

Investigating the Challenges of Workplace Inclusion of People with Disabilities: Transitioning the Diversity Game

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Abstract

Diversity and Inclusion is gaining attention across the globe. People with disabilities (PWDs) formulate an important diversity group. The organizations are consistently aiming at forming inclusive workplaces for PWDs. Building inclusive workplace is highly aimed at effective interactions between the workforce with and without disabilities, top management's involvement and PWD employee's perception of inclusion. This study proposes an in-depth analysis of challenges of inclusion of PWDs. The two phased study commences with extensive literature review and identification of challenges of inclusion of PWDs. These challenges are divided into seven categories and further subcategories. In the second phase, Best Worst Method (BWM) is applied to rank the identified challenges. This study focuses on the effective investigation and prioritization of challenges in building inclusive workplaces.

Keywords

Best Worst Method, Challenges, Inclusion, People with disabilities, Workplace

1. Introduction

Globalization has changed the way businesses operate all across the world, particularly in India, resulting in a shift in discourse and discussions regarding diversity and inclusion among Indian enterprises. Organizations are rigorously working on Diversity and Inclusion issues (Thomas, 2004). There are regular efforts to include women, culturally diverse people, minorities and much attention is levied on including people with disabilities (PWDs) in work environment. Organizations are increasing inclusion initiatives and efforts to provide adequate diversity and inclusion environment. They believe that it helps in increasing work efficiency and satisfaction. A workplace that values people's diversity as well as their individuality, removes barriers to full engagement, and fosters a sense of inclusion (Holvino et al., 2004; Roberson et al., 2006).

Recognizing and supporting the diversity of different groups within a diverse workforce is not only crucial for improving performance, but it is also a legal requirement that businesses cannot disregard. Even if it entails resolving the obstacles and expenses that come with it, it is commonly understood that diversity delivers both tangible and intangible value (Mor Barak et al., 2016). The SDGs commit to ending poverty and hunger worldwide by 2030, combating inequalities within and between countries, building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, protecting human rights and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and ensuring the planet's and natural resources' long-term protection. PWDs are referred eleven times in the agendas for Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Some of the SDGs deal with issues that affect disabled people. SDG 4 aims to 'Ensure equitable and accessible education,' SDG 8 aims to 'Promote inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment,' and SDG 10 aims to 'Reduce inequality' by focusing on PWDs' social, economic, and political inclusion.

Furthermore, the census of 2021 revealed that more than 2.1 percent of India's population is disabled. 1.5 crore of India's 70.22 crore male population are disabled. There are 1.18 crore disabled women in India, out of a total population of 65.46 crore women. According to the 2011 Census, India's population of differently abled people is 26.8 million. This equates to 2.21 percent in percentage terms. In India, the population of differently abled people has increased marginally, going from 21.9 million in 2001 to 26.8 million in the last ten years. The Indian government is always taking steps to empower people with disabilities. The government is implementing tough measures, from free education to job reservations in the public and private sectors. The PWD Act of 1995 sets aside 3% of all government positions for handicapped people and offers employment incentives to public and private sector employers who employ at least 5% disabled people. The sad reality is that out of India's estimated 70 million people with disabilities, only roughly 0.1 million are employed thus far. (Disability Information Resources).

Once the organisations hire PWDs, the inclusion of PWDs stand as an important challenge. It has become an essential for businesses to implement comprehensive disability inclusion initiatives in order to achieve a win-win situation. Not only might businesses achieve productive and competitive diversity, but individuals with disabilities (PWDs) may also be acknowledged and valued for their strengths. Past researches have emphasised on both challenges and opportunities of hiring and inclusion of PWDs. While, Lindsay et al. (2019) found no significant differences in performance ratings, job skills, necessary supervision, tenure, absenteeism, or compensation claims between PWDs and non-disabled employees, employers typically require additional assistance in developing inclusive environments. Gupta and Priyadarshi (2020); Fawzy and Shore (2019) has highlighted challenges of inclusion of PWDs and their career growth in organisations. Suresh and Dyaram (2020) further analysed the challenges of PWDs in Indian context. Organisations strive to provide enabling environment to PWD employees (Phillips, 2015) but the challenges are multi-faceted.

We aim to fill in these gaps in the literature in this study by addressing the following research objectives:

- Identifying the relevant challenges of inclusion of PWDs in organizations.
- Identifying a link between the difficulties and their context and further rank the challenges.

In this regard, the current study used a mixed methodology for assessment of challenges of inclusion of PWDs in organizations. An exhaustive literature review helped us to extract challenges discussed by researchers in context of Inclusion of PWDs. The challenges were categorized in three perspectives - the top management perspective, the group perspective and PWD employee's perspective. The challenges identified from literature were further discussed with professionals hiring PWDs, employees working with PWDs and PWD employees working in organizations. The shortlisted challenges were classified into three key dimensions of challenges which were further classified into categories. The motivation to use Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) to prioritize the challenges is derived from the fact that this technique has not been utilized in the domain. Thus, Best-worst method (BWM) is further used to ranked the identified challenges in each category and each dimension. Further study flows as follows: Section 2 discusses methodology. Section 3 and 4 provides the data analysis followed by a result discussion respectively. Section 5 elaborates conclusion and future scope.

2. Research Methodology

The research was split into two parts. A detailed literature review was undertaken in the first phase, and a list of challenges was explored. The review of old studies helped us to furnish an exhaustive list of challenges discussed by researchers in past. The challenges were divided into three perspectives - the top management perspective, the group perspective and PWD employee's perspective. Each perspective was further classified into categories of challenges. The top management challenges were classified into Policy challenges and HR regulation challenges. The group

perspective was classified into Recruitment challenges and leader member challenges. The PWD employee's perspective was classified into Work challenges, Reliability challenges and Career Progression challenges. Semi structured interviews were conducted with Professionals hiring PWDs, employees working with PWDs and PWDs working in organizations to validate the list of issues furnished from literature review. The final list of challenges utilized in the study is mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. List of challenges of Inclusion of PWDs

| Perspective | Category | Challenges | References |
|---|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Top Management Perspective | Policy Issues | Company's operational costs (P1) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | | Lack of Accommodation arrangements (P2) | (Bartram et al., 2021) |
| | | Lack of enough policies for PWDs (P3) | Kalargyrou et al., 2020 |
| | | Less involvement of Top Management (P4) | (Suresh andDyaram, 2020) |
| | | Lack of openness to diversity (P5) | (Bartram et al., 2021) |
| | | Fear of legislation (P6) | (VerulavaandBedianashvili, 2021) |
| | | Lack of confidence in disability inclusion (P7) | (Lindsay et al., 2019) |
| | | Lack of disability friendly environment (P8) | (Boehm andDwertmann, 2015) |
| | | Misconceptions about PWDs (P9) | (Dwertmann and Boehm, 2016) |
| | HR Regulatory Issues | difficulty of locating the required PWDs (HR1) | (Heron et al., 2020) |
| | | rouble locating qualified candidates (HR2) | (Heron et al., 2020) |
| | | Talent availability (HR3) | (Kulkarni et al., 2016) |
| | | Equal and fair policies (HR4) | (Singh, 2007) |
| | | Equal Employment Opportunity (HR5) | (Newton and Ormerod, 2005) |
| | | Lack of Wellbeing initiatives for PWDs (HR6) | (Luu, 2019) |
| | | Inefficient Integration and Sensitization Programs (HR7) | (Kulkarni et al., 2016) |
| | | Lack of awareness of integration of PWDs along processes (HR8) | (Polo – Blanco et al., 2020) |
| | | Inaccessible HR Systems (HR9) | (Newton and Ormerod, 2005) |
| | Group Perspective | Integration Issues | Disparity in remuneration (I1) |
| Lack of mentoring programs (I2) | | | (Bartram et al., 2021) |
| High turnover (I3) | | | (Kalargyrou et al., 2020) |
| Behavioural complications of PWDs (I4) | | | (Kalargyrou et al., 2020) |
| Challenges of training needs of PWDs (I5) | | | (Kalargyrou et al., 2020) |
| limited work experience (I6) | | | (Moore et al., 2020) |
| Lack of Job Flexibility Provisions (I7) | | | (Kulkarni et al., 2016) |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | Insufficient opportunities for PWDs' for skill enhancement (I8) | (Khan et al., 2019) |
| | | High Absenteeism (I9) | (Folguera-I-Bellmunt et al., 2018) |
| | Leader Member Issues | Poor supervisor support (LM1) | (Luu, 2019) |
| | | low quality relation with manager (LM2) | (Dwertmann and Boehm, 2016) |
| | | Challenge of considering individual PWD needs (LM3) | (Van Laer et al., 2020) |
| | | Profitability challenge (LM4) | (Kalargyrou et al., 2020) |
| | | Lack of trust amongst manager and PWD (LM5) | (Rawat et al., 2020) |
| | | Leader's incapability to make PWDs feel valued (LM6) | (Kensbockand Boehm, 2016; Moore et al., 2020) |
| | | Challenge of regular mentoring and supervision (LM7) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | | Challenge of identification of capabilities (LM8) | (Kwon, 2021) |
| Less support from supervisor (LM9) | | (Lindsay et al., 2020) | |
| PWD Employee's Perspective | | Work Issues | Misinterpretation of competence (W1) |
| | Bargained performance and consistent discrimination (W2) | | (Restubog et al., 2021) |
| | Difficulty in Multitasking (W3) | | (Khan et al., 2019) |
| | Negative impact on the productivity of peers (W4) | | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | Challenge of putting time and effort in simple tasks (W5) | | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | Task analysis (W6) | | (Narayanan andTerris, 2020) |
| | Regular requirement of programmed instructions (W7) | | (Narayanan andTerris, 2020) |
| | Indifferent attitude and low comfort level of peers (W8) | | (Kulkarni et al., 2018) |
| | Inefficient job design (W9) | | (Kensbockand Boehm, 2016) |
| | Reliability Challenges | Complex of Physical appearance and presentation (R1) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | | Low emotional stability (R2) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | | Slow pace of work (R3) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | | Challenge of performance uncertainty (R4) | (Boehm andDwertmann, 2015) |
| | | Unsoportive treatment by management (R5) | (Chordiya, 2022) |
| | | Physical and emotional challenges at work (R6) | (Khan et al., 2019) |
| | | Challenge of lowered expectations from manager (R7) | (Von Schrader et al., 2014) |
| | | Feeling of low respect (R8) | (Von Schrader et al., 2014) |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Career Progression Challenges | Biased and different outlook (R9) | (Von Schrader et al., 2014) |
| | Job crafting (CP1) | (Narayanan and Terris, 2020) |
| | High chances of termination (CP2) | (Von Schrader et al., 2014) |
| | Low self efficacy (CP3) | (Zhu et al., 2019) |
| | Isolation from co-workers (CP4) | (Hui et al., 2021) |
| | Monotonous job responsibility (CP5) | (Kensbockand Boehm, 2016) |
| | Scarce promotion opportunities (CP6) | (Von Schrader et al., 2014) |
| | Inaccessible Physical space(CP7) | Suresh andDyaram, 2020 |

In the second phase, the BWM approach is used to create a hierarchical list of problems. To arrive at the results, 5 decision makers were approached and asked to rate the factors. The best worst method (BWM) is a pairwise comparison-based strategy for solving MCDM problems. (Rezaei, 2015, 2016). In comparison to other MCDM approaches, BWM has two major advantages. The results obtained by BWM are more consistent than those produced by other MCDM approaches that use a full pairwise comparison matrix, which is also the main justification for using BWM in this study. BWM has never been used in the field of diversity and inclusion, hence the study yielded unexpected results. The BWM model makes the decision of prioritizing the challenges after undergoing the following steps-

Step 1: Identification of the factor set: The challenges were identified from extensive literature review.

Step 2: Selection of the best and the worst factor: The best and worst aspects are chosen based on interactions held with the experts.

Step 3: Calculation of the best factor's preference over the other factors: Based on the inputs provided by the experts, a score of 1-9 is used to compute the preference of the best criteria over the others. This generates the "Best-to-Others" vector as:

$$k_B = (k_{B1}, k_{B2} \dots, k_{Bn})$$

Step 4: Calculation of the factors' preference for the worst factor: This step is similar to step 3, only the calculated vector is "Worst-to-Others." as:

$$K_W = (k_{1W}, k_{2W} \dots, k_{nW})^T$$

Step 5: Calculating the optimal weights of factors.

In this step, We get the best weighted vector for the factors, which is represented by.

Thus, as given by Rezaei (2015), we can calculate the optimal weighs for factors by using the following programming problem:

$$\min \max_i \left\{ \left| \frac{y_B}{y_i} - k_{Bi} \right|, \left| \frac{y_i}{y_W} - k_{iW} \right| \right\}$$

Subject to

$$\sum_n y_i = 1$$

$$y_i \geq 0 \quad \forall i = 1, 2, \dots, n; \tag{P1}$$

Problem (P1) is equivalent to the following linear programming formulation (P2):

$$\min \eta$$

Subject to

$$\begin{aligned}
 &|y_B - k_{Bi}y_i| \leq \eta \quad \forall i = 1, 2, \dots, n \\
 &|y_i - k_{iW}y_W| \leq \eta \quad \forall i = 1, 2, \dots, n \\
 &\sum_i y_i = 1 \\
 &y_i \geq 0 \quad \forall i = 1, 2, \dots, n
 \end{aligned} \tag{P2}$$

On solving problem (P2), we get the value of η and optimal weights $(y_1^*, y_2^*, \dots, y_n^*)$ are determined.

Step 6: Check the consistency of solution.

Consistency ratio helps in checking the consistency of the solution

$$\text{Consistency Ratio} = \frac{\eta^*}{\text{Consistency Index}}$$

The consistency index is taken from the Table 2 given by Razaeei (2015).

Table 2. Consistency Index Table for BWM

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| kBi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Consistency index (max) | 0.00 | 0.44 | 1.00 | 1.63 | 2.30 | 3.00 | 3.73 | 4.47 | 5.23 |

The solution is considered more consistent if the consistency ratio (CR) is closer to '0,' while a value closer to 1 indicates less consistency.

3. Results and Discussion

As discussed earlier, there is an urgent need to identify the inclusion challenges and to support organizations gain clarity on devising effective diversity and inclusion strategies. This section explains how the data was analysed in order to confirm the framework that had been predicted. A structured questionnaire for BWM is produced with the help of the final list of challenges and presented to the decision makers. After the experts agreed on the barriers, the best and worst preferences were selected. The barrier and sub barriers importance weights were calculated after constructing a pairwise comparison matrix of the main and sub-barriers on a scale of 1–9. The challenges were ranked based on their criticality using the BWM procedures outlined in the Research Methodology described above. Table 3 shows how experts evaluated the best and worst of the barriers.

Table 3. Weights of the Technological Challenges and their rankings

| | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-----|-------|--------|
| Strategic Challenges | 0.182158912 | SC1 | 0.228 | 0.0416 |
| | | SC2 | 0.252 | 0.0459 |
| | | SC3 | 0.112 | 0.0204 |
| | | SC4 | 0.106 | 0.0193 |
| | | SC5 | 0.067 | 0.0121 |
| | | SC6 | 0.055 | 0.0101 |
| | | SC7 | 0.044 | 0.0080 |
| | | SC8 | 0.062 | 0.0112 |
| | | SC9 | 0.074 | 0.0136 |
| HR Challenges | 0.191197387 | HR1 | 0.172 | 0.033 |
| | | HR2 | 0.271 | 0.052 |
| | | HR3 | 0.097 | 0.019 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|-------|-------|
| | | HR4 | 0.079 | 0.015 |
| | | HR5 | 0.074 | 0.014 |
| | | HR6 | 0.056 | 0.011 |
| | | HR7 | 0.058 | 0.011 |
| | | HR8 | 0.042 | 0.008 |
| | | HR9 | 0.151 | 0.029 |
| Onboard Challenges | 0.191111157 | OC1 | 0.148 | 0.028 |
| | | OC2 | 0.093 | 0.018 |
| | | OC3 | 0.109 | 0.021 |
| | | OC4 | 0.072 | 0.014 |
| | | OC5 | 0.222 | 0.042 |
| | | OC6 | 0.042 | 0.008 |
| | | OC7 | 0.117 | 0.022 |
| | | OC8 | 0.067 | 0.013 |
| | | OC9 | 0.130 | 0.025 |
| Leadership Challenges | 0.122550377 | LC1 | 0.209 | 0.026 |
| | | LC2 | 0.227 | 0.028 |
| | | LC3 | 0.077 | 0.009 |
| | | LC5 | 0.089 | 0.011 |
| | | LC6 | 0.074 | 0.009 |
| | | LC7 | 0.073 | 0.009 |
| | | LC8 | 0.042 | 0.005 |
| | | LC9 | 0.064 | 0.008 |
| | | LC10 | 0.144 | 0.018 |
| | Job related Challenges | 0.13970288 | JR1 | 0.036 |
| | | JR2 | 0.076 | 0.011 |
| | | JR3 | 0.076 | 0.011 |
| | | JR4 | 0.099 | 0.014 |
| | | JR5 | 0.081 | 0.011 |
| | | JR6 | 0.153 | 0.021 |
| | | JR7 | 0.129 | 0.018 |
| | | JR8 | 0.202 | 0.028 |
| | | JR9 | 0.147 | 0.021 |
| Integrity Challenges | 0.10135817 | IC1 | 0.024 | 0.002 |
| | | IC2 | 0.148 | 0.015 |
| | | IC3 | 0.094 | 0.010 |
| | | IC4 | 0.098 | 0.010 |
| | | IC5 | 0.118 | 0.012 |
| | | IC6 | 0.148 | 0.015 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----|-------|-------|
| | | IC7 | 0.054 | 0.005 |
| | | IC8 | 0.205 | 0.021 |
| | | IC9 | 0.111 | 0.011 |
| Acceptability and Growth Challenges | 0.071921117 | AG1 | 0.139 | 0.010 |
| | | AG2 | 0.070 | 0.005 |
| | | AG3 | 0.193 | 0.014 |
| | | AG4 | 0.197 | 0.014 |
| | | AG5 | 0.175 | 0.013 |
| | | AG6 | 0.175 | 0.013 |
| | | AG7 | 0.051 | 0.004 |

This study aims at identifying and prioritizing the challenges of inclusion of PWDs from three perspectives – top management, group level and PWD employee’s level. We short-listed seven categories of challenges and further each category had sub challenges based on the feedback provided by our experts via an online survey. The study applies a contemporary MCDM technique -BWM to rate the challenges according to their priority. Furthermore, the weights of these problems were determined depending on their criticality levels. The difficulties that are heavier likely to have more critical levels of vulnerability and necessitate rapid action.

Based on the ranking done using BWM technique, it is evident that as per the global weights of challenges ‘difficulty finding quality applicants’ > ‘Lack of Accommodation Provisions for disabled employees’ > ‘challenges related to training the PWDs’ > ‘Operational Cost of Company’ > ‘difficulty to locate the needed PWDs’ > ‘lack of disability friendly HR Systems’ > ‘attitude and comfort level of coworkers’ > ‘Gap of expectations in Renumeration’ > ‘low quality supervisor - subordinate relationship’ > ‘lack of supervisor support’.

The weights of the ranked challenges are as follows - HR 2 (0.0518) > SC2 (0.0459) > OC5 (0.0424) > SC1 (0.0416) > HR1 (0.0329) > HR9 (0.0289) > JR8 (0.0282) > OC1 (0.0282) > LC2 (0.0279) > LC1 (0.0256).

While when we access the local weights derived by BWM, the rating changes. When the sub categories are assessed individually the rating differs as global weights are excluded. For instance, in Policy challenge sub category under Top Management Challenges, it shows ‘Lack of Accommodation Provisions for disabled employees’ > ‘Operational Cost of Company’ > ‘Few Disability Inclusive Policies’ > ‘Lacking Involvement of Top Management’ > ‘negative stereotypes based on disability status’ > ‘Need for Openness to diversity and broadening perspective’ > ‘Lack of disability climate’ > ‘Fear of litigation’ > ‘lack of disability confidence’

With the weights of P2 0.252 > P1 0.228 > P3 0.112 > P4 0.106 > P9 0.075 > P5 0.067 > P8 0.062 > P6 0.055 > P7 0.044. While the global weights indicate that P2 ‘Lack of Accommodation Provisions for disabled employees’ is the second most important challenge.

Similarly in HR regulatory challenges, the rating of sub categories derived by BWM according to the local weight is ‘difficulty finding quality applicants’ > ‘difficulty to locate the needed PWDs’ > ‘lack of disability friendly HR Systems’ > ‘availability of talent’ > ‘fairness and equality’ > ‘Equal Employment Opportunity’ > ‘Integration and Sensitization Programs’ > ‘Wellbeing of disabled employees’ > ‘lack of understanding on integration of disabled employees from recruitment to retention’ with weights HR2 0.271 > HR1 0.172 > HR9 0.151 > HR3 0.097 > HR4 0.079 > HR5 0.074 > HR7 0.058 > HR6 0.056 > HR8 0.042. The local weight of HR1 signifies its position of subfactor as second while according to the global weights sub factor is placed on fourth position.

This study provides a rating of challenges faced by organizations in successful inclusion of PWDs. This paper proposed BWM based methodology to detect seven categories of challenges on the basis of three perspectives of an organization (Top Management, Groups, and PWD employee’s). The research involved identification of challenges in inclusion of PWDs in organizations in Indian context. The research is conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the challenges were identified with the help of extensive literature review and these challenges were further confirmed from industry professionals and PWD employees. A comprehensive list of challenges was finalized for the analysis. In the second phase of the study, BWM is employed to understand the ranking of these challenges.

In the business sector, the current buzzwords are diversity and inclusion. The inclusion of PWDs in SDGs 2030 and the Indian government's ongoing activities in the mainstay have further bolstered the agenda. PWD inclusion, on the other hand, is hampered by a variety of difficulties. The understanding of these challenges is imperative for organizations, leaders, managers and policy makers.

6. Conclusion

This paper highlights the key challenges from three perspectives – Top Management, Group and PWD employees. Further categorizing them into seven categories of challenges which have sub category of challenges extracted from literature and professionals. According to the analysis difficulty in finding quality applicants', 'Lack of Accommodation Provisions for disabled employees', 'challenges related to training the PWDs', 'Operational Cost of Company', 'difficulty to locate the needed PWDs', 'lack of disability friendly HR Systems', 'attitude and comfort level of co-workers', 'Gap of expectations in Remuneration', 'low quality supervisor - subordinate relationship', 'lack of supervisor support' are the most important challenges. The organizations should pester upon locating and identifying sources of hiring PWDs to meet the most importantly rated challenge. The organizations can tie up with NGOs and agencies for locating best suited talented PWD employees. Job analysis before hiring PWDs would help organizations to find right person at the right place. The organizations should aggressively work on sensitization, trainings, and workshops for co-workers and managers to enable create comfortable working environment for PWDs.

There are some limitations to the study that can be used to guide future research. A few studies and researches would have been left out accidentally if the current study did not include a full list of challenges of including PWDs from an intensive literature evaluation. The study used BWM to comprehend most of the previous issues; in the future, approaches such as Interpretive structure modelling and Fuzzy Interpretive Structure Modelling could be used to improve the effectiveness of the results. Furthermore, the current study is based on the perspectives of a few HR professionals who hire PWDs and a few PWDs who work in firms; more experts, policymakers, senior management personnel, and PWDs can contribute to a more in-depth understanding of difficulties. This might be useful for describing research results.

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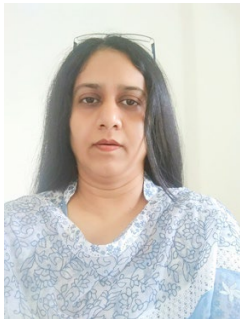
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