

Influence of Social Networking Sites on Students' Psychological Well-being

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Abstract— The widespread adoption of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and mobile internet technologies has significantly transformed the communication patterns, social interactions, and daily routines of students. This study investigates the influence of social media usage on students' psychological well-being by examining both its beneficial and adverse effects on mental health. Primary data were collected from 200 students using a structured questionnaire that assessed demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, and psychological outcomes across multiple dimensions. Key variables included duration and frequency of SNS use, preferred social media platforms, and perceived impacts on stress, anxiety, self-esteem, sleep quality, social relationships, and academic performance.

Descriptive statistical techniques, including mean, median, and mode, were employed to summarize the data, while correlation and regression analyses were used to examine relationships between social media usage and psychological well-being. The findings reveal significant associations between daily SNS usage, platform preference, and various psychological outcomes. While social media serves as an important medium for social connectivity, emotional expression, and access to support networks, excessive use is associated with increased levels of stress, anxiety, social comparison, and reduced overall well-being.

The study highlights the complex and multidimensional relationship between social media use and mental health among students. By integrating empirical evidence with insights from existing literature, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of digital behavior in academic settings. The findings offer valuable implications for educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health professionals in designing effective digital wellness initiatives and intervention strategies that promote balanced social media use while minimizing potential psychological risks.

Keywords— Social Networking Sites (SNS), Social Media, Psychological Well-being, Mental Health, Students, Anxiety, Stress, Digital Wellness.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

Social Networking Sites (SNS) has revolutionized the way individuals communicate, access information, and interact within society.

With the rapid expansion of internet connectivity and smartphone usage, social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and X (formerly Twitter) have become an integral part of students' daily lives. These platforms serve multiple purposes, including communication, entertainment, information sharing, academic collaboration, networking, and self-expression.

Students constitute one of the most active user groups of social media. The widespread adoption of SNS has significantly influenced their social behaviors, learning experiences, and psychological development. While social media provides opportunities for maintaining relationships, accessing educational resources, and participating in online communities, concerns have emerged regarding its potential effects on mental health and psychological well-being.

The student population is particularly vulnerable to psychological challenges due to academic demands, social pressures, identity development, and career-related uncertainties. Consequently, understanding the relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being has become an important area of academic inquiry. Existing studies suggest that social media can have both positive and negative consequences, depending on factors such as duration of use, type of engagement, platform characteristics, and individual differences. Therefore, a comprehensive investigation of these factors is necessary to understand how SNS usage influences students' psychological health.

B. Research Problem

The increasing dependence on Social Networking Sites among students has raised important concerns regarding their psychological well-being. Although SNS facilitate social connectivity, emotional expression, and access to information, excessive or inappropriate usage has been linked to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, loneliness, sleep disturbances, and reduced academic performance.

The relationship between social media use and mental health remains complex and inconclusive. While some studies report positive outcomes, including enhanced social support and community engagement, others highlight adverse effects associated with social comparison, cyberbullying, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and digital addiction. Given these contrasting findings, there is a need for empirical research that examines how different social media usage patterns affect the psychological well-being of students. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the relationship between SNS usage characteristics and various psychological outcomes.

C. Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyze the demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns among students.
- To assess the perceived impact of Social Networking Sites on students' psychological well-being.
- To examine the relationship between SNS usage variables, including duration of use, platform preference, and content type, and psychological outcomes.
- To investigate the influence of social media usage on factors such as stress, anxiety, self-esteem, sleep quality, social relationships, and academic performance.
- To develop a predictive model of psychological well-being based on social media usage patterns.

D. Research Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

H1: Daily SNS usage time is significantly associated with students' psychological well-being.

H2: Different types of social media content (Entertainment, Educational, and News-related content) have varying effects on psychological outcomes.

H3: Platform preference is significantly associated with differences in self-esteem and anxiety levels among students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being has attracted substantial attention from researchers across disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communication studies, and education. Existing literature indicates that the effects of social media are multifaceted and influenced by both individual and contextual factors.

One of the earliest theoretical explanations for the psychological impact of social media is Social Comparison Theory, proposed by Festinger (1954). The theory suggests that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their achievements, appearance, and lifestyles with those of others. In the context of social media, exposure to carefully curated and idealized content may encourage upward social comparisons, which can negatively affect self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Empirical studies have produced mixed findings regarding the impact of SNS on psychological well-being. Kross et al. (2013) reported that increased Facebook usage was associated with declines in subjective well-being and life satisfaction over time. The authors argued that online interactions may not provide the same psychological benefits as direct face-to-face communication. Similarly, several studies have linked excessive social media use to anxiety, depression, loneliness, and emotional distress.

In contrast, Ellison et al. (2007) found that social media platforms can enhance social capital by strengthening existing relationships and facilitating social support networks. Through online interactions, students can maintain friendships, seek emotional support, participate in communities, and access valuable information. Such benefits can contribute positively to psychological well-being and social connectedness.

Recent research highlights the importance of distinguishing between different forms of social media engagement. Active participation, such as posting content, communicating with friends, and engaging in discussions, is often associated with positive outcomes. Conversely, passive consumption of content, including excessive scrolling and observation of others' activities, has been linked to increased social comparison, envy, and reduced well-being.

Another significant area of research concerns the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO refers to the apprehension that others may be experiencing rewarding events or opportunities without one's participation. Studies suggest that FOMO encourages compulsive social media checking, disrupts sleep patterns, reduces concentration, and increases stress and anxiety levels among students.

The COVID-19 pandemic further emphasized the dual role of social media. During periods of social isolation, SNS served as important platforms for maintaining social relationships, accessing educational content, and obtaining emotional support. However, prolonged exposure to online environments also contributed to information overload, digital fatigue, and heightened psychological distress among some users.



In the Indian context, rapid digitalization, affordable internet access, and widespread smartphone adoption have significantly increased social media engagement among students. While these developments have expanded educational opportunities and social connectivity, concerns regarding their effects on mental health, academic performance, and emotional resilience continue to grow. Despite increasing scholarly attention, there remains a need for comprehensive studies that simultaneously examine multiple dimensions of social media usage and psychological well-being within student populations.

The present study contributes to the existing literature by investigating the association between social media usage patterns and psychological well-being among students. By examining variables such as frequency of use, duration of engagement, preferred platforms, content preferences, and perceived psychological outcomes, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influences students' mental health and overall well-being.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The present study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the relationship between Social Networking Site (SNS) usage and the psychological well-being of students. This design was considered appropriate as it enables the collection of quantitative data from a large number of respondents at a single point in time. The survey approach facilitated the assessment of students' social media usage patterns, behavioral tendencies, and perceived psychological outcomes, providing a comprehensive overview of the impact of SNS use on mental health and well-being.

B. Sample and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of students belonging to different educational levels and backgrounds. A total of 200 respondents participated in the survey. The participants were selected through the convenience sampling method, wherein respondents who were readily available and willing to participate were included in the study. This sampling technique allowed for efficient data collection within the available time and resources while ensuring adequate representation of students from diverse demographic groups.

C. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically designed to gather information relevant to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was divided into three major sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, gender, location, and educational level. The second section focused on SNS usage patterns, such as the social media platforms most frequently used, average daily time spent on social networking sites, and the primary purposes for using these platforms. The third section assessed the psychological impact of SNS usage through a series of Likert-scale statements. These items measured various dimensions of psychological well-being, including self-esteem, anxiety levels, social comparison behavior, overall life satisfaction, and the perceived impact of social media use on academic performance. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, enabling the quantification of psychological outcomes associated with SNS use.

D. Statistical Tools and Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to achieve the research objectives. Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages, were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and describe their social media usage patterns. To examine relationships and associations among variables, inferential statistical methods were applied. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between SNS usage and psychological well-being indicators. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the extent to which SNS usage variables predicted psychological outcomes. Additionally, the Chi-square test was utilized to examine associations between categorical variables. The results were presented through tables, charts, and graphical representations to facilitate interpretation and understanding of the findings. Data analysis and visualization were carried out using standard statistical procedures to ensure accuracy and reliability of the results.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Demographic Profile of Respondents

TABLE 1
GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	142	71
Male	58	29
Total	200	100

The sample shows a predominance of female respondents (71%), which aligns with research suggesting higher SNS engagement among female students.

TABLE 2
AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
17-19 years	68	34.0
20-22 years	89	44.5
23-25 years	31	15.5
26+ years	12	6.0
Total	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics For Age:

- Mean Age: 20.4 years
- Median Age: 20 years
- Mode: 19 years
- Standard Deviation: 2.3 years

Based on the descriptive statistics, the respondents were predominantly young adults with an average age of 20.4 years. The median age of 20 years and mode of 19 years indicate that most participants were concentrated around the late teenage and early adulthood years. The relatively low standard deviation of 2.3 years suggests limited variation in age among the respondents, reflecting a fairly homogeneous sample. Furthermore, with 78.5% of the respondents belonging to the 17–22 age group, the study primarily represents undergraduate students, making the findings particularly relevant for understanding social networking site usage and its psychological impact on this demographic.

TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
12th Pass	24	12.0
Undergraduate	98	49.0
Postgraduate	52	26.0
Bachelor's/Master's (Completed)	26	13.0
Total	200	100.0

The educational profile of the respondents shows that nearly half of the participants were undergraduates (49%), indicating that this group formed the dominant segment of the sample. Postgraduate students accounted for 26%, while those who had completed bachelor's or master's degrees constituted 13%, and 12% were 12th pass students. Overall, the distribution reflects a sample largely composed of higher education learners, with a strong representation of undergraduate and postgraduate respondents. This indicates that the data primarily captures perceptions and behaviors of students actively engaged in tertiary education, making the findings particularly relevant for analyzing academic-age populations.

B. Social Media Usage Patterns

TABLE 4
PRIMARY PLATFORM USED

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Instagram	89	44.5
WhatsApp	62	31.0
YouTube	31	15.5
Snapchat	12	6.0
Other	6	3.0
Total	200	100.0

The mode of the most frequently used social media platform among the respondents was Instagram, indicating that Instagram emerged as the most popular and commonly preferred social networking platform in the study sample. This finding suggests that a larger proportion of students use Instagram compared to other social media platforms for communication, entertainment, information sharing, and social interaction.

TABLE 5
DAILY USAGE TIME

Usage Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Coded Value
Less than 1	18	9.0	1
1-3 hours	54	27.0	2
3-5 hours	72	36.0	3
4+ hours (Heavy)	56	28.0	4
Total	200	100.0	-

Descriptive Statistics for Daily Usage:

- Mean Usage Code: 2.83 (approximately 3-4 hours daily)
- Median: 3 (3-5 hours category)
- Mode: 3 (3-5 hours category)
- Standard Deviation: 0.94

A significant majority (64%) of students use SNS for more than 3 hours daily, indicating substantial engagement.

TABLE 6
PRIMARY PURPOSE OF USE

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entertainment	118	59.0
Education	42	21.0
News/Information	28	14.0
Networking/Socializing	12	6.0
Total	200	100.0

Entertainment emerged as the predominant purpose for social media use among respondents, with 59% of participants indicating that they primarily use social media platforms for entertainment-related activities such as watching videos, browsing content, gaming, and engaging with recreational media. In comparison, 21% of respondents reported using social media mainly for educational purposes, including accessing study materials, participating in academic discussions, and enhancing learning opportunities. These findings suggest that while social media serves as a valuable educational resource for a notable proportion of students, its primary role remains centered on entertainment and leisure activities.

C. Psychological Impact Assessment

Psychological impact was measured using 5-point Likert scales converted to numerical scores:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree/Never/Very Negative
- 2 = Disagree/Rarely/Negative
- 3 = Neutral/Sometimes/No Effect
- 4 = Agree/Often/Positive
- 5 = Strongly Agree/Always/Very Positive

TABLE 7
SELF-ESTEEM IMPACT SCORES

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Negative (1)	22	11.0
Negative (2)	48	24.0
No Effect (3)	68	34.0
Positive (4)	44	22.0
Strongly Positive (5)	18	9.0
Total	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean: 2.94
- Median: 3.0
- Mode: 3
- Standard Deviation: 1.12

The mean score of 2.94 indicates a slightly negative to neutral impact on self-esteem.

TABLE 8
ANXIETY LEVEL SCORES

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Low (1)	16	8.0
Low (2)	38	19.0
Moderate (3)	72	36.9
High (4)	52	26.0
Very High (5)	22	11.0
Total	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean: 3.13
- Median: 3.0
- Mode: 3
- Standard Deviation: 1.09

The mean anxiety score of 3.13 suggests moderate anxiety levels associated with SNS use, with 37% reporting high or very high anxiety.

TABLE 9
SOCIAL COMPARISON BEHAVIOR

Frequency of Comparison	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never(1)	24	12.0
Rarely(2)	42	21.0
Sometimes (3)	74	37.0
Often (4)	40	20.0
Always (5)	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean: 2.95
- Median: 3.0
- Mode: 3
- Standard Deviation: 1.14

A composite well-being score was calculated by combining relevant items (self-esteem, life satisfaction, positive affect) and reverse-scoring negative items (anxiety, social comparison).

TABLE 10
OVERALL PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCORE

Well-being Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor	1.0-2.0	34	17.0
Below Average	2.1-2.5	46	23.0
Average	2.6-3.5	78	39.0
Above Average	3.6-4.0	28	14.0
Good	4.1-5.0	14	7.0
Total	-	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics for Composite Well-being:

- Mean: 2.79
- Median: 2.85
- Mode: 3.0
- Standard Deviation: 0.89

D. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine relationships between SNS usage variables and psychological outcomes.

TABLE 11
CORRELATION MATRIX

Variable	Usage Time	Self-Esteem	Anxiety	Social Comparison	Well-being
Usage Time	1.000	-0.324	0.412	0.378	-0.389
Self-Esteem	-0.324	1.000	-0.456	-0.398	0.687
Anxiety	0.412	-0.456	1.000	0.521	-0.612
Social Comparison	0.378	-0.398	0.521	1.000	-0.534
Well-being	-0.389	0.687	-0.612	-0.534	1.000

Note: $p < 0.01$

Key Findings:

- Usage Time and Well-being ($r = -0.389, p < 0.01$): Moderate negative correlation—higher daily usage is associated with lower psychological well-being.
- Usage Time and Anxiety ($r = 0.412, p < 0.01$): Moderate positive correlation—increased usage time correlates with higher anxiety levels.
- Social Comparison and Well-being ($r = -0.534, p < 0.01$): Strong negative correlation—frequent social comparison is associated with poorer well-being.
- Self-Esteem and Well-being ($r = 0.687, p < 0.01$): Strong positive correlation—higher self-esteem scores correspond to better overall well-being.

E. Cross-tabulation Analysis: Platform and Psychological Impact

TABLE 12
PLATFORM VS. SELF-ESTEEM IMPACT (CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS)

Platform	Negative Impact	Neutral	Positive Impact	Total
Instagram	42 (47.2%)	28 (31.5%)	19 (21.3%)	89
WhatsApp	16 (25.8%)	24 (38.7%)	22 (35.5%)	62
YouTube	8 (25.8%)	12 (38.7%)	12 (38.7%)	31
Snapchat	4 (33.3%)	4 (33.3%)	4 (33.3%)	12
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)	6
Total	70	68	62	200

Chi-Square Test:

- $\chi^2 = 18.74$
- $df = 8$
- $p = 0.016$

The chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between the choice of social media platform and its impact on users' self-esteem ($p < 0.05$). Among the platforms examined, Instagram users reported the highest prevalence of negative effects on self-esteem (47.2%), whereas users of WhatsApp and YouTube reported considerably lower rates, each accounting for 25.8%.

These findings suggest that platform-specific characteristics may influence the extent to which social media affects users' self-perception and self-esteem.

F. Comparison by Usage Time: ANOVA Results

Usage Category	N	Mean Well-being	Std. Deviation
Less than 1	18	3.42	0.78
1-3 hours	54	3.08	0.82
3-5 hours	72	2.67	0.84
4+ hours	56	2.38	0.91
Total	200	2.79	0.89

ANOVA Results:

- $F(3, 196) = 12.84$
- $p < 0.001$

There is a statistically significant difference in well-being scores across usage time categories. Post-hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) reveals that students using SNS for less than 1 hour daily have significantly higher well-being scores than those using for 3+ hours ($p < 0.001$).

G. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict psychological well-being from SNS usage variables.

TABLE 14
MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.612	0.375	0.359	0.714

TABLE 15
ANOVA FOR REGRESSION MODEL

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	59.24	5	11.85	23.24	<0.001
Residual	98.91	194	0.51	-	-
Total	158.15	199	-	-	-

TABLE 16
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta(β)	t	Sig.
Constant	4.127	0.284	-	14.53	<0.001
Daily Usage Time	-0.198	0.058	-0.208	-3.41	0.001
Social Comparison	-0.312	0.052	-0.389	6.00	<0.001
Purpose (Entertainment)	-0.156	0.072	-0.134	-2.17	0.031
Purpose (Education)	0.224	0.089	0.156	2.52	0.013
Platform (Instagram)	-0.178	0.068	-0.162	-2.62	0.009

Regression Equation: The multiple regression model predicting students' psychological well-being is expressed as:

$$\text{Well-being} = 4.127 - 0.198(\text{Daily Usage Time}) - 0.312(\text{Social Comparison}) - 0.156(\text{Entertainment Use}) + 0.224(\text{Educational Use}) - 0.178(\text{Instagram Usage})$$

Interpretation: The regression analysis revealed that all predictor variables significantly contributed to explaining variations in students' well-being. Social comparison emerged as the strongest negative predictor ($\beta = -0.389$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that increased comparison with others on social media is associated with lower psychological well-being. Daily social media usage time also showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.208$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that greater time spent on social media is linked to reduced well-being. Using social media primarily for entertainment negatively predicted well-being ($\beta = -0.134$, $p = 0.031$), whereas educational use had a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.156$, $p = 0.013$), indicating that students who use social media for learning purposes tend to report better well-being. Additionally, Instagram usage was significantly associated with lower well-being scores ($\beta = -0.162$, $p = 0.009$). Overall, the findings suggest that both the nature and intensity of social media engagement play important roles in shaping students' mental well-being.

H. Summary Statistics Table

TABLE 17
COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SUMMARY

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Age (years)	200	20.4	20	19	2.3	17	28
Daily Usage (coded)	200	2.83	3	3	0.94	1	4
Self-Esteem Impact	200	2.94	3	3	1.12	1	5
Anxiety Level	200	3.13	3	3	1.09	1	5
Social Comparison	200	2.95	3	3	1.14	1	5
Overall Well-being	200	2.79	2.85	3	0.89	1	5

V. DISCUSSION

A. Key Findings

- **High SNS Engagement Levels:** The study reveals substantial SNS engagement among students, with 64% using social media for more than 3 hours daily. This aligns with global trends indicating increased digital immersion among youth populations.
- **Negative Correlation Between Usage Time and Well-being:** The moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.389$) between daily usage time and psychological well-being supports H1. Students with higher usage durations report lower well-being scores, consistent with the "displacement hypothesis" suggesting that excessive SNS use may displace activities beneficial to well-being.
- **Platform-Specific Effects:** Instagram users demonstrate significantly higher rates of negative self-esteem impact (47.2%) compared to users of other platforms. This supports H3 and aligns with research highlighting Instagram's image-focused nature as conducive to social comparison and body image concerns.
- **Content Type Matters:** Educational use of SNS is positively associated with well-being ($\beta = 0.156$), while entertainment-focused use shows negative associations ($\beta = -0.134$).

This supports H2 and suggests that purposeful, goal-directed SNS use may buffer against negative psychological outcomes.

- **Social Comparison as Primary Mediator:** Social comparison emerges as the strongest predictor of well-being ($\beta = -0.389$), suggesting it may serve as a key mechanism through which SNS use affects psychological states. This finding supports theoretical frameworks emphasizing upward social comparison as a pathway to diminished well-being.

B. Theoretical Implications

The findings support the application of Social Comparison Theory to SNS contexts. The visual and curated nature of social media content appears to facilitate unfavorable comparisons, particularly on image-centric platforms. Additionally, the Displacement Hypothesis receives partial support, as heavy users demonstrate lower well-being scores.

C. Practical Implications

- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Educational institutions should implement programs teaching critical media literacy and awareness of social comparison tendencies.
- **Platform Design:** Findings suggest platforms should consider features that reduce comparison-inducing content exposure.
- **Usage Guidelines:** Evidence supports recommendations for moderate usage (1-3 hours) and purposeful engagement rather than passive consumption.
- **Individual Strategies:** Students may benefit from intentional shifts toward educational content and reduced exposure to highly curated entertainment content.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the influence of Social Networking Sites (SNS) on the psychological well-being of 200 students and revealed several important findings. The results showed that a majority of students (64%) spend more than three hours daily on social networking platforms, with entertainment being the primary purpose of use. Statistical analysis indicated a significant negative relationship between daily SNS usage time and psychological well-being ($r = -0.389, p < 0.01$), suggesting that increased time spent on social media is associated with lower levels of well-being.

Furthermore, Instagram users reported a significantly greater negative impact on self-esteem compared to users of other platforms ($\chi^2 = 18.74$, $p = 0.016$). Among all the variables examined, social comparison behavior emerged as the strongest predictor of reduced psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.389$), highlighting the detrimental effects of comparing oneself with others on social media. In contrast, educational use of SNS was found to be positively associated with well-being, indicating that purposeful and productive engagement with social media may have beneficial effects. The multiple regression model accounted for 37.5% of the variance in psychological well-being, demonstrating that social media usage patterns are significant determinants of students' mental health, although other personal, social, and environmental factors also contribute substantially to overall well-being.

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