

Examining the Primary-School Teachers' Motivation Levels during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the primary-school teachers' motivation levels towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with this purpose, the professional motivations of primary school teachers have been examined according to the variables of gender, years of professional seniority, grade level taught and the number of students attending the course in the distance education. The study group of the research consists of 258 primary-school teachers working in Erdemli district of Mersin province. The study was carried out by using the survey method one of which is a quantitative research method and the data have been collected through the Personal Information Form developed by the researchers and the "Primary School Teacher Motivation Scale" developed by Ozturk&Uzunkol (2013). The results of the research demonstrated the professional motivation level of the primary-school teachers to be moderate during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The gender showed a significant difference on primary-school teachers' professional motivation levels and female teachers' general average of professional motivation levels were found to be higher than the male teachers' professional motivational levels during Covid-19 Pandemic. Another significant difference in professional motivation levels was observed in the seniority levels in which it was determined to be between 21+ and 5-10, 11-15, 16-20 and between 16-20 and 11-15, 16-20 years of professional seniority groups. The professional motivation levels of the primary-school teachers did not show a significant difference according to the class level and the number of students participating in distance education. The data obtained from the scale have been interpreted, using the same scale, by comparing them with the studies carried out with teachers before the pandemic. Compared to pre-pandemic period, the professional motivation levels of the primary-school teachers are found to decrease.

Keywords: Primary-school teachers, Covid-19, Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Individuals, by nature, need an internal or external driving force to achieve their goals (Akbaba, 2006). Luthans (1995) defined this driving force as motive. And motivation, in its most basic sense, is defined as showing action to achieve a goal (Ibicioğlu et al., 2014). Directing and dealing with a situation with an internal desire is defined as intrinsic motivation, while extrinsic motivation is defined as being motivated by a situation to obtain tangible and relatively beneficial feedback from outside (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The difference here is the source of motivation. While intrinsic motivation consists of the individual himself, extrinsic motivation requires environmental effects. (Yazıcı, 2009).

Motivation is effective in the behavior of individuals (Özdaşlı & Akman, 2012). Therefore, motivation is of great importance in educational activities (Akbaba, 2006), as motivation is an important concept for both teachers and students in order to achieve the desired goals in the education-teaching processes. (Uyulgan & Akkuzu, 2014). A qualified education becomes possible when the teachers are motivated (Ada et al., 2014). Teachers' motivation also affects the students' motivation, fulfilling the targeted reforms of education, and obtaining the intended output from the education (De Jesus & Conbay, 2001). For these reasons, one can say that teachers' having high motivation and job satisfaction is a situation that concerns the entire education system (Selvitopu & Taş, 2020). Individuals' productivity, success and motivation depend on many different factors (Ayık & Ataş, 2014). Consequently, teachers' motivation levels may vary (Kılıç & Yılmaz, 2019).

The COVID-19 epidemic, which emerged on December 1st, 2019 in Wuhan, a city in of Hubei state in China, has become a global crisis in a short time (Can, 2020). On March 11th, 2020, when the epidemic was declared to be a

pandemic by WHO (2020), the first case was recorded in Turkey. The pandemic has been declared as a state of emergency in many countries. Countries have made rapid and new decisions regarding this situation (Zhang et al., 2020). As well as the economy and the health, COVID-19 has also greatly affected the education. In a very short time, face-to-face education turned into the form of distance education. Education systems were unprepared for this condition (Quezada et al., 2020). Distance education system was put into practice in Turkey in 23rd March, 2020. After nearly six months, On September 21st, 2020, face-to-face teaching started again. According to the course of the epidemic in Turkey, schools switched to distance education again on November 20th, 2020. Yet again, on March 3rd, 2021, considering the pandemic conditions in the cities, face-to-face education started again at particular levels and the distance education was still carried on 15.04.2021 (www.meb.gov.tr).

One of the occupational groups most affected by these new and changing conditions is teachers. Teachers, whose responsibilities have changed, started to have to take care of the social conditions of the students they are responsible for, and to be in regular communication with students and parents (König et al., 2020). In addition, one can say that it became comparatively difficult for teachers to attract students' attention to the lesson, motivate them to learn, and stay in touch with them during the distance education (Sangeeta & Tandon, 2020). Teachers' proficiency in using technology, their cooperation with students and parents etc may also vary depending on different factors. Furthermore, e-learning drawbacks such as not being able to test students' learning, low technological skills of students, internet and infrastructure problems can also affect the teaching. Such situations, on the one hand, cause a group of teachers to experience stress and be in a negative mood throughout this process, although there are teachers who are warmly attracted to distance education (Klapproth et al., 2020; Almanthari et al., 2020).

Behaviors and moods of teachers affect their motivation levels for the teaching profession (Karabağ Köse et al., 2018), and it is thought that educational practices carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic may have an impact on teachers' motivation. In addition, no study has been found in the literature on the motivation levels of teachers after the pandemic period. It is thought that examining the changes created by the educational practices in the COVID-19 pandemic on the motivation of teachers will contribute to the literature. Therefore, the main problem sentence of the research has been determined as; "What is the professional motivation level of the primary-school teachers in the Covid-19 pandemic?". In this context, answers are sought for the following sub-problems.

- 1-) Is there a significant difference by gender in the professional motivation level scores of primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2-) Is there a significant difference in the professional motivation level scores of the primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic considering the years of seniority?
- 3-) Is there a significant difference in the professional motivation level scores of the primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic according to the grade level?
- 4-) Is there a significant difference in the professional motivation level scores of primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the number of students attending the course in distance education?

METHOD

Model of the Research

This research was carried out according to the survey model, which is one of the quantitative research methods. Karasar (2006) defines general survey models as scanning studies on the entire population or on selected samples from the population in order to reach a general conclusion about a population. Using scanning model, this study aims to determine the motivation status of primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Group of the Research

The study group of the research consists of 258 primary-school teachers selected by purposive sampling method among 580 primary-school teachers working in Erdemli district of Mersin province in the 2020-2021 academic year. Participation in the research is on a voluntary basis. Information about the study group of the research is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal Information of the Primary School Teachers Constituting the Study Group

Variable	Gruplar	Frekans	Yüzde	Toplam
Gender	Kadın	130	50,4	258
	Erkek	128	49,6	
Placement Year	0-5 Yıl	18	7,0	258
	5-10 Yıl	28	10,9	
	11-15 Yıl	65	25,2	
	16-20 Yıl	41	15,9	
	21 ve üstü	106	41,1	

Grade Level	1. Sınıf	55	21,3	258
	2. Sınıf	71	27,5	
	3. Sınıf	69	26,7	
	4. Sınıf	63	24,4	
Number of Students	0-10 Kişi	93	36,0	258
Attending Classes in Distance Education	11-20 Kişi	123	47,7	
	21-30 Kişi	23	8,9	
	31 ve üstü Kişi	19	7,4	

Of the 258 teachers who participated in the study, 50.4% were female and 49.6% were male teachers. As their career year; 7.0% of 258 primary-school teachers work in the range of 0-5 years, 10.9% of them 5-10 years, 25.2% of them 11-15 years, 15.9% of them 16-20 years and 41.1% of them 21 years and over. According to the grade level, 21.3% of the 258 teachers teach at the 1st grade, 27.5% at the 2nd grade, 26.7% at the 3rd grade and 24.4% at the 4th grade. In terms of the number of students attending the course in distance education, 36.0% of 258 primary-school teachers are 0-10 people, 47.7% are 11-20 people, 8.9% are 21-30 people, 7.4% are 31 and above.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: In the personal information form developed by the researchers, there are questions to determine the gender, professional seniority year, class level of the primary-school teachers and the number of students participating in the distance education. The identity information of the teachers was not requested in the personal information form.

Primary School Teacher Motivation Scale: Developed by Öztürk & Uzunkol (2013), the "Primary School Teacher Motivation Scale" has four sub-dimensions: positive attitude towards the profession, appreciation and professional happiness, avoidance of the profession and assimilating the profession. "Primary School Teacher Motivation Scale" consists of 30 items. There are five options for each item. These options are expressed as Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Partially Agree (3), Agree (4) and Totally Agree (5). The four sub-dimensions of the scale whose validity and reliability are tested explain 50% of the total variance. The total internal consistency number was found to be .87. In the exploratory factor analysis, the KMO value was found to be .843.

For the analysis of the data, the first step was to check whether the data showed a normal distribution. Tabachnick & Fidell (2013) state that the distribution shows a normal distribution when the skewness and kurtosis values are between ± 1.50 . Since the kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the data obtained in the study were between these values, it was observed that the data showed a normal distribution. For this reason, parametric tests were used in the analyses. While calculating the General Average, the sub-dimension of avoidance was reverse scored. Independent Samples T-Test was used to examine primary-school teachers' professional motivations during the COVID-19 pandemic by gender

Analysis of Data

A One-Way Analysis of Variance was conducted to examine the professional motivations of primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic by years of seniority, grade level and the number of students attending the course during the distance education process. The significance value of the data was determined over $p < .05$. Data have been evaluated over the reference ranges as; $X \leq 1.79$ Not Sufficient, $1.80 \leq X \leq 2.59$ Low, $2.60 \leq X \leq 3.39$ Intermediate, $3.40 \leq X \leq 4.19$ High, and $X \geq 4.20$ Extremely High.

FINDINGS

This part of the study includes the findings obtained from the analysis of the main problem and sub-problems, For this purpose, in Table 2, the descriptive statistics of the professional motivation of the primary-school teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic are presented according to the sub-dimensions and the general average.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Results of Primary-School Teachers' Attitude Scores Towards Profession During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Dimensions	N	\bar{X}	S
Positive Attitude towards the Profession and Professional Success	258	3,29	1,20
Recognition and Professional Happiness	258	2,61	,96
Job Avoidance	258	3,00	,86
Assimilation of Profession	258	4,17	,79
General Average	258	3,36	,57

As can be seen in Table 2, the descriptive statistics of primary-school teachers' motivation towards the profession were found to have a medium level of motivation in the positive attitude towards the profession and professional success sub-dimension (\bar{X} = 3.29).

In the sub-dimension of appreciation and professional happiness, it was determined that the motivation average of the primary-school teachers was at a medium level (\bar{X} = 2.61). It is seen that the general average of the professional motivation of the primary-school teachers is at a moderate level (\bar{X} = 3.36)

The Independent Samples T-Test was applied to examine the primary-school teachers' attitude scores towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic by gender.

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test Results of Primary-School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Profession During the COVID-19 Pandemic by Gender

Dimensions	Cins	N	\bar{X}	S	Sd	t	P
Positive Attitude towards the Profession and Professional Success	Kadın	130	3,42	1,19	256	1,69	,09
	Erkek	128	3,16	1,20			,09
Recognition and Professional Happiness	Kadın	130	2,66	,98	256	,73	,46
	Erkek	128	2,57	,94			,46
Job Avoidance	Kadın	130	2,96	,79	256	-,66	,50
	Erkek	128	3,03	,94			,50
Assimilation of Profession	Kadın	130	4,25	,75	256	1,52	,12
	Erkek	128	4,10	,82			,12
General Average	Kadın	130	3,44	,56	256	2,31	,02
	Erkek	128	3,28	,57			,02

According to the results of the analysis in Table 3, the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers do not show a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of positive attitudes towards the profession and professional success $t(256)=1.69, p> .05$, appreciation and professional happiness $t(256)=.73, p> .05$, avoidance of occupation $t(256)= -.66, p> .05$ and assimilation of occupation $t(256)=1.52, p> .05$ according to gender. On the other hand, the general average of the primary school teachers' motivation levels towards the profession shows a significant difference according to gender $t(256)=2.31, p< .05$

One-Way Analysis of Variance was applied to examine the Primary-School Teachers' attitude scores towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic according to the years of seniority. While expressing the differences, 0-5 years were coded as A, 5-10 years B, 11-15 years C, 16-20 years D, and 21 years and above as E.

Table 4. One-Way Variance Analysis Results of Primary-School Teachers' Attitude Towards Profession During the COVID-19 Pandemic by Placement Year

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	P	Fark
Positive Attitude towards the Profession and Professional Success	Between Groups	13,52	4	3,38	2,38	,052	-
	Within Groups	359,24	253	1,42			
	Total	372,77	257				
Appreciation and Professional Happiness	Between Groups	27,91	4	6,98	8,33	,000	A-D, B-D, C-D, C-E, D-E
	Within Groups	211,98	253	,83			
	Total	239,90	257				
Job Avoidance	Between Groups	7,33	4	1,83	2,49	,043	B-E, D-E
	Within Groups	185,84	253	,73			
	Total	193,18	257				
Assimilation of Profession	Between Groups	13,73	4	3,43	5,91	,000	A-D, C-D, D-E
	Within Groups	146,95	253	,58			
	Total	160,69	257				
General Average	Between Groups	6,32	4	1,582	5,11	,001	B-E, C-E, D-E, B-C, B-D
	Within Groups	78,30	253	,310			
	Total	84,63	257				

As can be seen in Table 4, the results of the analysis indicate that there is no significant difference in the positive attitude towards the profession and the professional success sub-dimension of the primary-school teachers according to their placement years $F(4, 253) = 2,38, p > ,05$. However, in the sub-dimension of appreciation and professional happiness, there is a significant difference according to the placement year $F(4, 253) = 8,330 p < ,05$. Scheffe Test was conducted to determine between which occupational year groups the difference was. According to the Scheffe Test results, it was determined that the difference was between 16-20 and 0-5; 5-10, 11-15, 21+ and between 11-15 and 21+ placement year groups. A significant difference is observed in the sub-dimension of Job Avoidance regarding the placement year. $F(4, 253) = 2,49, p < ,01$. The Scheffe Test results indicate that the obtained difference is between 16-20 and 5-10, 21+ placement years. A significant difference was observed in the sub-dimension of assimilation of the profession according to placement year

$F(4, 253) = 5,91, p < ,05$. According to the results of the Scheffe Test, it was determined that the difference was between 16-20 and 0-5, 11-15, 21+ placement year groups. On the general average of the motivation of the primary-school teachers towards the profession, there is again a significant difference according to the placement year $F(4, 253) = 5,11, p < ,05$. According to the results of the Scheffe Test, the difference is between 21+ and 5-10, 11-15, 16-20 and between 5-10 and 11-15, 16-20 placement year groups.

One-Way Analysis of Variance has been applied to examine the Primary- School Teachers' attitude towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic according to the grade level.

Table 5. One-Way Analysis of Variance Results of Primary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Profession During the COVID-19 Pandemic by Grade Level

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	p
Positive Attitude towards the Profession and Professional Success	Between Groups	8,35	3	2,78	1,94	,12
	Within Groups	364,41	254	1,43		
	Total	372,77	257			
Appreciation and Professional Happiness	Between Groups	1,33	3	,44	,47	,70
	Within Groups	238,56	254	,93		
	Total	239,90	257			
Job Avoidance	Between Groups	5,79	3	1,93	2,61	,05
	Within Groups	187,39	254	,73		
	Total	193,18	257			
Assimilation of Profession	Between Groups	1,75	3	,58	,93	,42
	Within Groups	158,94	254	,62		
	Total	160,69	257			
General Average	Between Groups	1,90	3	,63	1,95	,12
	Within Groups	82,72	254	,32		
	Total	84,63	257			

According to Table 5, the analysis results indicates no significant difference in the sub-dimensions of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success $F(3, 254) = 1,94, p > ,05$, Appreciation and professional happiness $F(3, 254) = ,47, p > ,05$, Job avoidance $F(3, 254) = 2,61, p > ,05$ and assimilation of the profession $F(3, 253) = ,93, p > ,05$, according to the grade level.

There is also no significant difference in the general average of the motivation levels of the primary school teachers according to the grade level $F(3, 254) = 1,95, p > ,05$.

One-Way Analysis of Variance was applied to examine the Primary-School Teachers attitude towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the number of students attending the course in the distance education process.

Table 6. One-Way Analysis of Variance Results of Primary-school Teachers' Attitudes Towards Profession During the Covid-19 Pandemic According to the Number of Students Attending the Class in the Distance Education Process

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	P
Positive Attitude towards the Profession and Professional Success	Between Groups	8,463	3	2,82	1,96	,11
	Within Groups	364,311	254	1,43		
	Total	372,773	257			
Appreciation	Between Groups	4,73	3	1,57	1,70	,16

and Professional Happiness	Within Groups	235,17	254	,92		
	Total	239,90	257			
Job Avoidance	Between Groups	2,03	3	,67	,90	,44
	Within Groups	191,14	254	,75		
	Total	193,18	257			
Assimilation of Profession	Between Groups	3,48	3	1,16	1,87	,13
	Within Groups	157,20	254	,61		
	Total	160,69	257			
General Average	Between Groups	1,79	3	,59	1,83	,14
	Within Groups	82,84	254	,32		
	Total	84,63	257			

As in Table 6, in the results of the analysis, positive attitude towards the profession and professional success according to the number of students attending the course in distance education $F(3, 254) = 1,96, p > .05$, appreciation and professional happiness $F(3, 254) = 1,70, p > .05$, avoidance of occupation $F(3, 254) = .90, p > .05$, and assimilation of occupation $F(3, 253) = 1,87, p > .05$. There was no significant difference on the general average of the motivation levels of the primary school teachers according to the grade level. $F(3, 254) = 1,830, p > .05$.

As is seen in Table 6, there is no significant difference in the sub dimensions of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success $F(3, 254) = 1,96, p > .05$, appreciation and professional happiness $F(3, 254) = 1,70, p > .05$, Job avoidance $F(3, 254) = .90, p > .05$ and assimilation of profession $F(3, 253) = 1,87, p > .05$ according to the number of students attending the course in distance education. There is also no significant difference in the general average of the motivation levels of the primary school teachers according to the class level. $F(3, 254) = 1,830, p > .05$.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study primary-school teachers' motivation levels towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic have been examined according to the variables of gender, placement year, grade level and the number of students attending the course during the distance education process in terms of the sub-dimensions of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success, appreciation and professional happiness, job avoidance, professional assimilation. The analyzes were compared with the results of previous research on the motivation levels of primary-school teachers.

The results of the analysis indicated that the general average of the professional motivation levels of the primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic was moderate. ($\bar{X} = 3.36$) According to the study conducted by Bayraktar & Akın (2019) on primary-school teachers before the pandemic, the professional motivation of primary-school teachers is determined to be at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.61$). The general motivation levels of primary school teachers for the profession can be said to have decreased compared to the pre-pandemic period.

The results of the sub-dimensions regarding the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic have been found to be as $\bar{X} = 3.29$ in Positive attitude towards the profession and professional success; as $\bar{X} = 2.61$ in Appreciation and occupational happiness, as $\bar{X} = 3.00$ in Job avoidance, and as 4.17 in Profession assimilation. According to the Bayraktar and Akın's study (2019), the sub-dimensions of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success have been found to be as $\bar{X} = 4.29$, appreciation and professional happiness as $\bar{X} = 3.78$, avoidance from the profession as $\bar{X} = 2.62$, and professional assimilation as $\bar{X} = 3.77$.

Similar results are also seen when compared with Demir et al.'s (2017) study, which was conducted with the same scale. When compared with the results before the pandemic, it is seen that the results of the primary-school teachers' positive attitude towards the profession and the sub-dimensions of professional success, appreciation and professional happiness have lower scores. In their study on the factors on teachers' motivation, Ada et al. (2014) concluded that teachers' being appreciated and feeling professionally successful are effective on developing positive attitudes towards the profession. Büyükses (2010) also concluded in his study that the fact that teachers are not appreciated by their administrators negatively affects their motivation.

Considering these results, the problems experienced by teachers about being appreciated for the profession and feeling successful while doing their profession can be said to affect their positive attitudes towards the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the besides, the avoidance scores of primary-school teachers have increased compared to before the pandemic. It can be said that the educational disruptions experienced during the pandemic

period, the increase in the workload of teachers and the uncertainties that occur in the process cause an increase in the scores of teachers to avoid their profession. On the other hand, there is an increase in the scores of the primary-school teachers' professional assimilation sub-dimension compared to the pre-pandemic period.

For the first sub-problem of the research, the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers towards the profession have been examined according to the gender variable. The results have shown that there is a significant gender difference on the general average of the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers, and the professional motivation of female teachers during the pandemic is determined to be higher than that of males. No other significant differences are detected in terms of gender in any of the sub-dimensions of the scale. However, while the averages of female teachers in the sub-dimensions of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success, appreciation and professional happiness, assimilation of the profession were higher, the averages of male teachers in the sub-dimension of avoiding the profession were found to be higher. This situation is similar to the results of Demir et al.'s (2017) study on the motivation of primary-school teachers before the pandemic. According to these results, it can be said that female teachers' motivation level averages towards the profession are higher than male teachers before and after the pandemic. In his study on teachers' motivation, Ertürk (2016) determined that female teachers' intrinsic motivation levels are higher than male teachers, and this is due to the fact that female teachers are less affected by external factors and adapt more to their profession if they achieve the feeling of satisfaction and success towards the profession compared to male teachers.

For the second sub-problem of the study, the motivation levels of primary-school teachers in the pandemic have been examined according to their professional seniority years. According to the results, there is a significant difference in the general average of primary-school teachers' attitudes towards the profession according to professional seniority, and this difference is observed as between 21+ with 5-10, 11-15, 16-20 and 5-10 with 11-15, 16-20. While there was no significant difference according to professional seniority in the sub-dimension of positive attitude towards the profession and professional success, it was determined that the views of teachers differed according to professional seniority among other sub-dimensions. In Demirkol's (2019) study conducted before the pandemic, it is seen that there was a significant difference only in the dimension of assimilation of the profession according to professional seniority. In this case, it can be said that the motivation levels of teachers according to professional seniority have been affected by the pandemic.

For the third sub-problem of the research, the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers during the pandemic have been examined according to the grade level. According to the results, there is no significant difference on the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers according to the grade level. However, while the group with the highest motivation in the general average is the 2nd grade teachers, it is followed by the 1st grade, 4th grade and 3rd grade teachers, respectively. In the studies conducted by Bayraktar and Akın (2019) before the pandemic, it was seen that the motivation levels of the primary-school teachers did not show a significant difference compared to the class level in the grand total and other sub-dimensions.

For the fourth sub-problem of the study, the motivation levels of primary-school teachers during the pandemic have been examined according to the number of students attending the course in distance education. According to the results, it was seen that the number of students attending the course in the distance education process did not make a significant difference on the motivation of the primary-school teachers towards the profession. In the study conducted by Canöz et al (2019) and Demirkol (2019) before the pandemic, it is seen that the motivation level of primary-school teachers does not differ according to the number of students in the classroom.

In order to increase the professional motivation of primary-school teachers, which have been found to decrease in the pandemic, it may be suggested during the COVID-19 pandemic process that detailed research should be carried out by the ministry in order to determine the reasons for this decrease in teachers' motivation. In addition to this, due to the decrease in the appreciation and professional happiness sub-dimension scores of primary-school teachers during the pandemic, it can be suggested that teachers be given certificates of achievement in proportion to their professional dedication.

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