

INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAIT ANGER AND ANGER EXPRESSION AND SUBMISSIVE BEHAVIORS IN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between anger, anger expression styles and submissive behaviors in adolescents. The study group of the research consisted of 445 high school students selected by random sampling method. The participants consisted of 250 (45.9%) men and 295 (54.1%) women. In the research, State-Trait Anger and Anger Expression Style Scale, Submissive Behaviors Scale and Personal Information Form were used to determine the anger and anger expression styles of adolescents. In the analysis of the data; t-test, one-way variance analysis, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis were used. According to the research findings, a significant difference was found in favor of female students in trait anger and anger-out sub-dimensions of trait anger and anger expression styles of adolescents according to gender variable. In the anger control sub-dimension, a significant difference was found in favor of

male students. According to the grade variable, the anger-in subscale dimension, which is one of the state-trait anger and anger expression subscales, was found to be significantly higher in the 10th grade students than the 9th grade students. As a result of the correlation analysis conducted in the research, a positive and moderate relationship was found between the adolescents' scores from submissive behaviors and the anger-in sub-dimensions. As a result of the regression analysis conducted in the research, it was concluded that submissive behaviors were a significant predictor of adolescents' anger-in. According to the findings of this study, it can be suggested that school psychological counselors conduct anger control group guidance for 9th and 10th grade students.

Keywords: submissive behavior, trait anger, anger expression style, adolescent.

Introduction

Anger can be expressed as a normal emotion that can be encountered frequently in daily life, from small disappointments to intense bursts of emotions, and can be experienced in different processes and intensities, and that is accompanied and affected by physiological and biological changes. The best time to learn to deal with emotions and control behaviors is childhood and adolescence (Hollenhorst, 1998). One of the most important problems faced during adolescence is anger. Feeling of anger may be associated with various psychological problems in adolescents and adults from time to time. (Dodge, Price, Bachorowski, and Newman, 1990). Anger is sometimes beneficial for individual in terms of its consequences when it is for short-term, and has a moderate severity; and sometimes it can have longer-lasting, violent and destructive consequences. In terms of its results, it is generally considered as a negative emotion for both the individual and the society (Balkaya, 2001). Anger

can be considered as a negative emotion in terms of social evaluation. When young children are angry, they are often punished by adults, such as parents or teachers. However, for each individual, anger is a subjective experience in expressing her/himself (Averil, 1983). Understanding and controlling anger is an important skill. Learning this skill in childhood and early adolescence is critical for the individual's socialization and life after adolescence (Duran and Eldeleklioglu, 2005).

It is very important to gain positive interpersonal problem-solving approaches in reducing adolescents' uncontrolled anger behavior (Arslan, Hamarta, Arslan and Saygin, 2010). Social support from teachers and family provides positive contributions to the individual in adolescence in expressing anger. (Arslan, 2009). Anger management, on the other hand, refers to the ability to manage negative situations in the process of experiencing anger. Humanity's concerns about controlling anger date back to ancient and middle ages (Hollenhorst, 1998). Anger is considered as a multidimensional concept with emotional, cognitive, physiological and behavioral elements. The emotional dimension of anger is associated with the power of emotional responses to situations causing anger. Cognitive dimension is related to the negative schemes that the individual has regarding the environment in which s/he lives; and, behavioral dimension includes positive or negative coping mechanisms used in expressing anger (Boman, 2003). Every person feels anger against a target at various times. Conditions that can be considered negative such as the presence of disturbing situations, the effect of stress, and the inability to fulfill wishes cause the individual to feel anger. In cases where anger is felt, approaching behavior is generally displayed to reflect anger rather than an avoidance behavior towards the target (Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, 2004).

Unrepressed anger often indicates that the level of anger is high. Anger that is not properly expressed is likely to have consequences such as assault, insult, threat, or swearing at individuals and objects (Spielberger, Krasner, and Solomon, 1988). Anger expression is the export of the anger verbally or by pouring it into behavior. Unrepressed anger can also be considered as a defense response to stress (Starnier and Peters 2004). A person with a high anger level can get angry quickly. Most people know to control their anger, but people who cannot control their anger immediately are often described as 'angry' among people; because there is no need to make much effort to annoy these people (Burger, 2006). Gilbert and Allan (1994) state that individuals with submissive behaviors can sometimes afford to lose the respect of people in their environment for the sake of a profit. Generally, the way anger is evaluated and handled has many positive and negative effects on other behaviors. The person needs to get to know her/his own anger and develop appropriate approaches (Soykan, 2003).

Submissive behavior can be defined as inability to express oneself in situations involving tension, and being shy, remaining passive, and refraining from expressing oneself in situations where interests are to be defended in mutual relations (Gilbert and Allan, 1994). It may be thought that the presence of a risky situation is effective in order for submissive behavior to occur (Kaygısız, 2019). Submissive behaviors can be considered as a response to an event. People may tend to show submissive behavior from time to time, as they respect authority or rely on authority's actions. When an individual feels conflict in her/himself about submissive behaviors, s/he can overcome this conflict situation by reasoning (Morris, 2002). High level of submissive behavior may cause more extreme stress, depression and other personality and behavioral disorders in the person. Pressure and threats to children and adolescents in the family may increase the likelihood of submissive behavior in the future. The person who displays

submissive behaviors would prefer to accept the accusations s/he may encounter instead of defending her/himself. Because individuals who show submissive behaviors can generally aim not to offend the opposite (Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, and Irons, 2003).

Submissive behavior can be considered as preventing the reaction against social threats or conflict situations. As a result, the person may experience excessive tension and humiliation. In addition, submissive behavior may sometimes cause a person to lose her/his reputation and to become a laughing stock in social settings (Gilbert and Allan, 1994). It was concluded that submissive behaviors are often associated with symptoms of stress and depression and some other mental disorders. Submissive behaviors are a significant predictor of depression. Because the repressed anger and lack of self-expression paves the way for submissive behaviors (Allan and Gilbert, 2002). Environmental factors, rather than heredity, have more impact on the formation of submissive behaviors. Family environment and social environment are the most likely environmental factors to affect submissive behaviors (Gilbert and Allan, 1994).

People who display submissive behaviors tend to hold themselves accountable and take responsibility for what happens when things are not working well in their social life. In addition, they can accept to be dominated by others by belittling themselves and suppressing their feelings. As a result, they may experience disappointment (Akin, 2009). The fact that children display submissive behaviors makes parents' and teachers' work easier from time to time, so that adults think that they can control the children more easily. Whereas, in a healthy human relationship, respect must be dominant, not submissive behavior. In this sense, it can be said that submissive behaviors contradict healthy human behaviors (Yıldırım, 2004).

Method

The study group of the research consisted of 545 students (295 females, and 250 males), studying in 5 different high schools in Meram, Selçuklu and Karatay districts of Konya. The research was carried out in the academic year of 2018-2019, and the study group consisted of students studying in the 9th and 10th grades of high schools in these districts.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Variables | <i>N</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 295 | 54.1 |
| Male | 250 | 45.9 |
| Grade | | |
| 9 | 233 | 42.7 |
| 10 | 312 | 57.3 |
| Mother's education status | | |
| Primary school | 187 | 34.4 |
| Secondary school | 119 | 21.8 |
| High school | 138 | 25.3 |
| University | 101 | 18.5 |
| Father's education status | | |
| Primary school | 107 | 19.7 |
| Secondary school | 95 | 17.5 |

| | | |
|-------------|-----|------|
| High school | 150 | 27.4 |
| University | 193 | 35.4 |

In Table 1, the distribution of the participants constituting the study group by gender is seen. Females make up 54.1% of the study group with 295 people, and males make up 45.9% of the study group with 250 people. 9th grade high school students make up 42.7% of the study group with 233 people, and 10th grade students make up 57.3% of the study group with 312 people. Mother’s education status of 187 people, who make up 34.4%, is primary school; 119 people, who make up 21.8%, is secondary school; 138 people, who make up 25.3%, is high school, and 101 people, who make up 18.5%, is university. Father’s education status of 107 people, who make up the of 19.7%, is primary school; 95 people, who make up 17.5%, is secondary school; 150 people, who make up 27.4%, is high school, and 193 people, who make up 35.4%, is university. Participants are between 14-17 years old and the average is 15.46 years.

Data Collection Tools

In the research, “Trait Anger Scale and Anger Expression Styles Scale”, “Submissive Behaviors Scale” and “Personal Information Form” were used to collect data.

Trait Anger Scale and Anger Expression Styles Scale (TAS and AESS)

The adaptation of Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Scale, whose original name was “State-Trait Anger Scale and Anger Expression Scale” and developed by Spielberger, Jacobs, Russel and Crane, was carried out by Özer (1994).

The scale, consisting of a total of 34 items and evaluated by the four-point Likert technique, has four sub-scales. Ten of the items constitute the trait anger sub-scale. Anger Expression Styles Sub-Scale consists of three sub-scales, eight items from each sub-scale and 24 items in total. These are repressed anger, unrepressed anger and anger management sub-scales. There is no reverse matter in TAS and AESS. From the trait anger sub-scale, individuals can get 10 points as the lowest, and 40 as the highest. They can get 8 points as the lowest, and 32 as the highest from each scale total in the anger expression styles sub-scale (Özer, 1994).

Submissive Behaviors Scale (SBS)

Submissive behaviors scale was developed in 1991 by Gilbert and Allan. Its original name is known as “Submissive Acts Scale (SAS)”, and it was adapted to Turkish as Submissive Behaviors Scale by Şahin and Şahin (1992). SBS is a 5-point Likert-type scale with 16 items. In each item, it is asked how well the person is described by the behavior (Şahin and Şahin, 1992).

The scale is intended only to measure social behaviors. Therefore, emotional expressions are not included in the scale. SBS was developed to measure the level of submissive social behaviors. The scale consists of 16 items, and in each item, it is asked how well the behaviors mentioned describe the person. SBS is a self-rating scale and can be applied to adolescents and adults (Şahin and Şahin, 1992).

Results

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results of Adolescents' Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Scores by Gender

| | Gender | N | \bar{X} | Ss | t | p | n ² | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-----|-----------|------|--------|-------|----------------|-------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|------|-------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|------|------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|------|
| Trait Anger | Female | 295 | 24.70 | 5.90 | 2.259 | .024* | .009 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 250 | 23.59 | 5.47 | | | | Repressed Anger | Female | 295 | 18.80 | 4.22 | 1.544 | .123 | .004 | Male | 250 | 18.23 | 4.35 | Unrepressed Anger | Female | 295 | 18.99 | 5.04 | 2.477 | .014* | .011 | Male | 250 | 17.98 | 4.49 | Anger Management | Female | 295 | 19.31 | 5.32 | -2.928 | .004* | .015 |
| Repressed Anger | Female | 295 | 18.80 | 4.22 | 1.544 | .123 | .004 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 250 | 18.23 | 4.35 | | | | Unrepressed Anger | Female | 295 | 18.99 | 5.04 | 2.477 | .014* | .011 | Male | 250 | 17.98 | 4.49 | Anger Management | Female | 295 | 19.31 | 5.32 | -2.928 | .004* | .015 | Male | 250 | 20.61 | 5.05 | | | | | | | | |
| Unrepressed Anger | Female | 295 | 18.99 | 5.04 | 2.477 | .014* | .011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 250 | 17.98 | 4.49 | | | | Anger Management | Female | 295 | 19.31 | 5.32 | -2.928 | .004* | .015 | Male | 250 | 20.61 | 5.05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Anger Management | Female | 295 | 19.31 | 5.32 | -2.928 | .004* | .015 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 250 | 20.61 | 5.05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

* p < .05

Trait anger and unrepressed anger sub-scales of the female students were found to be significantly higher than the male students in the adolescents' trait anger and anger expression styles scores according to the gender variable. Anger management scores were found to be significantly higher among male students than female students. Repressed anger scores did not differ significantly between female and male students.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results Regarding the Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Scores of Adolescents by Grade Level

| | Grade | N | \bar{X} | Ss | t | p | η^2 |
|-------------------|-------|-----|-----------|------|--------|-------|----------|
| Trait Anger | 9 | 233 | 24.06 | 5.80 | -.354 | .724 | .001 |
| | 10 | 312 | 24.29 | 5.72 | | | |
| Repressed Anger | 9 | 233 | 18.05 | 4.28 | -2.295 | .022* | .011 |
| | 10 | 312 | 18.90 | 4.28 | | | |
| Unrepressed Anger | 9 | 233 | 18.12 | 4.79 | -1.651 | .099 | .008 |
| | 10 | 312 | 18.80 | 4.81 | | | |
| Anger Management | 9 | 233 | 19.55 | 5.34 | -1.438 | .151 | .006 |
| | 10 | 312 | 20.21 | 5.14 | | | |

* $p < .05$

According to the grade variable, repressed anger score, which is one of the sub-scales of trait anger and anger expression styles, was found to be significantly higher in 10th grade students than the 9th grade students. There was no significant difference in trait anger, unrepressed anger and anger management scores.

Table 4. One-Way Variance Analysis Results Regarding Whether Adolescents' Scores from Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Sub-Scales Differed According to Mother's Education Level Factor

| | Source | KT | Sd | KO | F | P |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|-----|--------|-------|------|
| | Inter-groups | 45.271 | 3 | 15.090 | .454 | .714 |
| Trait Anger | Intra-group | 17840.385 | 537 | 33.222 | | |
| Total Score | Total | 17885.656 | 540 | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 72.332 | 3 | 24.111 | 1.304 | .272 |
| Repressed | Intra-group | 9932.377 | 537 | 18.496 | | |
| Anger Total | Total | 10004.709 | 540 | | | |
| Score | | | | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 42.761 | 3 | 14.254 | .607 | .611 |
| Unrepressed | Intra-group | 12613.513 | 537 | 23.489 | | |
| Anger Total | Total | 12656.274 | 540 | | | |
| Score | | | | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 82.617 | 3 | 27.539 | 1.008 | .389 |
| Anger | Intra-group | 14677.875 | 537 | 27.333 | | |
| Management | Total | 14760.492 | 540 | | | |
| Total Score | | | | | | |

According to the results of one-way analysis of variance, regarding whether the scores obtained by adolescents from trait anger and anger expression sub-scales differ according to the mother's education status factor, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in anger, repressed and unrepressed anger and anger management scores according to the mother's education level factor.

Table 5. One-Way Variance Analysis Results Regarding Whether the Scores Adolescents Received from Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Sub-Scales Differed According to Father's Education Level Factor

| | Source | KT | Sd | KO | F | P |
|-------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| | Inter-groups | 35.299 | 3 | 11.766 | .360 | .782 |
| Trait Anger | Intra-group | 17627.268 | 539 | 32.704 | | |
| Total Score | Total | 17662.568 | 542 | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 124.954 | 3 | 41.651 | 2.268 | .080 |
| Repressed | Intra-group | 9896.920 | 539 | 18.362 | | |
| Anger Total | Total | 10021.874 | 542 | | | |
| Score | | | | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 62.387 | 3 | 20.796 | .893 | .445 |
| Unrepressed | Intra-group | 12556.391 | 539 | 23.296 | | |
| Anger Total | Total | 12618.778 | 542 | | | |
| Score | | | | | | |
| | Inter-groups | 177.411 | 3 | 59.137 | 2.188 | .089 |
| Anger | Intra-group | 14570.729 | 539 | 27.033 | | |
| Management | Total | 14748.141 | 542 | | | |
| Total Score | | | | | | |

According to the results of one-way analysis of variance regarding whether the scores obtained by adolescents from trait anger and anger expression sub-scales differed according to father's education level factor, it was concluded

Table 6. Correlation Results for Submissive Behaviors, Trait Anger and Anger Expression Styles Sub-Scales

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Submissive Behaviors | - | | | | |
| 2. Trait Anger Total Score | .019 | - | | | |
| 3. Repressed Anger Total Score | .389** | .358** | - | | |
| 4. Unrepressed Anger Total Score | -.049 | .722** | .318** | - | |
| 5. Anger Management Total Score | .045 | - | -.077 | - | - |
| | | .575** | | .548** | |

** p <.01

that there was no significant difference in anger, repressed and unrepressed anger and anger management scores according to father's education level factor.

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted in the study, a positive and moderately significant relationship was found between the scores that adolescents received from the submissive behaviors scale and the scores they received from trait anger and anger expression sub-scales and repressed anger

sub-dimension. No significant relation was found between scores obtained from submissive behaviors scale and trait anger, unrepressed anger and anger management scores.

Table 7. Regression Analysis Results Related to Repressed Anger in Adolescents

| Variables | B | SE | β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Submissive Behaviors Scale | .203 | .021 | .389 | 9.847 | .000*** |
| *** <i>p</i> <.001 | | <i>R</i> =.389 | <i>R</i> ² =.151 | <i>p</i> <.001 | F(1, 545)=96.968 |

As a result of the regression analysis conducted in the study, submissive behaviors of adolescents significantly predict their repressed anger. It was concluded that 15.1% of the total variance related to the adolescents’ repressed anger can be explained by submissive behavior.

Discussion

As one of the findings of this study, a significant relationship was found between gender and trait anger, unrepressed anger and anger management levels. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are no consistent results in this regard. There are studies claiming that there is not a significant relationship between gender and trait anger and anger expression styles (Keskin, 2019; Buntaine and Costenbader, 1997; Erdoğan, 2015). At the same time, in the study conducted by Dündar (2016), it was found that the controlled anger scores of men

were higher than women. In the study conducted by Özmen, Özmen, Çetinkaya, Taşkın, and Dündar (2009) with adolescents, it was concluded that the anger management scores of men were higher than women, and the mean of trait anger, repressed anger and unrepressed anger scores were higher in women than men. In the study conducted by Evren, Bozkurt, Çiftçi, Demirci, Evren, Can, and Umut (2015), it was concluded that women have more problems such as anger, depression and anxiety, which may also be associated with suicidal ideation, when compared to men.

When the findings of the research are evaluated within the framework of the related literature, Averil (1983) stated that men are likely to encounter more devastating results than women at the end of the process of expressing anger. He stated that men tend to express their anger more physically, while women tend to express their anger more emotionally, such as crying. When evaluating the forensic and physical negative results that may occur at the end of the process of men's expressing anger feelings, it can be interpreted that men may prefer controlling their anger by repressing anger, and as a result, the level of women's unrepressed anger is higher than that of men, and their level of anger management is low. The fact that the level of trait anger of women is higher than that of men can be interpreted as that women express their anger less destructively than men, are freer than men to control their anger, and as a result, their trait anger level is high. In addition, it can be interpreted that discipline policies applied in schools put more pressure on male students to control their anger than women.

In another finding of the study, the fact that trait anger, unrepressed anger, and anger management scores in adolescents do not differ statistically according to the grade variable can be considered as an expected result, since the group of students who participated in the study was in the same developmental period. The fact that repressed anger is higher in the 10th grade students than the 9th grade

students can be explained by the tendency of the 10th grade students, who are nearing the end of the adolescence, to tend to hold their anger with the increase in self-esteem. When the literature is examined, in a study conducted by Önder and Bölükbaşı (2019), a positive correlation was found between self-esteem and repressed anger. Sarıkaya (2015) stated that as age increases, the level of self-esteem also increases. In the study conducted by Burney (2006), it was concluded that 9th grade students tend to more display unrepressed anger compared to 10th, 11th and 12th grade students, and 12th grade students tend to control their anger more than lower grade students. These studies support the findings of the research.

According to the findings of the research, it was concluded that the trait anger and anger expression style did not differ according to the mother's education level factor. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are various studies examining the relationship between the level of mother's education, trait anger and anger expression styles. The findings of this study support the studies in which there is no significant relationship between mother's education level and sub-scales of trait anger and anger expression styles (Demirci Danışık, 2005; Gülveren, 2008; Zengin, 2010). In addition, these research findings can be interpreted as: The information and experiences that mothers conveyed to adolescents about trait anger and anger expression styles may be based on informal education rather than formal education.

According to the findings of the research, it was concluded that the trait anger and anger expression styles did not differ according to the father's education level factor as well as the mother's education level factor. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are various studies examining the relationship between father's education level and trait anger and anger expression styles. In the studies conducted by Kuruoğlu, (2009) and Zengin, (2010), there

was no significant difference between father's education level and trait anger and anger expression styles. In addition, the findings of this research can be interpreted as: The information and experiences that fathers convey to adolescents about trait anger and anger expression styles may be based on informal education rather than formal education. The fact that both mother's and father's education level did not significantly influence adolescents' trait anger and anger expression styles can be interpreted as a collaboration between parents in raising adolescents.

Generally, the way anger is evaluated and handled has many positive and negative effects on other behaviors. The person needs to get to know her/his own anger and develop appropriate approaches (Soykan, 2003). When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies investigating the relationship between concepts such as violence, aggression and hostility, which may be associated with anger and anger expression styles (Kaya, Güneş, Kaya and Pehlivan, 2004; Yavuz and Özdemir, 2019). There is no study investigating the relationship between trait anger and anger expression styles and submissive behaviors. With this study, it was aimed to find the relationship between repressed anger and submissive behaviors and the importance of expressing anger in appropriate ways. In addition, the study is intended to contribute to the relevant literature.

According to the findings of the research, it was concluded that submissive behaviors are a significant predictor of adolescents' repressed anger. An individual who exhibits submissive behaviors can be evaluated in a way that s/he is afraid of expressing her/his feelings and thoughts, and as a result, s/he is expected to have repressed anger instead of unrepressed anger. Gilbert and Allan (1994) state that individuals with submissive behaviors can sometimes afford to lose the respect of others' in their environment for the sake of a profit. This can be interpreted as that submissive behaviors are not the only variables in

explaining repressed anger, but different reasons can be effective in explaining repressed anger. Kaygısız and Tıraş (2019) stated that the existence of a situation that can be evaluated as negative and risky can be effective in the emergence of submissive behaviors. Gansle (2005) states that anger is generally considered to be a negative experience for both people who display it and those to whom the anger is directed. This negative experience has also been linked to many negative situations for children, adolescents and adults. Although not limited to these behaviors, they stated that physical harm to others, themselves and their environment is related to anger behavior.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this study, it was concluded that submissive behaviors are a significant predictor of adolescent's repressed anger. Studies on variables such as stress, self-perception, and self-efficacy that will be able to predict the anger of adolescents' repressed anger can be conducted, and results can be compared.

In the research, repressed anger levels of the 10th grade students were found to be significantly higher than the 9th grade students. The “The student uses constructive ways to deal with anger” achievement in the 9th grade level classroom guidance program can also be added to the 10th grade level classroom guidance program.

Group counseling activities can be carried out for 9th and 10th grade students by school psychological counselors.

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