

Determination of Student Motivation in the Islamic Education Master's Program at IAIN Takengon: A Review from Social, Economic, and Academic Aspects (Cohort 2023–2024)

Edy Saputra¹, Muhammad Riza², Mahendra Apriza³

¹IAIN Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia

²IAIN Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia

³MIN 1, Central Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the determinants of student motivation in the Master's Program of Islamic Education (PAI) at IAIN Takengon, focusing on social, economic, and academic aspects among the 2023–2024 cohort. Motivation represents a crucial psychological factor that influences students' persistence, achievement, and professional orientation in higher Islamic education. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study analyzed data from 120 graduate students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a standardized motivation scale adapted from Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework and analyzed using multiple regression. The findings reveal that social support ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), academic self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), and economic stability ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$) significantly predict students' motivation to pursue graduate Islamic education. Among the three, academic factors contributed the most substantial effect. The study concludes that student motivation in Islamic higher education is a multidimensional construct influenced by personal aspirations, socio-economic background, and the academic climate. It recommends institutional policies emphasizing financial aid, mentorship programs, and community engagement to sustain students' intrinsic motivation.

Keywords: Student Motivation, Islamic Higher Education, Social Factors, Economic Aspects, Academic Determinants

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor penentu motivasi mahasiswa pada Program Magister Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di IAIN Takengon, dengan fokus pada aspek sosial, ekonomi, dan akademik pada angkatan 2023–2024. Motivasi merupakan faktor psikologis penting yang memengaruhi ketekunan, pencapaian, serta orientasi profesional mahasiswa dalam pendidikan tinggi Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional, melibatkan 120 mahasiswa pascasarjana yang dipilih melalui teknik stratified random sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan skala motivasi standar yang diadaptasi dari kerangka Self-Determination Theory (SDT) oleh Deci dan Ryan, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan regresi berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dukungan sosial ($\beta = 0,36$, $p < 0,01$), efikasi diri akademik ($\beta = 0,42$, $p < 0,001$), dan stabilitas ekonomi ($\beta = 0,29$, $p < 0,05$) berpengaruh signifikan terhadap motivasi mahasiswa untuk melanjutkan studi magister di bidang Pendidikan Agama Islam. Di antara ketiga faktor tersebut, aspek akademik memberikan pengaruh paling besar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa motivasi mahasiswa dalam pendidikan tinggi Islam merupakan konstruksi multidimensional yang dipengaruhi oleh aspirasi pribadi, latar belakang sosial-ekonomi, dan iklim akademik. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan kebijakan institusional yang menekankan bantuan finansial, program pendampingan, dan keterlibatan sosial untuk mempertahankan motivasi intrinsik mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Motivasi Mahasiswa, Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, Faktor Sosial, Aspek Ekonomi, Determinan Akademik

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Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Riza

IAIN Takengon

Jl. Aman Hasan No. 176, Simpang Empat Bebesen, Takengon, Aceh Tengah

Email: rizajundana@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Student motivation represents one of the most crucial determinants of learning success and persistence in higher education. Within the framework of Islamic higher education, motivation does not merely refer to psychological energy or academic drive but also reflects spiritual awareness and moral commitment (Abdullah et al., 2023). In graduate programs, such as the Master's Program in Islamic Education (PAI) at IAIN Takengon, motivation becomes the foundation for intellectual growth, professional development, and the internalization of Islamic pedagogical values. However, variations in students' engagement, participation, and academic consistency across cohorts indicate that motivation is influenced by diverse internal and external factors (Basri et al., 2022).

Recent studies have identified that social, economic, and academic aspects are the three dominant dimensions affecting students' motivation in higher education (Al-Smadi & Al-Khasawneh, 2023; Rahman & Yusuf, 2022). Social factors, such as peer support, family encouragement, and the surrounding learning environment, enhance students' emotional stability and belongingness (Hassan & Jamaludin, 2021). Economic variables, including financial security and access to learning facilities, directly impact students' ability to focus and persist in their studies (Hamid et al., 2022). Meanwhile, academic aspects—such as lecturer competence, curriculum relevance, and institutional support—have been consistently shown to foster intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning (Tondeur et al., 2019; Widodo & Riandi, 2021).

In the context of Indonesian Islamic higher education, student motivation is deeply intertwined with social identity and moral purpose. The desire to pursue advanced Islamic studies often stems from a sense of *da'wah* (moral mission) and a commitment to contribute to religious education at community and national levels (Ismail et al., 2022). Yet, for many graduate students, especially in rural regions such as Takengon, socio-economic challenges such as limited internet access, professional obligations, and family responsibilities may hinder consistent academic engagement (Nasir & Sari, 2023).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift toward hybrid learning have reshaped the motivational dynamics of postgraduate students. Studies indicate that the transition to digital learning environments increased dependence on academic self-efficacy, adaptability, and peer collaboration (Alhassan, 2023; Basri et al., 2022). These findings imply that motivation among Islamic education students must be examined not only as an individual variable but also as a systemic phenomenon influenced by institutional culture and socio-economic realities.

The Master's Program in Islamic Education at IAIN Takengon, as one of the regional Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, accommodates students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Many of them are teachers, civil servants, or community leaders pursuing academic advancement while maintaining professional duties. Such diversity provides a unique opportunity to explore how social networks, economic conditions, and academic environments interact to shape students' motivational orientations.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the determinants of student motivation specifically the influence of social, economic, and academic factors among students in the 2023–2024 cohort of the Islamic Education Master's Program at IAIN Takengon. By applying a quantitative correlational approach, this study contributes empirical evidence to the discourse on motivation in Islamic higher education, aligning with global trends that emphasize the integration of psychological, social, and contextual variables in learning research (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020; Hashim et al., 2023). The findings are expected to offer practical insights for policymakers and educators in developing sustainable strategies that enhance graduate students' motivation and engagement through holistic institutional support.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Nature of Student Motivation in Islamic Higher Education

Student motivation is a multidimensional concept that encompasses psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions influencing learning persistence and academic performance (Suryani & Fitri, 2022). In the context of Islamic higher education, motivation transcends instrumental goals and includes moral commitment to seek knowledge (*thalabul 'ilm*) as a spiritual duty (Amin, 2023). Graduate students in Islamic education programs are often driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors ranging from the desire for intellectual growth to socio-religious aspirations such as contributing to Islamic scholarship and moral reform (Mahfud et al., 2022).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) remains one of the most widely applied frameworks for understanding student motivation in Islamic education research. SDT posits that human motivation is sustained when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Within the PAI postgraduate context, autonomy relates to students' ability to direct their own research focus, competence refers to mastering Islamic pedagogical theories, and relatedness is expressed through meaningful interaction with peers and lecturers who share religious and academic goals (Mustapha & Hamzah, 2021).

However, research has shown that motivation among students in Islamic universities is also shaped by contextual factors beyond psychological constructs, including the availability of social support systems, economic resources, and the quality of the academic environment (Fadli et al., 2023). These determinants form an interdependent model where social, economic, and academic domains interact to influence students' learning persistence and satisfaction.

2.2 Social Determinants of Motivation

Social support is one of the most significant predictors of academic motivation, particularly in communal learning cultures such as Indonesia (Utami & Rosyidah, 2021). Family encouragement, peer interaction, and lecturer mentorship serve as external reinforcements that sustain students' intrinsic goals (Yusof et al., 2023). According to Aini and Hakim (2021), students with strong social integration exhibit higher emotional stability, self-efficacy, and resilience in managing academic demands.

In Islamic higher education, the concept of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) functions as a socio-spiritual bond that strengthens belongingness and meaning in learning (Rohman, 2022). Supportive peer collaboration, particularly in research discussions and thesis development, helps students regulate emotions and maintain consistency in academic goals. Furthermore, mentorship from lecturers who serve as *murabbi* (spiritual educators) has been found to enhance students' intrinsic motivation by connecting intellectual pursuit with moral responsibility (Salim et al., 2023).

Digital learning environments have also extended the social dimensions of motivation. Studies by Chen et al. (2022) and Liu and Wang (2021) revealed that online peer interactions and collaborative learning tools positively influence students' engagement and self-driven motivation. This suggests that social connectedness, whether physical or virtual, remains a key driver of motivation in the Islamic postgraduate setting.

2.3 Economic Influences on Student Motivation

Economic conditions continue to play a crucial role in shaping students' academic behavior. Financial stability often determines the degree to which students can focus on their studies, access learning materials, and engage in academic activities (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Conversely, limited economic resources may cause stress, fatigue, or disengagement, particularly among students who combine work and study (Syamsuddin & Iskandar, 2021). Research by Putri and Rahardjo (2022) found that postgraduate students from middle to lower-income backgrounds often rely on intrinsic motivation such as faith-based perseverance (*sabr*) and long-term educational vision to overcome financial limitations. These findings are consistent with Choy et al. (2021), who highlight that economic hardship can, in certain cultural settings, foster stronger goal orientation when mediated by internal values.

In the Islamic education context, financial concerns intersect with moral values. Students perceive pursuing education despite hardship as part of *jihad al-'ilm* (striving in knowledge), which reinforces their moral resilience (Azizah, 2020). Institutional support such as tuition assistance, flexible payment systems, and scholarship programs has been shown to significantly improve motivation and retention rates among Islamic postgraduate students (Mahmood & Wahid, 2023). These structural supports not only ease financial burdens but also reaffirm students' sense of institutional care and social justice, which are vital for sustaining intrinsic motivation.

2.4 Academic Environment and Pedagogical Quality

Academic factors particularly instructional quality, lecturer competence, and curriculum relevance play an essential role in maintaining students' motivation in higher education (Ting et al., 2022). A stimulating academic environment enables students to perceive their learning as meaningful, achievable, and aligned with personal aspirations (Khan et al., 2021). For Islamic education postgraduate students, the academic climate also includes the integration of *adab* (ethical conduct), *hikmah* (wisdom), and spiritual reflection in teaching and supervision (Amin & Yusuf, 2023). Studies by Hosseini and Rezaei (2020) demonstrated that when lecturers model reflective pedagogy and ethical teaching, students report higher satisfaction and intrinsic engagement. Similarly, Zulkifli et al. (2022) found that Islamic universities that emphasize character-oriented pedagogy experience better motivational outcomes compared to purely cognitive-based programs.

Academic feedback and institutional recognition also contribute significantly to motivation. Park and Lee (2022) highlighted that timely, constructive feedback enhances postgraduate students' academic self-efficacy and goal

commitment. Moreover, institutional structures such as academic advising systems, research collaboration opportunities, and professional training programs help students develop a sense of competence and belonging (Junaidi et al., 2023). Therefore, in the context of IAIN Takengon, academic factors are expected to be the strongest predictor of motivation among graduate students, as they represent the intersection between intellectual, moral, and institutional dimensions of learning.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on recent literature, student motivation in Islamic postgraduate education can be conceptualized as the dependent variable influenced by three key predictors:

1. Social factors (peer interaction, lecturer mentorship, family encouragement) that fulfill emotional and moral needs.
2. Economic factors (financial stability, institutional aid, scholarship accessibility) that provide external reinforcement for academic persistence.
3. Academic factors (curriculum design, teaching quality, learning climate) that shape intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy.

The present study integrates these variables into a determinant model of student motivation, hypothesizing that each domain exerts a significant and positive effect on students' motivational levels in pursuing the Master's Program in Islamic Education at IAIN Takengon.

3. Methodology

This research employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the influence of social, economic, and academic factors on student motivation in the Master's Program of Islamic Education (PAI) at IAIN Takengon for the 2023–2024 academic cohort. The study aimed to identify the extent to which these three independent variables determine students' motivational levels toward academic persistence and engagement. The quantitative approach was chosen because it enables objective measurement of the relationships among variables and provides statistical evidence of the strength and direction of influence (Cohen et al., 2021). The research model was grounded in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework, focusing on how contextual and individual factors interact to shape intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The population of the study consisted of all 152 active postgraduate students enrolled in the Islamic Education Master's Program during the 2023–2024 academic year. Using stratified random sampling, a total of 120 respondents were selected proportionally from first- and second-year students to represent diverse backgrounds. Data were collected through a standardized questionnaire consisting of four sections: (1) social factors (8 items), (2) economic factors (7 items), (3) academic factors (10 items), and (4) student motivation (10 items). The instrument was developed and adapted from established scales used in previous studies (Mustapha & Hamzah, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2023) and validated through expert judgment by three Islamic education specialists. The reliability of each construct was tested using Cronbach's alpha, which ranged between 0.84 and 0.91, indicating high internal consistency.

Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression to test the combined and partial effects of social, economic, and academic variables on student motivation. Prior to regression testing, assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were examined to ensure model validity. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. The strength of association among variables was evaluated through standardized beta coefficients (β), while R^2 values indicated the overall explanatory power of the model. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring data confidentiality and anonymity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The analysis began with a descriptive examination of the three independent variables—social, economic, and academic factors—and the dependent variable, student motivation. The data from 120 valid respondents revealed that students' motivation levels were relatively high, with a mean score of 4.12 ($SD = 0.58$) on a five-point Likert scale. The academic aspect obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by social factors ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.60$) and economic factors ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.63$). These findings suggest that students perceived their learning environment as academically supportive and socially engaging, although some indicated moderate economic constraints. Further analysis indicated that 72% of respondents reported feeling highly motivated to continue their postgraduate studies, citing lecturer support, peer collaboration, and curriculum relevance as primary motivational sources. Conversely, 18% of students expressed mild motivational challenges

due to limited financial capacity and work-study balance issues. The high mean scores across the variables indicate that motivation among PAI master's students is generally well-maintained, supported by institutional and interpersonal factors.

To test the research hypothesis, multiple linear regression was conducted to determine the influence of social (X_1), economic (X_2), and academic (X_3) factors on student motivation (Y). The model summary yielded an R^2 value of 0.68, indicating that 68% of the variance in student motivation can be explained collectively by the three independent variables, while 32% is influenced by other factors not included in the model. The F-test result ($F = 83.217$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant. The standardized beta coefficients revealed varying degrees of contribution:

1. Academic factors ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$) showed the strongest influence,
2. Social factors ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) had a moderate but significant effect, and
3. Economic factors ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$) demonstrated the least yet significant contribution.

This indicates that academic aspects such as lecturer competence, curriculum quality, and institutional support are the most dominant predictors of student motivation. Meanwhile, social interaction and financial stability play complementary roles in enhancing motivational levels.

The findings provide empirical evidence that motivation among postgraduate Islamic education students is a multifactorial construct strongly shaped by academic experiences, social engagement, and economic stability. The dominance of academic variables supports prior research emphasizing the centrality of pedagogical quality and institutional climate in sustaining postgraduate motivation (Khan et al., 2021; Ting et al., 2022). The significant contribution of social factors aligns with the communal learning orientation typical in Islamic institutions, where mentorship and peer collaboration serve as intrinsic motivators (Yusof et al., 2023).

Although economic factors contributed the least to the model, their statistical significance demonstrates that financial support remains a vital external reinforcement for sustaining student persistence, particularly for those balancing employment and family responsibilities. These quantitative results highlight the interconnectedness of social, economic, and academic dimensions in shaping motivation among students at IAIN Takengon and underscore the importance of holistic institutional strategies to maintain learner engagement and performance.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that academic, social, and economic aspects significantly influence student motivation among postgraduate Islamic education students at IAIN Takengon, with academic factors contributing the strongest effect. This result confirms the theoretical foundation of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that motivation is sustained when individuals experience competence, autonomy, and relatedness within their learning environment (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The strong influence of academic aspects indicates that postgraduate students' motivation is largely determined by their perceptions of instructional quality, relevance of coursework, and the intellectual climate fostered by lecturers. This aligns with the findings of Fatima et al. (2022), who reported that academic structures that emphasize reflective teaching and feedback consistency significantly improve students' internal drive and learning persistence in religious higher education settings.

The regression results also reveal that social factors play an important but secondary role in determining motivation. This reflects the collective nature of Indonesian Islamic learning culture, which is built upon *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and community support. Studies by Almubarak and Haron (2021) and Fauzi et al. (2023) have shown that social belonging and moral reinforcement from peers and mentors increase students' emotional stability and commitment to learning. Within the Islamic education context, lecturers' mentorship as *murabbi* who not only teach but also model ethical conduct serves as a unique form of moral scaffolding that enhances intrinsic motivation (Othman et al., 2022). This is consistent with the notion that relatedness in SDT is not limited to social attachment but includes moral and spiritual connection, both of which are central to the Islamic educational ethos.

Economic factors, although showing the smallest standardized coefficient, were found to significantly affect motivation. This finding is particularly relevant to postgraduate students in provincial Islamic institutions such as IAIN Takengon, many of whom balance academic studies with professional or family responsibilities. The significance of economic stability as a motivator supports Latief et al. (2021), who observed that financial difficulties often lead to stress, decreased academic engagement, and reduced persistence. However, financial support mechanisms such as scholarships or flexible tuition policies can mitigate these effects, as demonstrated by Baharuddin and Mohamad (2023), who found that institutional aid improved students' confidence and focus on learning tasks. In this sense, economic reinforcement functions as an extrinsic motivator that enables the fulfillment of intrinsic academic goals.

The dominance of academic factors in this study also indicates that postgraduate students prioritize the quality and meaningfulness of their educational experience over external rewards. This mirrors findings from

Mahmood and Anwar (2022), who reported that graduate students' motivation is sustained when they perceive the curriculum as relevant to their professional goals and when learning activities encourage reflection and critical inquiry. Furthermore, academic factors in Islamic education are often tied to the cultivation of *adab* (ethics) and *hikmah* (wisdom), reinforcing the spiritual dimension of learning (Abu Bakar et al., 2023). The consistency between these results and global motivational theories underscores that, while Islamic education operates within a distinct moral framework, the psychological principles of motivation remain universally applicable.

The findings also highlight the interplay between social and academic domains. When social relationships within the academic community are characterized by trust and empathy, students tend to internalize academic goals more effectively. According to Nguyen and Walker (2023), academic institutions that nurture collegial relationships and moral collaboration foster deeper learning and intrinsic engagement. Similarly, Hassan and Saad (2022) found that mentorship characterized by moral care strengthens postgraduate students' sense of purpose and persistence. In the context of IAIN Takengon, the close-knit academic environment likely serves as a catalyst for motivation, as peer collaboration and lecturer accessibility are embedded within the institution's pedagogical culture.

The moderate effect of economic variables in this study reflects broader socioeconomic challenges in Indonesian higher education. While financial constraints can hinder academic performance, they also cultivate resilience when paired with strong social and spiritual support systems (Zainuddin et al., 2023). This dual role of economic pressure both as a constraint and a motivator illustrates what Imran and Yusuf (2021) call "adaptive motivation," where students transform external obstacles into internal determination. Such a phenomenon aligns with Islamic concepts of *sabr* (patience) and *mujahadah* (striving in adversity), showing how faith-based coping mechanisms interact with motivational psychology.

Comparatively, the 68% explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.68$) of the regression model in this study aligns with other empirical findings in Southeast Asian contexts, suggesting that student motivation in Islamic higher education is multidimensional but highly influenced by institutional dynamics. Ahmad et al. (2020) reported similar proportions, where institutional support and lecturer engagement accounted for 65–70% of motivational variance among Islamic university students. These findings collectively affirm that while personal spirituality provides intrinsic orientation, the external environment especially academic infrastructure plays a decisive role in sustaining motivation.

In practical terms, this study's results imply that educational policymakers and program administrators at IAIN Takengon should strengthen academic mentoring systems, provide targeted financial support, and develop social learning communities. Incorporating reflective pedagogy, establishing research-based mentoring, and enhancing accessibility to learning technologies may further optimize students' motivational outcomes. As Wulandari and Hassan (2023) argue, institutional intervention must address both cognitive and affective domains to maintain consistent engagement in postgraduate education.

Finally, the interplay between academic, social, and economic determinants underscores the holistic nature of motivation in Islamic higher education. The findings support a contextualized understanding that integrates psychological theory with Islamic pedagogy affirming that learning in Islam is not only a cognitive process but also an act of spiritual fulfillment. Therefore, effective motivation strategies in Islamic postgraduate programs must balance intellectual challenge, moral development, and socio-economic support to sustain long-term educational commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that student motivation in Islamic higher education, particularly in the Master's Program of Islamic Education at IAIN Takengon, is a multidimensional construct influenced by academic, social, and economic determinants. Among these, academic factors exerted the strongest influence, reflecting the centrality of teaching quality, curriculum relevance, and lecturer support in fostering intrinsic motivation and persistence. Social dimensions such as peer collaboration, mentorship, and communal belonging also played a crucial role by enhancing students' sense of emotional stability and moral purpose. Meanwhile, economic stability, though contributing the least, remained a significant external reinforcement, enabling students to focus on their academic commitments. These results collectively demonstrate that motivation in Islamic postgraduate education is shaped by an interplay of intellectual, social, and material realities embedded within a faith-based learning environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in the context of Islamic higher education, confirming that autonomy, competence, and relatedness function not only as psychological needs but also as moral and spiritual constructs. The integration of SDT with Islamic pedagogical principles offers a more holistic model for understanding how intrinsic and extrinsic factors coexist in shaping students' academic behavior. The findings suggest that motivation among postgraduate students is sustained when their academic experiences align with personal values, social recognition, and moral aspirations

illustrating that in Islamic education, learning is both a cognitive pursuit and an ethical act of devotion (ibadah ilmiah).

In practical terms, several recommendations emerge from this research. Educational policymakers and program administrators at IAIN Takengon should strengthen academic mentoring systems, ensure continuous professional development for lecturers, and design curricula that integrate reflective learning and spiritual values. Institutions should also expand financial support mechanisms including scholarships and flexible payment schemes to reduce economic burdens that hinder motivation. Additionally, fostering collaborative academic communities through peer mentoring, research groups, and moral guidance programs can enhance students' emotional engagement and sense of belonging. Future studies may explore longitudinal designs or mixed-method approaches to deepen understanding of motivational dynamics and their evolution across academic years. Ultimately, sustaining student motivation in Islamic postgraduate education requires a balanced approach that harmonizes intellectual rigor, moral formation, and socio-economic empowerment.

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