

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON STUDENT SELF-EFFICACY: A LITERATURE REVIEW ACROSS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract: Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a certain level of performance, which can influence various important aspects of their life. This article identifies and analyzes various cultural dimensions that affect the formation and manifestation of students' self-efficacy, as well as explores the variations in the effects of self-efficacy within educational contexts. The analysis was conducted on literature obtained from the Google Scholar database over the past 11 years (2015 - 2025). The final sample consisted of 20 articles that presented diverse findings on how cultural values influence individuals' beliefs in their own capabilities in educational settings. The literature review results indicate that Hofstede's cultural dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint play significant roles in shaping how students assess and develop their self-efficacy. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies show that self-efficacy has varying effects on key educational outcomes, including academic achievement, student's mental health, career exploration, motivation, and learning approaches. This study highlights the importance of intervention strategies that consider cultural values and practices to optimize the development of self-efficacy, which in turn contributes to both academic success and psychological well-being of students in educational contexts.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Educational Context

1 INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a certain level of performance, which can influence various life events. This belief affects an individual's feelings, thought patterns, motivation, and behavior (Bandura, 1994). Previous studies have demonstrated that self-efficacy significantly contributes to personal achievement and well-being across multiple domains, including education (Chun et al., 2016; Ansong et al., 2018). In educational settings, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to approach challenges as opportunities for growth. However, research also indicates that self-efficacy is not formed in isolation; cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping these beliefs (Klassen et al., 2009, as cited in Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2019). Hofstede (2011) identifies six cultural dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint, that distinguish societies and potentially influence self-efficacy formation. For instance, Jin et al. (2023) found that students from individualistic cultures with low power distance tend to have higher self-efficacy than those from collectivist, high power distance cultures. Despite these findings, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of how specific cultural dimensions affect self-efficacy processes, especially in diverse educational contexts.

This manuscript presents a literature review that explores the influence of culture on self-efficacy in the educational context. The review synthesizes findings from journal articles to highlight the relationship between cultural dimensions and self-efficacy. The methods used to select and analyze the literature will be explained in the Materials and Methods section, while the Results and Discussion section will present and interpret the main findings. By examining various cultural contexts, this study aims to provide insights that can be used to develop effective and culturally sensitive educational strategies to improve students' academic achievement and psychological well-being.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method used in this study is a literature review, which involved searching for previously published international literature through the Google Scholar database over the past 11 years (2015 - 2025). The initial search yielded 17,900 articles using keywords such as "self-efficacy," "different cultures," and "across culture". Subsequently, filtering criteria were applied to eliminate duplicate entries, outdated publications, and sources not directly relevant to the research topic. The review was then refined to focus specifically on articles published in reputable journals that addressed student self-efficacy within educational contexts across various cultures. Each article was critically evaluated for its relevance and the accuracy of the information presented. Following a comprehensive screening process, a total of 20 articles were identified as most relevant and included in the literature review.

3 RESULTS

Table 1
Summary of Included Studies within the Literature Review

Author and Year	Country of origin and sample characteristic	Study design, predictor measure and outcome measures	Findings
Ahn, Usher, Butz and Bong (2016)	Country: Multinational n = 2,893 middle school students – 416 from Korea, 522 from the Philippines, and 1,955 from the United States	Design: quantitative, cross-cultural Predictor: cultural background, sources of self-efficacy information, self-efficacy Outcome: Mathematics anxiety, Mathematics achievement	1. Students from collectivistic cultures tend to give lower self-efficacy ratings due to cultural norms that emphasize humility. 2. In the formation of self-efficacy, social agents such as family or peers have different levels of influence depending on the culture.
Bekomson, Cklaimz, and Ngban (2023)	Country: Nigeria n = 1,529 students – 663 males and 866 females	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional Predictor: cultural value Outcome: students' self-efficacy	1. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that cultural value orientation significantly affects students' self-efficacy across various dimensions: social, academic, language, moral, and overall self-efficacy. 2. Students with a high cultural value orientation tend to have higher self-efficacy scores compared to those with low or moderate cultural value orientations. 3. Significant differences were found between groups with low and high cultural value orientations, as well as between low and moderate groups. However, no significant difference was observed between moderate and high groups, particularly in the dimensions of social, academic, and language self-efficacy.
Bonneville-Roussy, Bouffard, Palikara and Vezeau (2019)	Country: Multinational n = 132,279 students and 22,557 teachers across 4,423 schools. – 16 countries that participated in the PISA 2015	Design: cross-cultural Predictor: student perceived teaching practices, nation-level cultural values Outcome: students' science-related self-efficacy (SE)	1. Cultural values of individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance influence the relationship between teaching practices (IB and TL) and students' self-efficacy. 2. In individualistic countries, teacher-

			led (TL) teaching practices are more strongly associated with students' self-efficacy because students are accustomed to receiving individual feedback. 3. In countries that tolerate uncertainty, students are better able to build self-efficacy through exploration and open-ended problem solving offered by inquiry-based (IB) practices. 4. The influence of uncertainty avoidance on the relationship between teaching practices and students' self-efficacy is greater than that of individualism/collectivism.
Gebauer, McElvany, Köller and Schöber (2021)	Country: Germany n = 1597 seventh graders	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional Predictor: socialization context Outcome: self-efficacy	1. Cultural differences influence the sources of students' self-efficacy development, where values, beliefs, and habits shaped by their cultural background play a significant role in this process. 2. Students from collectivistic cultures (such as those from the former Soviet Union and Turkey) tend to have stronger family bonds, which are more relevant for the development of their self-efficacy.
Gruber and Kurahashi-Friedmann (2024)	Country: Germany and Japan n = 571 – 271 Japanese students and 300 German students	Design: quantitative, cross-cultural Predictor: motivation, self-efficacy Outcome: learning strategies	Japanese students exhibit lower levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as self-efficacy, compared to German students.
He and Zhang (2024)	Country: Hongkong n = 307 undergraduate students	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional Predictor: growth mindset, cultural orientation Outcome: learning self-efficacy	1. Long-term orientation has a positive moderating effect among undergraduate students, meaning the higher the long-term orientation of these undergraduate students, the stronger the relationship between their growth mindset and learning self-efficacy. 2. Power distance and uncertainty avoidance have negative moderating effects among undergraduate students, meaning the higher these dimensions are for the undergraduate students, the weaker the relationship between their growth mindset and learning self-efficacy. 3. Individualism/collectivism and motivation towards achievement and success did not show significant moderating effects in this relationship among undergraduate students.

Hormuth, Ferencz, Heikkilä and Ihmäki (2025)	Country: Germany and Finland n = 307 undergraduate business students – 223 germany, 84 finland	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional. Predictor: hope, self-efficacy, motivation Outcome: academic success	1. No significant differences in self-efficacy were found between the two groups of students. 2. Self-efficacy was a significant predictor of GPA for students in Finland, explaining 10.8% of the variance in academic performance ($p = 0.002$). In contrast, self-efficacy did not significantly predict GPA among students in Germany.
Jasmon, Masturah, Nugraha, Sya kura, Afifah, Siburian (2020)	Country: Indonesia n = 1017 medical students	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional. Predictor: parental career expectations, self-efficacy Outcome: adolescent–parent career congruence	The influence of parental expectations and career congruence is very important in shaping self-efficacy and career exploration of medical students within a collectivist culture. Self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role between parental expectations, career congruence, and career exploration.
Jin, Wu, Xia and Zhao (2023)	Country: Multinational n = 42 countries that participated in the PISA 2018	Design: cross-cultural Predictor: hofstede's six cultural dimensions Outcome: latent means of student self-efficacy	1. Power distance is the most influential cultural factor on student self-efficacy, where countries with high power distance tend to have students with lower self-efficacy due to social pressure and strict adherence to authority. 2. Indulgent culture (supporting the enjoyment of life) has a dual effect, but in this study, the effect is positive, where indulgent culture can enhance students' self-confidence through tolerance of failure and encouragement to try new things. 3. Countries with high levels of individualism are correlated with higher student self-efficacy, as individualistic cultures promote personal responsibility, courage in facing failure, and a sense of control over one's future.
Ma (2021)	Country: United States of America, China, Finland n = 22,454 students – 4,838 (USA), 12,058 (China), 5,649 (Finland)	Design: quantitative, correlational Predictor: self-efficacy, gender, economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) Outcome: fear of failure, academic performance	1. United States students demonstrated the highest self-efficacy (SE), Finnish students showed a moderate level of self-efficacy, and Chinese students had the lowest self-efficacy. 2. In the US, most students fell into the High SE profile. In China, most students were categorized under Low and Moderate SE. In Finland, the distribution was more balanced, with a larger proportion of students in the Moderate SE profile. 3. In both the US and Finland, male students were more likely to belong to Low SE profiles, indicating that female students had relatively higher

academic confidence. In contrast, in China, male students were less likely to fall into lower SE profiles, showing relatively higher self-efficacy compared to females.

4. In the US, the pattern followed a clear linear trend: High SE > Moderate SE > Low SE, as expected in theory. In China, High SE students still performed the best, but interestingly, Low SE students outperformed Moderate SE students, showing that the relationship between SE and achievement isn't always linear. In Finland, a unique pattern emerged: students with Moderate SE had the highest academic achievement, followed by High SE, and then Low SE. This suggests that a moderate level of confidence may be optimal for success in the Finnish educational context.

Meissel and Rubie-Davies (2016)	Country: New Zealand n = 2,210 students – intermediate schools (7th and 8th grades)	Design: quantitative, correlational Predictor: self-efficacy, mastery and performance goal orientation Outcome: mathematics achievement	1. Self-efficacy was positively associated with achievement among New Zealand European, Māori, and Pasifika students, but not among Asian students. 2. All collectivist groups (Māori, Pasifika, and Asian) had higher levels of self-efficacy than New Zealand European students.
Mesurado, Richauda, and Mateo (2016)	Country: The Philippines and Argentina n = 374 college students – 176 (the Philippines), 171 (Argentina)	Design: quantitative, cross-cultural Predictor: self-efficacy, eustress Outcome: engagement, flow	Argentine students scored higher in self-efficacy compared to Filipino students.
Özek and Ferraris (2020)	Country: Turkey and Italy n = 291 undergraduate students – 146 (Turkey) and 145 (Italy).	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional Predictor: self awareness Outcome: career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)	1. Country of origin (Italy vs Turkey) was a significant predictor of self-efficacy in career decision making ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.05$). 2. The regression model had an R² value of 0.42, indicating that 42% of the variance in self-efficacy in career decision making is explained by self-awareness, previous job experience, and country of origin. 3. Students from an individualistic culture (Italy) tended to have higher self-efficacy and faced fewer barriers in career decision making compared to students from a collectivist culture (Turkey), who were more influenced by family aspirations.

Pearl, Tzoumis, Lockie (2023)	Country: United States, Brazil, France, Japan, Switzerland, Netherlands n = 584 students – 462 (US), 318 (Brazil), 65 (France), 57 (Japan), 35 (Switzerland), 33 (Netherlands).	Design: quantitative, longitudinal Predictor: cognitive flexibility & openness, emotional regulation Outcome: self-efficacy	1. Participants from countries with individualistic cultures showed higher levels of self-efficacy compared to those from collectivist cultures, both before and after the GVT (Global Virtual Teams) experience. 2. Cultural dimensions play an important role in shaping self-efficacy regardless of participation in GVT (Global Virtual Teams).
Schönfeld, Brailovskaia, Bieda, Zhang, and Margraf (2015)	Country: Germany, Russia, China n = 2,210 students – 394 (Germany), 604 (Russia) and 8,669 (China)	Design: quantitative, correlational Predictor: self-efficacy, mastery and performance goal orientation Outcome: mathematics achievement	1. Self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the effect of daily stress on mental health, with a stronger mediation effect on positive mental health than on negative mental health. 2. The buffering effect of self-efficacy on daily stress and mental health was found to be consistent across cultures (Germany, Russia, China).
Simamora, Saragih, Hasratuddin (2019)	Country: Indonesia n = 11 th grade students at SMA 1 Pagaran 2018/2019	Design: quantitative, correlational Predictor: daily stress, general self-efficacy Outcome: positive and negative mental health	The experimental group, utilizing the GDL-BTCC (Guided Discovery Learning in Context of the Batak Toba Culture Context) materials, demonstrated a significant enhancement in mathematical problem-solving abilities compared to the control group.
Syafii and Azhari (2025)	Country: Indonesia and Egypt n = 100 students – 50 (Indonesia), 50 (Egypt)	Design: quantitative, correlational Predictor: cultural and educational context Outcome: academic self-efficacy, academic resilience	1. Indonesian students demonstrate higher academic self-efficacy across all dimensions compared to Egyptian students. 2. The "Confidence in Mastery of Content" dimension shows the largest difference, indicating that Indonesia's pedagogical approach supports conceptual understanding and intellectual independence.
Wang, Liang, and Tsai (2018)	Country: United States of America, Taiwan n = 442 undergraduate students – 218 (USA), 224 (Taiwan)	Design: quantitative, cross-cultural Predictor: cognition factors of science learning self-efficacy (SLSE), Outcome: academic self-efficacy	1. For U.S. students, academic self-efficacy was positively influenced by both Self-Correction (SC) and Personal Willpower (PW), with SC having a stronger impact. This highlights that the ability to monitor and adjust behavior is crucial for building students' confidence in their academic skills, while internal drive and persistence also play an important role. 2. For Taiwanese students, only Self-Correction (SC) had a significant positive effect on academic self-efficacy. Although Personal Willpower (PW) was strongly influenced by Constructive Use (CU), it did not directly impact self-efficacy. This suggests a cultural

difference where behavioral self-regulation plays a more important role in academic confidence than internal drive or willpower alone in the Taiwanese context.

Yuan, Weiser and Fischer (2016)	Country: United States of America n = 428 undergraduate students – 120 male, 308 female under 26 years old	Design: quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional Predictor: parent-child relationship quality, ethnicity, self-efficacy Outcome: academic achievement	Self-efficacy as a mediator occurred only among Asian American students, not among European American students. This indicates that the collectivist culture in Asian Americans makes the parent-child relationship more influential on self-efficacy and academic achievement.
Zhao, Peng, and Liu (2021)	Country: Taiwan, Malaysia n = 1,062 students – 619 (Taiwan), 443 (Malaysia)	Design: quantitative, cross-sectional Predictor: teacher knowledge transfer, self-efficacy, deep approach to learning Outcome: student employability	1. Teacher knowledge transfer was positively and significantly associated with students' self-efficacy in both Taiwan and Malaysia. This suggests that effective knowledge transfer by teachers enhances students' confidence in their academic abilities (β Taiwan=0.569, β Malaysia=0.493, $p<0.001$). 2. Students' self-efficacy positively and significantly influenced employability in both Taiwan and Malaysia. This indicates that strong confidence helps students develop skills needed for the workforce (β Taiwan=0.242, β Malaysia=0.314, $p<0.001$). 3. Students' confidence also had a positive and significant effect on deep learning approaches in both countries. In other words, students who believed in their abilities tended to engage in more reflective and in-depth learning (β Taiwan=0.476, β Malaysia=0.355, $p<0.001$).

4 DISCUSSIONS

Most of the articles reviewed used cross-cultural designs, while some employed only cross-sectional designs. The results of the literature review indicate that culture plays a significant role in influencing the formation and manifestation of students' self-efficacy across various educational contexts. Bekomson et al. (2023) found that students with a high cultural value orientation tend to have higher self-efficacy scores compared to those with low or moderate cultural value orientations.

4.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Most studies in this research explicitly use Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain differences in students' perceptions of self-efficacy. The dimensions discussed in this literature review include:

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Most studies compare students' self-efficacy based on this cultural dimension, though the results vary. Some research shows that students from individualistic cultures tend to have higher self-efficacy levels than those from collectivistic cultures (Ahn et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2023; Pearl et al., 2023; Gruber & Kurahashi-Friedmann, 2024). The higher the individualism score of a country, the higher the self-efficacy of its students, and vice versa (Mesurado et al., 2016; Ma,

2021; Gruber & Kurahashi-Friedmann, 2024). Individualistic cultures tend to enhance self-efficacy by encouraging personal responsibility, courage to face failure, and control over one's future (Ahn et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2023). Conversely, students from collectivistic cultures tend to report lower self-efficacy due to norms emphasizing humility (Ahn et al., 2016). However, strong family bonds in collectivistic cultures positively influence students' self-efficacy through parent-child relationships, an effect less pronounced in individualistic cultures (Yuan et al., 2016; Gebauer et al., 2021). Furthermore, family involvement in collectivistic cultures affects students' career decision-making. Students from collectivistic countries exhibit lower self-efficacy and face more barriers in career decisions than those from individualistic countries, largely due to family aspirations (Özek & Ferraris, 2020). The influence of individualism/collectivism on self-efficacy is neither universal nor uniform but highly dependent on local social contexts and educational systems (Hormuth et al., 2025; Meissel & Rubie-Davies, 2016). For instance, Syafii and Azhari (2025) found that Indonesian students have higher academic self-efficacy than Egyptian students across various dimensions, despite Indonesia's higher collectivistic cultural values. This difference is attributed to a stronger emphasis on "Confidence in Mastery of Material" in Indonesia, reflecting pedagogical approaches that support conceptual understanding and intellectual independence, thereby enhancing academic self-efficacy.

Power Distance

Jin et al. (2023) identified power distance as the most influential cultural dimension affecting students' self-efficacy. Students in countries with high power distance (e.g., several Asian countries) tend to have lower self-efficacy due to social pressure and obedience to authority, which reduce their confidence and lead to passivity in learning. He and Zhang (2024) further found that power distance negatively moderates the relationship between growth mindset and learning self-efficacy. This means that in high power distance cultures, even students with a growth mindset struggle to develop self-efficacy because of hierarchical and obedience-focused cultural norms.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension also plays a role in shaping students' self-efficacy in educational contexts. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance tend to have students with lower self-efficacy because their education systems and cultures discourage exploration and risk-taking (Jin et al., 2023). Bonneville-Roussy et al. (2019) showed that uncertainty avoidance affects the effectiveness of teaching approaches on self-efficacy development. In countries with low uncertainty avoidance, inquiry-based learning (IB), which emphasizes exploration and student-centered learning, has a stronger positive impact on self-efficacy. Students accustomed to uncertainty feel more confident exploring and solving problems openly. Conversely, in high uncertainty avoidance countries, students respond better to structured and teacher-led (TL) approaches, reflecting their preference for certainty, control, and clear learning frameworks. He and Zhang (2024) also found that uncertainty avoidance negatively moderates the relationship between growth mindset and learning self-efficacy, making it difficult for students in high uncertainty avoidance cultures to fully benefit from a growth mindset due to their preference for certainty and risk avoidance.

Indulgence vs. Restraint

Indulgent cultures, characterized by individual freedom, tolerance of failure, and encouragement to enjoy life and express oneself freely, positively contribute to students' self-efficacy. Jin et al. (2023) found that countries with high indulgence scores show higher average student self-efficacy. Such cultures enable students to face failure more confidently, remain motivated, and try new things, fostering a positive learning environment crucial for self-efficacy development.

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation

He and Zhang (2024) found that long-term orientation positively moderates the relationship between growth mindset and learning self-efficacy. Students with a stronger long-term orientation tend to value perseverance, planning, and process, which align well with growth mindset principles. This alignment helps students build confidence in learning by focusing on long-term goals and sustaining effort through challenges.

4.2 Variation of Self-Efficacy Effects in Educational Contexts

Cross-cultural studies indicate that self-efficacy has varied and significant effects on several important variables within educational contexts. This literature analysis reveals several key patterns, including:

Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement

Research by Hormuth et al. (2025) shows that self-efficacy significantly predicts students' GPA in Finland, but no significant relationship was found among students in Germany. Ma (2021) also found a linear relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in the United States, where higher self-efficacy corresponds to higher academic performance. In Finland, students with moderate levels of self-efficacy exhibited the highest academic achievement, while in China, the relationship was more complex. Meissel and Rubie-Davies (2016) reported a positive correlation between self-efficacy and mathematics achievement among European, Māori, and Pasifika students in New Zealand, but no significant relationship was found among Asian students. Simamora et al. (2019) further found that culturally based Guided Discovery Learning significantly enhanced students' problem-solving abilities in mathematics by increasing self-

efficacy. These findings suggest that the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement varies depending on cultural and national contexts.

Self-Efficacy and Mental Health in Schools

Schönfeld et al. (2015) found that self-efficacy acts as a mediator between students' daily stress and mental health. This mediating effect is stronger for positive mental health dimensions than for negative ones. The findings are consistent across Germany, Russia, and China, indicating that self-efficacy serves as a protective factor against the adverse effects of daily stress in diverse cultural settings.

Self-Efficacy and Career Exploration

In collectivistic cultures such as Indonesia, parental expectations play a crucial role in shaping medical students' self-efficacy, which in turn influences their career exploration behaviors (Jasmon et al., 2020). The study shows that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between parental expectations and career congruence in Indonesian medical students. Conversely, in individualistic cultures like Italy, students exhibit higher career decision-making self-efficacy and face fewer obstacles compared to students from collectivistic cultures such as Turkey (Özek & Ferraris, 2020). These differences highlight how cultural context affects the development and function of self-efficacy in students' career decision-making processes.

Self-Efficacy and Motivation

Wang et al. (2018) found that academic self-efficacy among U.S. students is positively influenced by self-correction ability and personal willpower. In contrast, among Taiwanese students, only self-correction significantly affects academic self-efficacy. This suggests that culture influences the factors shaping self-efficacy, with U.S. students relying more on self-control and personal motivation, whereas Taiwanese students emphasize self-correction.

Self-Efficacy and Learning Approaches

Zhao et al. (2021) discovered that teacher knowledge transfer is positively and significantly correlated with self-efficacy, deep learning approaches, and employability among students in Taiwan. In Malaysia, although the direct path between teacher knowledge transfer and employability was not significant, other pathways still showed significant positive relationships. These findings indicate that teacher knowledge transfer can enhance self-efficacy and deep learning approaches, which subsequently promote employability in both countries, despite cultural differences influencing the strength of these relationships. Additionally, Bonneville-Roussy et al. (2019) found that in countries with low uncertainty avoidance, inquiry-based learning (IB) centered on students has a greater impact on increasing self-efficacy than teacher-led (TL) methods. This finding underscores the importance of culturally grounded instructional approaches in strengthening students' self-efficacy.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study found that culture has a significant influence on the formation and manifestation of students' self-efficacy across various educational contexts. Hofstede's cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint, play important roles in shaping how students assess and develop their beliefs in their own abilities. Cross-cultural research shows that self-efficacy has varying effects on key aspects within education, including academic achievement, mental health at school, career exploration, motivation, and learning approaches. Overall, the results of this review highlight the necessity of culturally sensitive educational approaches to effectively enhance students' self-efficacy, which in turn contributes to both their academic success and psychological well-being in educational settings. Educational intervention strategies must consider differences in cultural values, norms, and practices to create learning environments that optimally support the development of self-efficacy across diverse cultural backgrounds.

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