. Overall, the PBL model proved to be sufficiently effective in improving the quality of learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of education in Indonesia is currently encouraging learning innovations aligned with the demands of 21st-century education. These competencies include critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, commonly referred to as the 4C skills. One of the main challenges of 21st-century learning is the need to develop student-centered and problem-based learning approaches so that students are able to think critically through the integration of theory and practice (Faradilla et al., 2024). Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character, morality, and spiritual competence, in line with the goals of national education and the teachings of Islam itself (Setiawan et al., 2017).

However, in practice, PAI learning in schools often faces challenges due to instructional models that tend to be dominated by lecture-based, teacher-centered methods and the pressure of a dense curriculum. These conditions potentially limit the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and the meaningful internalization of religious values (Khalil, YSH, & Arifin, S., 2024). Furthermore, monotonous lecture methods make learning less meaningful and less relevant to students' daily lives. One of the major challenges in education is the lack of innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning (Rafliyanto & Mukhlis, 2023). Many educators have not yet mastered the use of modern learning models and continue to rely on conventional teaching methods. This situation leads to student boredom, resulting in

suboptimal understanding of learning materials. In addition, monotonous learning patterns reduce students' motivation to actively participate in the learning process. Therefore, renewal efforts that are aligned with students' real-life contexts in PAI learning are urgently needed to improve teaching and learning systems that have been predominantly focused on teachers (Teacher-Centered Learning/TCL).

In this regard, the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in PAI is considered highly relevant for deepening students' understanding and enabling them to apply Islamic principles and norms in their daily lives. This approach also helps students prepare to face the challenges of modern life. Through PBL, the learning process becomes more relevant to students' real-life experiences, as students are able to recognize the relevance of the problems they encounter. Consequently, this approach fosters curiosity, stimulates group collaboration, actively engages students in finding solutions to identified problems, and develops critical thinking skills (Defi Triana Sari et al., 2022). In line with this perspective, Olson emphasizes that the primary goal of education is to prepare students to function effectively in society (Hamalik, 2023). Therefore, education needs to provide opportunities for students to be directly involved in solving real-world problems, as they will inevitably face various life challenges in the future that require critical thinking abilities.

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is a pedagogical approach that is considered appropriate and necessary to be implemented within educational contexts. PBL is viewed as a driving force in the innovation of learning models. This model provides students with opportunities to think deeply and critically, analyze situations, and identify solutions to existing problems. PBL is a learning model that fosters higher-order thinking skills while offering space for exploration, reflection, and self-directed learning. As a modern approach, PBL shifts the classroom focus from mere teacher-centered knowledge transmission to the development of essential 21st-century skills. Moreover, PBL actively engages students with real-life issues, thereby creating a learning process that is more relevant and meaningful (Haryanto & Kusmiyati, 2022).

Problem-Based Learning is defined as an instructional approach that actively engages students in solving authentic problems as a context for developing critical thinking skills and acquiring essential knowledge and competencies (Syamsidah & Suryani, H., n.d.). This model encourages students to actively construct knowledge through a series of stages, including problem orientation, organization of learning activities, self-directed learning, group work, and the development and presentation of outcomes (Erlin Herina, 2022). The implementation of the PBL model in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a highly significant role and offers broad opportunities for educational development. Through PBL, students are able to master PAI subject matter—such as aqidah (Islamic creed), akhlaq (morality), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Islamic history—through real and contextual problem situations (Desita Erviani, 2025).

Thus, PBL does not merely focus on cognitive academic achievement but also contributes to affective and psychomotor development, including the formation of Islamic educational character traits such as responsibility, independence, empathy, and collaboration—attributes that align with the core objectives of PAI learning (Khalil, YSH, & Arifin, S., 2024).

The learning process of Islamic Religious Education at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia demonstrates notable dynamics, particularly in terms of student engagement during classroom activities. Based on classroom observations, it was found that some students remain passive and are not actively involved in the learning process. They tend to receive material unilaterally from the teacher without engaging in critical thinking or problem-solving related to their daily lives. This condition results in a low level of appreciation for the Islamic values being taught, as well as limited ability to apply Islamic teachings to real-life problems in their surrounding environment.

To address these issues, teachers at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia have begun implementing the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in Islamic Religious Education classes. This model encourages students to actively identify contextual problems, engage in discussion, collaborate with peers, and find solutions both independently and collaboratively. The application of the PBL model is expected to enhance

students' understanding of Islamic teachings, foster Islamic character development, and cultivate critical thinking skills from an early age. This practice also provides opportunities for students not only to comprehend Islamic teachings theoretically but also to internalize them in their daily behavior.

The situation at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia reflects broader challenges in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Many teachers continue to employ conventional approaches that emphasize memorization and cognitive knowledge, while affective and psychomotor aspects remain underdeveloped. This condition poses a barrier to forming students who not only master religious knowledge theoretically but also demonstrate Islamic behavior that reflects religious values in their everyday lives.

Research on the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) has been widely conducted by previous scholars. One such study examined the effectiveness of PBL in improving students' learning outcomes in IRE and found that the use of the PBL model significantly increased students' academic achievement, as indicated by an improvement in the average score from 65.0 to 80.0 (Ayas Hendra Hermawan et al., 2024). Another study by Nur Jannah, entitled Application of Problem-Based Learning Model in Improving Islamic Education Learning Outcomes of Students, reported similar findings. The study revealed that the implementation of the PBL model had a positive impact on improving students' learning outcomes and reducing the number of students whose scores were below the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). In the pre-cycle stage, 20% of students had not met the KKM; this figure increased to 50% in Cycle I and reached 75% in Cycle II, indicating a 25% increase in learning mastery between Cycle I and Cycle II (Jannah, 2023).

Although these studies demonstrate the effectiveness of PBL in improving cognitive learning outcomes, they largely focus on quantitative improvements in achievement scores and mastery levels. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the implementation process of the PBL model in a more contextual and qualitative manner, particularly in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. The application of PBL in PAI is important not only to assess its effectiveness in enhancing students' academic performance but also to examine its role in developing students' holistic competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, character formation, and the internalization of Islamic values. In addition, research is required to analyze practical strategies for implementing PBL in real classroom settings and to identify challenges that may arise when integrating this model into PAI learning.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on examining the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning model in Islamic Religious Education at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia. This research seeks to observe how students actively participate in the PAI learning process through PBL, thereby transforming the perception that Islamic Religious Education is merely theoretical into one that is applicable and relevant to students' real-life challenges. The implementation of PBL at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia is expected to optimize PAI learning so that it becomes more meaningful, effective, and relevant in shaping students' character and developing their competencies holistically. In this way, the present study differs from previous research by emphasizing the qualitative dynamics of classroom implementation and student engagement, rather than focusing solely on learning outcomes measured by test scores.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on its object of study, this research is categorized as field research. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which focuses on mapping and describing various phenomena, including events, social interactions, perspectives, beliefs, and ways of thinking of individuals or groups, with the aim of providing an in-depth portrayal of what occurs during the implementation process (Sugiyono, 2018).

This study utilized three main data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. The collected data were then processed using qualitative data analysis procedures so that they were ready to be interpreted (Sugiyono, 2018). The data sources were divided into two types. First, primary data were obtained directly through interviews and observations conducted at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia, Pinang,

Tangerang City. Second, secondary data consisted of information gathered from supporting sources such as journals, scientific articles, internet sources, and official documents from SD Islam Cikal Cendekia, Pinang, Tangerang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SD Islam Cikal Cendekia is located in a safe, comfortable, and easily accessible environment for both two-wheeled and four-wheeled vehicles. Specifically, the school is located at Jl. Perkutut No. 690, Pinang Griya Permai, Pinang, Tangerang City. SD Islam Cikal Cendekia is committed to developing excellence in education, both in terms of academic achievement and spiritual character. As a modern Islamic educational institution, SD Islam Cikal Cendekia has a vision of becoming a school based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, oriented toward the development of moral character and critical thinking in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Students' thinking abilities are optimized through learning activities oriented toward systematic group or team work, enabling students to strengthen, sharpen, test, and develop their thinking skills continuously (Wulandari et al., 2023). Thus, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model functions as a learning process framework that optimizes real problems (authentic issues) as the main basis in the learning process. Through this approach, students are directed to sharpen critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities to face various given challenges, while simultaneously forming a deep understanding of the learning material.

The steps of implementing the Problem-Based Learning model (Problem-Based Learning) (Dewi Indrapangastuti, 2023):

Table 1. The steps of implementing the Problem-Based Learning

Phase	Teacher Behavior Indicators	Student Roles
Problem Orientation	Presents authentic problems and encourages students to identify and solve the problems.	Understand the presented problem and recognize the importance of finding solutions.
Organizing Students for Learning	Assists in explaining and organizing task responsibilities, including forming learning groups (if applicable).	Join groups, plan, and divide tasks related to the problem.
Guiding Individual and Group Investigation	Guides students in obtaining information, conducting investigations, and finding solutions.	Conduct investigations, organize and record information, gather data from multiple sources, and analyze information.
Developing and Presenting Work	Assists students in planning and preparing reports to be presented.	Formulate solution conclusions (reports/products) and present them in front of the class.
Analyzing and Evaluating the Problem-Solving Process	Facilitates reflective discussions to analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process and outcomes.	Participate in evaluation, reflect on the learning process, and identify strengths and weaknesses of the solutions.

The study began with the researcher's visit to SD Islam Cikal Cendekia to review the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), both those that had been previously applied and those that had not. After obtaining official permission from the school, the research was conducted with fifth-grade students as the research subjects.

At the next stage, interviews were conducted with the PAI teacher to identify the level of student engagement in learning activities, assess the teacher's perspectives on the implementation of the PBL model, and evaluate the teacher's role in the PAI learning process in the classroom. Based on the results of

interviews and classroom observations, the researcher obtained several important pieces of information that formed the basis of the analysis in this study, namely:

1. The majority of students (15 students) showed interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI), while 5 students stated that they disliked the subject because they felt the material was too extensive, which reduced their learning motivation.
2. In general, students paid attention to the teacher's explanations during the learning process; however, there were still some students who were less focused, depending on the teacher's teaching style and the classroom atmosphere.
3. The learning process in the classroom still reflected several Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) models, resulting in some students being passive during learning activities, and some of them even felt bored with this method.
4. Some students were reluctant to give presentations in front of the class due to fear of making mistakes, and they preferred discussion methods that were considered more comfortable and interactive.
5. Some students stated that they rarely expressed their opinions during learning activities due to the limited time available in each lesson session.

The results of interviews and observations of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process in the fifth-grade class were used as the basis for planning the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model. In this context, the Problem-Based Learning model was applied to the theme *Emulating Asmaul Husna*, which consisted of three main stages: material delivery, group discussion activities, and presentation of discussion results. The material taught included Asmaul Husna *Al-Qowiyy* and *Al-Qoyyum*, which discuss the attributes of Allah as the All-Powerful and Never Weak, as well as how to emulate these attributes in daily life, such as by doing good deeds, maintaining noble character, and being grateful for the knowledge and blessings received. The implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in the fifth-grade class is described through the following stages of learning activities:

Providing Problem Orientation to Students

Based on an interview with Mr. Puhutri, it was found that the learning activities began with a joint prayer and greeting, followed by checking students' attendance and reviewing the previous lesson. This review activity plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, as it functions to assess students' readiness to receive new material and to direct their concentration toward the learning activities to be carried out. Through this activity, the teacher can foster students' interest and focus on the topic to be discussed (Karimatus Saidah et al., 2021). This activity also helps ensure that students are truly prepared to participate in the learning process. After conducting apperception and identifying students' level of understanding of the previous material, the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia clearly presents the new learning topic so that the information can be well absorbed by students; however, material presentation that focuses solely on textbook content has the potential to cause boredom among students. Therefore, the teacher attempts to present contextual problems that frequently occur in the school environment, such as the habit of scribbling on desks, littering, and damaging plants, which are categorized as improper behavior. These problems are then linked to the learning theme being discussed and accompanied by the screening of educational videos to help students better understand the context.

The teacher also poses questions aimed at stimulating curiosity and encouraging students to think critically about the problems they face. This is in line with the statement by Wulandari et al. (2023) that at the beginning of problem-based learning, teachers need to clearly communicate learning objectives, instill positive attitudes toward the lesson, and describe what is expected of students. Teachers also need to provide clear procedures to involve students in identifying problems in their own environment. Students need to obtain sufficient new information to be able to investigate the problems they face in depth. The best way to

present problems in problem-based learning is by relating them to students' real-life experiences, using surprising events that arouse curiosity and the desire to solve problems.

Based on the author's observations, in the process of presenting problems, the teacher not only raises core issues but also provides additional explanations so that students do not misunderstand the context of the problems being discussed. This approach is intended to help students more easily grasp the essence of the problems that are the focus of learning. When the teacher presented the problems, all students showed enthusiasm in listening to the explanations given. During the activity, if there were students who did not yet understand the problems presented, the teacher provided opportunities for them to ask questions, thereby creating two-way interaction that supports active learning. The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model has a main characteristic of using problems related to real-life situations (Defi Triana Sari et al., 2022). Through this approach, students are encouraged to develop creativity and critical thinking skills in finding solutions to the problems they encounter in daily life. After that, the teacher provided additional motivation by explaining the benefits and importance of learning the material so that students would have internal motivation to learn more deeply.

Organizing Students to Conduct Investigation

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that learning activities were not always carried out individually, but could also be conducted through the formation of small groups to discuss the material being taught. In this context, the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia divided students into small groups based on their seating arrangements, and each group was asked to use their own ideas to solve the given problems. The material used was contextual in nature, namely problems that needed to be understood, analyzed, identified, and for which solutions or alternatives had to be sought based on real conditions and students' needs. Before the activity began, the teacher provided guidance so that each group prepared the results of their discussion and readied themselves to present their findings in front of the class. This preparation helped students feel more confident and less nervous when speaking in front of other groups. This approach is in line with Rodiyah (2022), who emphasizes that problem-based learning encourages teachers to develop collaborative skills among students and to guide them to work together in solving problems.

The main challenge for teachers at this stage is ensuring that all students actively participate in the investigation activities. This is also consistent with the statement by Ayas Hendra Hermawan et al. (2024), which notes that problem-based learning requires cooperation and mutual assistance among students, while the teacher's role is to guide them in planning learning activities. The investigation activities and preparation of learning reports showed that the level of student participation in group work varied; some students appeared less active, possibly due to differences in academic ability. This condition caused some students to be more dominant in discussions, while others tended to be passive. To address this issue, the teacher implemented a heterogeneous grouping system by placing students with high, medium, and low abilities in the same group to achieve balanced contributions. The aim was for higher-achieving students to motivate others to become more active in learning.

The teacher also provided opportunities for less active students to ask questions, encouraging them to learn more diligently and develop confidence in expressing their opinions. This questioning activity is also important for assessing students' cognitive aspects. From interviews with several students, it was found that some were still reluctant to express their opinions due to fear of being laughed at by their peers. In such situations, the teacher plays an important role in helping students find solutions and creating a safe and supportive learning environment so that learning effectiveness can be maintained. Essentially, in problem-based learning, the main focus is directed toward student activities such as discussion, expressing ideas, and developing understanding through interaction and the exchange of ideas. Through these activities, students

are actively involved in acquiring new knowledge while deepening their understanding of material they have not yet fully mastered.

Assisting Independent and Group Investigation

Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Ainal, it was found that during the investigation stage, each group was required to share the information they possessed regarding the topic being discussed and to actively participate in the discussion process. The main challenge for the teacher at this stage was to ensure that all students were truly involved in the investigation activities and were able to produce solutions to the given problems. In the context of exemplary moral learning, the teacher guided students to analyze real cases of commendable behavior that could be applied in school life. Based on interviews and observations, the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia played an important role in guiding students to collect information and conduct simple experiments until they fully understood the various dimensions of the problems being studied.

The purpose of this stage was to enable students to acquire relevant skills, data, and experiences to form their own ideas and arguments. At this stage, the teacher also encouraged the exchange of ideas and active discussion among group members by posing questions to deepen understanding of the issues being analyzed. The teacher monitored the progress of each group and provided assistance when students encountered difficulties, while still encouraging them to solve problems independently and maintain autonomy in the investigation activities. This is in line with the view of Haryanto and Kusmiyati (2022), who explain that investigation activities carried out independently, in pairs, or in small groups constitute the core of problem-based learning. Although different learning situations require diverse investigation techniques, such activities generally include data collection, experimentation, hypothesis formulation, explanation of results, and solution development. The teacher acts as a guide who provides direction without interfering with students' independence in the investigation process.

In line with this, Faradilla et al. (2024) emphasize that the exchange of ideas and acceptance of diverse perspectives are important aspects of the investigation stage, in which teachers should provide the necessary support without taking over students' independence. Based on the author's observations, the teacher functioned effectively as a facilitator at this stage, as evidenced by students' active involvement in understanding the problems and developing solution plans. The teacher also ensured that each group understood the given problem and distributed tasks proportionally so that all members were involved. In practice, each group assumed different roles, such as recording discussion results, searching for references from books, and discussing the findings to deepen their understanding. Through these activities, students were expected to collect accurate and factual data to support the arguments they developed and to take responsibility for the validity of the data. The information gathered was expected to provide relevant solutions to the problems they had previously identified.

Reviewing and Reassessing the Problem-Solving Steps Undertaken

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia evaluates the outcomes of students' discussions comprehensively, provides corrections, emphasizes key points, and summarizes the results of each group discussion. After that, the teacher invites students to reflect on the learning outcomes through question-and-answer sessions or follow-up discussions to deepen their understanding of the material. If there are students who still experience difficulties in understanding the material, the teacher provides additional explanations on the parts they have not yet understood so that the learning process achieves optimal results. Before the learning activities end, the teacher delivers conclusions or moral messages that can be applied in daily life, so that students truly understand the essential meaning of the lesson. This view is in line with Rodiyah (2022), who states that problem-based learning (Problem-Based Learning) also includes activities to help students analyze their learning processes, assess the intellectual skills used, and improve their ways of thinking. Thus,

students are encouraged to reflect on and reconstruct the understanding they have gained during the learning process.

Teachers have an important role in helping students evaluate their thinking processes and investigate learning outcomes so that learning experiences become more meaningful (Rafliyanto & Mukhlis, 2023). Based on observations of the activities of fifth-grade students at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning model has been carried out well and effectively. In terms of receiving, students showed a high level of attention and focus on the teacher's explanations, especially because the teacher used video media to help identify the issues being discussed. In terms of responding, students began to ask questions, answer the teacher's questions, and respond to the teacher's explanations, although some still appeared passive or lacked confidence in providing responses. In situations where some students were highly dependent on other group members, the teacher encouraged them to be more actively involved in group collaboration. In terms of valuing, students were able to provide appropriate answers and were involved in question-and-answer sessions within their groups, although some students did not participate because they were absent. In terms of organization, each group demonstrated good ability in solving problems and presenting the results of their discussions in front of the class. In terms of character recognition, students were able to work together without choosing their own group members, although there were still a small number of students who did not fully respect the opinions of their group mates.

These findings indicate that the implementation of the PBL model in fifth grade has been able to foster active attitudes, a sense of responsibility, and mutual respect among students in problem-based Islamic Religious Education learning activities.

Analyzing and Evaluating the Problem-Solving Process

The final stage in the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is analyzing and evaluating the problem-solving process carried out by students. At this stage, the teacher acts as a facilitator who does not judge whether students' opinions are right or wrong, but rather appreciates every idea that emerges in the discussion. Furthermore, the teacher reinforces the discussion results by adding information or necessary clarification to students' answers, as well as providing opportunities for other students to respond or ask questions. The learning process at this stage is closed with reflective activities, namely a process in which students assess the extent of their understanding of the material that has been learned. This evaluation activity is important because it helps the teacher determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved and identify the necessary improvement steps for subsequent learning activities (Sudirman, 2005).

Based on the researcher's observations, the Islamic Religious Education teacher actively monitors group discussion activities and student engagement throughout the problem-based learning process—from problem identification, investigation, presentation of results, to final reflection. The teacher provides opportunities for students to conclude the main points of learning from beginning to end, then closes the activity with group discussions and reinforcement of the material. Based on interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students, it is known that the implementation of the PBL model can reduce boredom in learning because the problems originate from daily habits, making them easier to understand and more meaningful for students.

Supporting factors for the implementation of PBL include curriculum alignment, the availability of facilities and infrastructure such as learning media and technology, teacher creativity, and a conducive learning environment. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include students' difficulties in generating ideas, limited implementation time, and differences in levels of understanding among students. To overcome these obstacles, teachers provide guidance through instructions or sample answers, use time effectively and efficiently, and conduct evaluation and repetition of material so that students' understanding becomes stronger and more evenly distributed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study conducted on fifth-grade students at SD Islam Cikal Cendekia, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model shows fairly good results and is feasible to be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning. During the implementation of the PBL model, the teacher was able to motivate students to learn more actively and meaningfully. In general, the application of this model can improve the quality of learning effectively. First, students are expected to implement the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model more optimally, as this approach has been proven to increase learning activities and learning outcomes in the Islamic Religious Education subject. Second, teachers are advised to randomly give students the opportunity to present the results of their group discussions in front of the class, so that students gradually become accustomed to and more confident in presenting learning outcomes and their opinions in front of their peers. As for the weaknesses found, schools should apply the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model because this learning model can increase students' learning activities and learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education. Subject teachers should randomly appoint one student from a group to present their work in front of the class, so that over time students become accustomed to presenting their work in front of the class, and students should be more active when sharing with their groups in solving problems.

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