

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RESEARCH SCHOLARS IN DATA COLLECTION: A STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the problems and challenges faced by the social science research scholars of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. The problems are categorized into three stages, viz. problems in data collection, problems while obtaining information, problems while analyzing data and summarizing research. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire from 95 research scholars. Major findings are almost half of the research scholars were satisfied with the literature available in the libraries of AMU, around 1/3rd were satisfied with e-resources, more than 2/5th are satisfied with library services, one third are satisfied with infrastructural facilities, almost half are not satisfied with training programs, 60% faced problems in literature search, major problem is related to internet connectivity, respondent's attitude is a problem, most used research tool is questionnaire followed by interview, print questionnaire preferred, google form is preferred, one third of the respondents are not interested in filling questionnaire, language is the main hindrance in interview. The study offers various suggestions and recommendations for the research scholars including the provision for short-duration intensive courses and training programs for meeting the challenges in data collection.

Keywords: *Research Scholars, Doctoral Students, Data Collection, Literature Search, Social Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Research Tools, Online Survey, Case study.*

1. Introduction

The most challenging part of social science research is the collection of data that involves vibrant processes that are ever evolving and changing. Data collection, in qualitative research, is defined as the systematic gathering of data for a particular purpose using various research tools, including, interviews, focus groups, observation, existing records, and electronic devices. Depending on the data collection method, researchers encounter problems obtaining information from respondents for a study (Rimando et al, 2015).

Social Science Research basically covers both qualitative and quantitative studies, generally in the form of systematic investigation of human behaviour in a society and their multifaceted activities. This systematic investigation in both qualitative and quantitative studies aims to formulate a body of theory and suggest better ways to solve behavioural problems among research participants. Various studies have focused on the problems related to social science research: commonly they are identified as economical, historical or technological problems. In social science field, researchers are facing various

challenges while collecting data. The present study focuses on the problems and challenges of data collection procedure in social science research in order to bring to the fore a clear picture of current status of data collection in the social science research.

With the growing disciplinary and the interdisciplinary approach towards research, various methodological aspects regarding data collection have been adopted. On the basis of the existing variant research studies, the researcher faces difficulties in selecting the right methodology and research tools to collect data. Data collection is one of the most essential elements and the creative component of research process. Studies that rely on data collected from individuals require questionnaires to be expertly designed and packaged to encourage a high response. To ensure, collection of validated and original data from the respondents, the investigator usually adopts survey method using questionnaires in both print and online forms accompanied by the interview process consisting of structured and informal conversations.

While we talk about the importance of research data and its collection, which is quite a broad and comprehensive stage in the research process, the problems that occur during the data collection are not to be neglected. In order to obtain valuable information for the study, the researchers face various challenges due to the use of different methods of data collection depending on the nature of the study. These problems that occur during the data collection processes may involve investigation using human subjects in the form of interviews or focus groups.

2. Review of Literature

Many studies that related to the present study have been reviewed to generate a better

understanding of the problems and issues that have been discussed, to formulate a sound basis for the study.

Bocar (2013) studied the various difficulties faced by the students, and researchers during their research work. These difficulties had a larger negative impact on the research output produced by the researchers. He explained that the cooperation of the selected respondents beyond the academic institutions is a big problem and besides this time and stress management also increased the problems while data collection and to overcome this kind of problem the researchers are suggested to have friendly relation with their respective respondents and proper time management.

Data collection challenges have been described by Rimando (2015). The author further gave recommendations for the early researchers in public health and social research. During data collection for research work, doctoral students faced problems associated with the location, literacy, duration of data collection, researcher fatigue and sensitive information. Further to overcome all these issues, the author recommended that questions should be prepared keeping the literacy level and language used among respondents, provide proper time, regarding sensitive information etc. The investigator should elaborate on other interesting topics and include icebreakers before interview. Another study by Elmarie, et al. (2017) explained various issues and challenges regarding data collection to conduct international alcohol control (IAC) study in South Africa. This study identified the problem of delays in software development, budgetary implications and difficulties in identifying full range of alcohol beverage. This study suggested that special effort is needed to maximize the response and validity of data

collection while conducting research on sensitive topic.

Xu (2008) conducted a study based on qualitative meta-synthesis of methodological issues and challenges during the data collection, analysis process and strategies used to resolve them. These issues and challenges include the adequacy and availability of qualifying studies, quality and quantity of primary studies, studies based on identical samples; separation of relevant data for analysis; and validity of synthesis findings etc. This paper concluded that the quality of qualified studies is more essential for a qualitative meta-synthesis and quality versus quantity issues must be dealt with in context and perspective. Apart from this, Pierce and Scherra (2004) described the issues relating to data collection in the rural localities. Some general problems, that the researchers faced while collecting the data from the rural areas, have negative impact on their research studies. They further encountered the problems such as location of appropriate participation, rural-social issues, environmental barriers and ethical considerations are the hindrance while obtaining correct information for the research problem. Other than that, some studies focused on the problems and advantages of online data collection procedures used in studies, Lefever et al (2007) discussed the advantages and limitations of online data collection in order to explore the major advantages and difficulties faced by the investigator. According to this study, the technical problems while connecting to the respondents was a big issue while collecting data online; as problems of web connectivity was prominent, issue of emails becoming spam resulting in less responses as the respondents were not aware of them to response.

For interview process Hassen (2016) designed a model named as 'Talk' as a data collection instrument which consist of four components such as Thought, Action, Language and Knowledge (Talk). Through the casual 'Talk' the investigator can extract data using formal and informal conversation from different social community. The study further explained the importance of interview using 'Talk' as a means of data collection for extracting in-depth information on any topic of study as compared to questionnaire or observation. In the same way, Gill et al. (2008) explored the most common and prominent methods of data collection used in qualitative research such as Interview and Focus Groups. The main purpose of the study was to elaborate detail information about these two methods, their practical working in data collection and choice of these methods.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are as follows :

- To identify the satisfaction level of social science research scholars regarding the resources available in university library and seminar library.
- To know the problems faced by the researchers in searching relevant literature.
- To identify the problems faced by researchers while using the subject specific databases for literature search.
- To find out the problems faced while collecting data with the information technologies.

- To review the methods of data collection that will assure more reliable and complete data collection for conducting researches in the social sciences.
- To identify the problems while using various research tools meant for data collection.
- To find out the reasons for unwillingness in giving correct information.
- To put forward suggestions for improving the situation.

4. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to the problems faced while collecting data by the research scholars of the faculty of Social Sciences in Aligarh Muslim University. The research scholars from the various departments of Social Science Faculty are facing number of problems while conducting their research work especially during data collection. These problems vary among each department due to the different types of researches and techniques used for research. This study focuses on some common and genuine problems faced by the research scholars

5. Methodology

The study is conducted using survey method for which a structured questionnaire was framed to collect data from the research scholars of the Social Science Faculty, Aligarh

Muslim University. Faculty of Social Science consists of the department of Economics, Education, History, Islamic Studies, Library and Information Science, Mass Communication, Physical Education, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology including Social Work. To collect the data from the research scholars of each department, stratified random sampling method was used for selecting the sample. Out of one hundred sixteen questionnaires distributed, one hundred five questionnaires were returned back. Ten questionnaires were partially filled so could not be entertained in the study and only ninety-five questionnaires were finally considered for data analysis.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through questionnaire from ninety-five respondents covering all the departments of social science faculty in AMU, was thoroughly organized and tabulated in the following tables.

6.1. Response Rate

There are a total of one hundred and sixteen research scholars from ten departments of social science faculty in the sample, out of which ninety five research scholars (81.89%) participated in survey. Hundred percent of participation are from the four departments i.e. Economics, Library & Information Science, Mass Communication and Sociology. The other departments have less than 90% of respondents and the name of these departments and percentage are given in table 1

Table 1
Department-wise Distribution of Respondents

Departments of Social Science Faculty	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaires Returned Back	Response Rate (in percentage)
Economics	14	14	100.00
Education	11	11	81.82
History	24	16	66.67
Islamic Studies	5	4	80.00
Library & Information Science	8	8	100.00
Mass communication	3	3	100.00
Physical Education	4	3	75.00
Political Science	19	15	78.95
Psychology	16	14	87.50
Sociology	7	7	100.00
Total	116	95	81.89

6.2. Level of Satisfaction

With the available literature in the University library and department/seminar library 45.26 % of the research scholars were satisfied while 34.74% scholars were partially

satisfied. Only 8.42% scholars were fully satisfied while 9.47% were not satisfied. As far as the availability of e-resources is concerned, 30.53% researchers were satisfied, 12.63% were fully satisfied while 21.05 % were not satisfied

Table 2
Level of Satisfaction

SI. No.	Statements	Level of Satisfaction				
		FS	S	PS	D	FD
1	Internet Connectivity in the campus	18 (18.95)	34 (35.79)	23 (24.21)	14 (14.74)	6 (6.32)
2	Library services for research	15 (15.79)	42 (44.21)	31 (32.63)	6 (6.32)	1 (1.05)
3	Availability of e-resources in the Library/ Seminar Library	12 (12.63)	29 (30.53)	29 (30.53)	20 (21.05)	5 (5.26)
4	Infrastructural facilities such as computer lab./space for researchers	11 (11.58)	33 (34.74)	26 (27.37)	18 (18.95)	7 (7.37)
5	Financial Assistance provided by funding agencies	9 (9.47)	30 (31.58)	34 (35.79)	14 (14.74)	8 (8.42)
6	Availability of literature in the Library/ Seminar Library	8 (8.42)	43 (45.26)	33 (34.74)	9 (9.47)	2 (2.10)
7	Training programs for software packages	4 (4.21)	8 (8.42)	17 (17.89)	46 (48.42)	20 (21.05)

FS - Fully Satisfied, **S** - Satisfied, **PS** - Partially Satisfied, **D** - Dissatisfied, **FD** - Fully Dissatisfied
Percentages are given in parenthesis

Library provided different services for the research purpose and with these services 44.21% research scholars were satisfied and 15.79% were fully satisfied where as 6.23% were not satisfied with library services. With the internet connection available in the campus 35.79% researchers were satisfied, 24.21 % scholars were partially satisfied and 18.95% were fully satisfied while 14.74% of the research scholars were dissatisfied and 6.32% were fully dissatisfied with the internet connection.

Another important element which needs to be mentioned here is that some departments such as Islamic studies do not have neither internet connection nor a computer lab. Under such conditions the researchers from that particular department were also not satisfied with the availability of e-resources. Around half (48.42%) of research scholars were also not satisfied with the training programs conducted for understanding the problems

faced during their research especially training of software packages for data analysis and interpretation, 21.05% are fully dissatisfied whereas only 8.42% were satisfied and 4.21% were fully satisfied with the training programs. Regarding the financial assistance provided by various funding agencies such as UGC, ICSSR, CSIR, ICHR etc. among the research scholars 35.79% respondents were partially satisfied, 31.58% were satisfied and 9.47% were fully satisfied while 14.74% of researchers were dissatisfied and 8.42% were fully dissatisfied.

6.3. Problems Faced in Literature Search

The analysis (table 3) shows that 3/5th (60%) of research scholars are facing problems while searching literature for study; while rest 40% research scholars do not face any kind of problems while searching the relevant literature for their research work.

Table 3
Problems Faced in Literature Search

Opinion	No. of Research Scholars	Percentage
Having Problems	57	60.00
No Problem	38	40.00
Total	95	100.00

6.4. Type of Problems Faced in Literature Search

The results in table 4 revealed that around more than half (52.63%) of research scholars faced problem of unavailability of relevant literature in their seminar library and University library; while 40% researchers

faced problems as relevant journals are not subscribed by the department or even by the University library. More than one-third of research scholars (28.42%) are not aware about the sources of information from where they can find the relevant literature for their research work.

Table 4
Type of Problems Faced in Literature Search

SI. No.	Type of Problems	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total Respondents
1.	Relevant literature is not available in seminar/ University Library	50	52.63
2.	Relevant journals are not subscribed by University Library/Seminar Library	38	40.00
3.	Cost of full text documents is much higher for purchasing	34	35.79
4.	Lack of awareness about the sources of information for searching literature	27	28.42
5.	Lack of Infrastructure facilities such as computer lab	25	26.31
6.	Translated documents are not available when required	20	21.05

* Multiple answers allowed

Apart from that two-third of the research Scholars (35.79%) faced problems regarding the cost of full text documents, that is much higher to purchase as such literature is not available in full text form. Lack of infrastructure facilities including computer labs, reading space and other basic facilities became another problem faced by 26.31% research scholars. Translation of the documents is a problem for 21.05% research scholars even though they requested for translation but they did not get on time.

6.5. Problems Faced in University Library

The University Library plays a vital role in the research work and provides various sources and services to ease the research work of every stream of researchers. But sometimes they faced problems in many ways. The problems faced by the researchers when they search the relevant literature in the

library are given in table 5. Among the above problems discussed the major problem faced is related to the internet connectivity which was faced by 54.74 % of research scholars. Nearly 48.42% of them do not know how to use the resources available in the library through consortium, followed by 41.05% researchers who faced the problem of less awareness about institutional repositories available in the library. Apart from these, 38.95% research scholars have been facing problems relating to identify the authenticity of the information sources while 29.47% researchers do not know how to use different databases related to their area of research and about 27.37% research scholars do not know as to how to do basic search or even advanced search techniques. It is clear that majority of the research scholars from different subject background were facing problems related to online information sources and their usage.

Table 5
Type of Problems Faced in University Library

SI. No.	Type of Problems	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total respondents
1.	Slow Speed of Internet Connectivity in the Campus	52	54.74
2.	Lack of knowledge to use the consortium	46	48.42
3.	Lack of awareness about the Institutional Repositories	39	41.05
4.	Evaluation problem to identify the authenticity of information sources	37	38.95
5.	Less knowledge of how to use OPAC/Web OPAC	30	31.58
6.	Lack of Knowledge to use the databases	28	29.47
7.	Lack of knowledge of using the advanced search techniques	26	27.37
8.	Less knowledge of keyword search techniques	21	22.11

* Multiple answers allowed

6.6. Type of Problems Faced During Data Collection

During data collection the researchers faced many problems which is shown in table 6. Around two-third of the research scholars (62.11 %) faced problems regarding the attitude of the respondents showing lack of interest in giving responses, keeping themselves uninformed about the

researchers' requirements about the information and giving excuses of having less time. Whereas 31.56% research scholars were unable to collect data because of the restriction to access the confined data from the institutions. Around a quarter(26.32%) research scholars faced the problem of inadequate time. Thus, majority of the researchers faced problems in collecting data because of respondents' attitude.

Table 6
Type of Problems Faced in Data Collection

SI. No.	Type of Problems	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total respondents
1.	Respondents' attitude	59	62.11
2.	Restriction to access the confined data by the institutions	30	31.56
3.	Inadequate Time	25	26.32
4.	Unknown place and population	17	17.89

* Multiple answers allowed

6.7. Research Tools for Data Collection

The research scholars adopted various tools and techniques for collecting data which are shown in the table 7. The most convenient and suitable research tool for data collection adopted by the research scholars was questionnaire; more than 3/5th of the research scholars (63.16 %) used this tool to collect data from the respondents, followed by the interview technique which was used by 43.16 % of research scholars, whereas

observation method for data collection was chosen by 41.05 % of the research scholars. The percentage of research scholars who used the focus group technique is 15.79 % and the same percentage of research scholars collected data from secondary sources. Very few research scholars (2.10%) used cinematographic technique to collect data because these scholars belonged to the subject of Physical Education. It is seen that the research scholars are using more than one research tools in their research work.

Table 7
Research Tools for Data Collection

SI. No.	Types of Problems	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total respondents
1.	Questionnaire	60	63.16
2.	Interview	41	43.16
3.	Observation	39	41.05
4.	Focus group	15	15.79
5.	From Secondary Sources	15	15.79
6.	Any Other (Cinematographic Technique)	2	02.10

* Multiple answers allowed

6.8. Preference of Questionnaire over Interview

It is clear from the results given in table 7 that questionnaire was the most convenient tool for data collection, Research scholars preferred different type of questionnaires such as print, emailed and online.

The table 8 shows that print questionnaire was preferred by 45.26 % of the researchers as compared to the online questionnaire. Around one third of the research scholars (34.74%) used online questionnaires in the form of Survey monkey, Google form, Kwik Survey, Type form etc. out of which 23.15% research scholars used Google Form while

9.47% scholars used Survey Monkey for collecting data through online questionnaire.

The study (table 8) further reveals the preference of interview technique. More than one-third of the research scholars (33.68%) preferred personal interview; while 16.86% research scholar preferred informal conversation/ interview to obtain information from the respondents. Very few research scholars i.e. 9.47% preferred guided interview. Thus, it can be said that print questionnaire is the most preferred tool of data collection and Google form is the highly used form of online questionnaire while personal interview is the widely used method for collecting data.

Table 8
Preference of Questionnaire Over Interview

SI. No.	Type of Questionnaire	No. of Research Scholars	Type of Interview	No. of Research Scholars
1	Print	43 (45.26)	Personal interview	32 (33.68)
2	Online:-	33 (34.74)	Informal conversational interview	16 (16.84)
	i) Google Form	22 (23.15)	Focus group interview	11 (11.58)
	ii) Survey Monkey	9 (09.47)	Guided interview	9 (09.47)
	iii) Kwik Survey	4 (04.21)		
	iv) Type Form	7 (07.37)		
	v) Survey Planet	4 (04.21)		
3	E-mailed	8 (08.42)		

* Percentages are given in parentheses

6.9. Problems with Various Types of Questionnaire

Table 9 exhibits various problems faced by the research scholars while taking responses through questionnaires in print, emailed and online form. More than 1/3rd of (35.79%) research scholars faced problem with the print questionnaire where respondents were not interested to fill questionnaire, while 32.63 % research scholars faced problems where the respondents did not give correct information. Partial response by the respondents was another problem faced by 29.24 % research scholars. When the

researchers started to collect data through online questionnaire, some problems arose. One of the main problem faced by 20% of the research scholars was the unawareness of using online questionnaire by the respondents. Those research scholars who faced problem in online questionnaire are 16.84%, where respondents did not reply even after sending reminders. Apart from these, web connectivity was another problem which was faced by 11.58 % research scholars while using online questionnaire. It can be concluded that research scholars faced more problems in collecting data through print questionnaires as compared to the online questionnaire.

Table 9
Problems with Various Types of Questionnaire

SI. No.	Problems with Print Questionnaire	No. of Research Scholars (%)	Problems with Emailed & Online Questionnaire	No. of Research Scholars (%)
1.	Respondents are not interested to fill questionnaire	34 (35.79)	Respondents are not aware of using the online questionnaire	19 (20.00)
2.	Respondents did not give correct information	31 (32.63)	No response even after sending reminder	16 (16.84)
3.	Partial responses by the respondent	28 (29.47)	Web connectivity	11 (11.58)
4.	Respondents did not return the filled questionnaire	20 (21.05)	Unable to obtain the email addresses of respondents to send the questionnaire	9 (09.47)
			Need to collect large sample	5 (05.26)
			Email questionnaire becomes spam	4 (04.21)

Percentages are given in parentheses

6.10. Problems in Interview Method

Different types of problems faced when the research scholars adopted the interview technique in order to collect data for their research work and are given in table 10. During interview process language problem came to the fore as a big problem, faced by 24.21 % of the research scholars. Those research scholars

faced the problem of lack of proper time and less information regarding their research work or specific subject area are 21.05%, whereas 14.74 % research scholars faced the problem of respondent's level of understanding and their giving wrong information. It can be said that collecting data through interview process is much hectic rather than through questionnaire.

Table 10
Problems Faced in Interview Method

SI. No.	Type of Problems	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total respondents
1	Respondents Language problem	23	24.21
2	Respondents do not give full information	20	21.05
3	Respondents do not give proper time	20	21.05
4	Respondents level of understanding	14	14.74
5	Respondents give wrong information	14	14.74

6.11. Reasons for Unwillingness in Giving Accurate Information

Various reasons of unwillingness of respondents in giving accurate information are detailed in table 11. More than a quarter of the research scholars (41.05 %) opined that unwillingness to give accurate information, similarly 41.05% of the respondents think that there is of no use for them and they wanted to

keep information confidential, while 34.74 % of the research scholars believed that the respondents were unaware of the research topic that is why they did not want to give proper information to the investigator and sometimes there was no time to give information. Apart from these, 31.58% of the respondents topic might be unfamiliar/ controversial, they think that it may create a problem; in that case also the respondents were not willing to give accurate information.

Table 11
Reasons for Unwillingness in giving Accurate Information

Sl. No.	Reasons	No. of Research Scholars	% of Total respondents
1	Respondents want to keep information confidential	39	41.05
2	Respondents think that it is useless for them	39	41.05
3	Respondents are unaware of your research topic	33	34.74
4	Respondents think that the topic might be controversial	30	31.58
5	Respondents have lack of time	26	27.37

7. Findings

Major findings of the present study are:-

- Almost half (45.26%) of research scholars were satisfied with the literature available in the university library and seminar library.
- Around one third (30.53%) of the research scholars were satisfied with the available electronic resources in the university library and seminar library.
- More than 2/5th (44.21%) of them are satisfied with library services.
- One third (34.74%) of them are satisfied with infrastructural facilities.

- Less than ten percent of them are not satisfied with library services, available e-resources, internet connectivity and financial assistance for research.
- Almost half (48.42%) of the research scholars are not satisfied with the training programs for software packages.
- Three fifth of them (60%) faced problems in literature search.
- Half of them (52.63%) opined that relevant literature is not available neither in university library nor seminar library.
- Major problems faced by them (54.74%) is because of the internet connectivity (slow speed).

- Half of them (48.42%) lack knowledge in using consortium.
- Respondent's attitude is a problem (62.11%) faced by the research scholars.
- Most convenient and suitable research tool for data collection was the questionnaire followed by interview.
- Print questionnaire was preferred by 45.26% of them.
- Google form is preferred by around a quarter of them (23.15%) than survey monkey, Kwik survey, type form, survey planet etc.
- More than one third (35.79%) of research scholars faced the problem that the respondents are not interested to fill up the print questionnaire.
- In the case of emailed and online questionnaire, the main problem faced was that the respondents are not aware of using it.
- Language problem is the major hindrance in the interview method.
- Prominent reason behind unwillingness in giving accurate information is that the respondents wish to keep the information confidential.

8. Suggestions

Some of the suggestions related to the study are given below-

- Institutions must have provisions of essential training for the researchers of social science faculty in order to spread awareness about the availability of library resources and their searching techniques.

- Encourage the use of data repositories, and subject specific databases for the relevant literature. The researchers should get connected to latest updates in research techniques and data collection tools.
- The researchers should provide a brief introduction of their research work and also encourage them for their effort in providing required data.
- The institution and university should promote the research data management and reuse of the data.
- It is suggested that the university library and concerning departments should improve the infrastructural facilities for researchers.
- Library should facilitate high speed internet connection so as to enable research scholars to make use of the electronic information and the information resources.

9. Conclusion

Data collection for Social Science research is a crucial issue even in the era of Information and Communication Technology. The present study focused on all the problems faced by research scholars during data collection in their research work in Social Science Faculty of AMU. Majority of the research scholars faced different kinds of problems during their research, literature search and data collection.

Sometimes researchers do not understand the nature of the research work and they apply inappropriate techniques or tools to collect the essential data for their study. While in some cases the researchers do not have any idea about the sources of literature and they faced various problems while searching the relevant literature for the research work. During the

research process, majority of the researchers faced problems in using Databases, Consortium, Digital Resource Centers, and Institutional Repositories because of having less knowledge about them.

Majority of the researchers from different subject background such as Islamic Studies, History and Political Science do not have proper knowledge about the searching techniques and advanced search techniques. These were the reasons due to which the researchers faced difficulties during their research process especially in data collection.

The Central library of AMU is self-sufficient in terms of printed resources and digital resources, but due to less knowledge about all the services and sources provided by the library the researchers faced many difficulties. To understand and to solve such problems the library and specific departments of their concerned field should provide appropriate training programs for enhancing the awareness and use of available resources and services from time to time and should also provide practical knowledge about the research work.

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