Using 'Socialization Programme for Visually Impaired students' (SPVI) to improve their Social Skills

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Socialization Program on nine participants with visual impairments. Socialization Programme for Visually Impaired (SPVI) was developed and then experiment was conducted to find out effectiveness of the programme on socialization of visually impaired male students of age 13-15 years. Findings from this study demonstrate that participants' overall social skills were improved when assessed using tool 'Social Skills Scale for Visually Impaired' (SSSVI). The students demonstrated that the programme was effective for improving selected social skills for the participants. Thus, the study concluded that the SPVI programme was found to be effective to improve social skills of VI in all the skills viz. Taking Initiative, Maintaining Self-control, Accepting differences and Managing Emotions except the skill Expressing feelings. This study suggests future research is needed on the similar sample from the population and there is a need for more empirical research on the population's social skills.

Keywords: Social skills, visually impaired adolescents, social skills development, Socialization Programme, Effectiveness

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Social skills are observable behaviours that individual exhibits to perform competently in a social task. The development of social skills lays a critical foundation for later academic achievement as well as work related skills (McClelland & Morrison, 2003). Adolescents with Visual Impairment (VI) seem to be socially more isolated, to have few friends and small social networks, lack adequate social support (Anderson E.M. et al., 1982). According to Ferrell (1996), children with visual impairment remain relatively backward in terms of social development as compared with sighted children. Social skills play a critical role in the learning process of a person especially in the case of students with Visual Impairment.

Social skills training

Social skills training (SST) is a form of behaviour therapy used by teachers, therapists, and trainers to help persons who have difficulties in interacting and thus relating to other people. Trainees are expected to learn to change their social behaviour patterns by practicing selected behaviours in individual or group therapy sessions. Spence (2003) explains that the process of SST is aimed at increasing an individual's ability to perform key social behaviours that are important in achieving success in social situations.

Major goal of SST is to improve the individual with the ability to function effectively in real-life settings (Corrigan et al. 1993). Positive social reinforcement and repeated practice are commonly used strategies to encourage persons to participate in the training and to strengthen their appropriate behaviours. SST helps VI children expand their behavioural repertories and succeed in different social situations. In particular, the principles underlying SST emphasize the importance of setting clear expectations with specific instructions, coaching the individual through the use of modelling, engaging individuals in role playing or behavioural rehearsal, and offering positive and corrective feedback for small improvements in social behaviour.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

According to Behaviourists children's social behaviours are not a consequence of innate traits. *Bandura Albert,* (1977) in his Social learning theory, explained that people learn new behavior through overt reinforcement or punishment, or via observational learning of the social factors in their environment. People can learn through observation - observational learning can occur in relation to three models: Live model – in which an actual person is demonstrating the desired behavior. Verbal instruction – in which an individual describes the desired behaviour in detail, and instructs the participant in how to engage in the behavior and Symbolic – in which modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, Internet, literature, and radio. This type of modeling involves a real or fictional character demonstrating the behaviour.

Theory of Social Behaviorism by *Mead George Herbert* (1967) explained that people develop self-images through interactions with other people, a person's personality consisting of self-awareness and self-image, is a product of social experience. The self develops solely through social experience. The planned and organized experiences lead to develop person's self-image and lead to improve their socialization. It is clear from this explanation that the development of self and identity in the context of intimate and reciprocal relations is important for socialization.

Moreover there are two different aspects of socialization, cognitive (*Jean Piaget*) and psycho-social (*Erik Erikson*) development. According to *cognitive approach* - Socialization is largely a matter of cognitive development, viewed as a combination of social influence and maturation. Thus it is clear that Socialization program may be helpful to change children's thought process that may improve their interaction with the world as skill assimilation and accommodation is an ongoing process. *Psycho-social theory* focuses on how children socialize and how this affects their sense of self. According to this theory, successful completion of each developmental stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Thus it again confirms the need of Social skills improvement for socialization and thus sense of self. The theories support the socialization and inclusion override the physical impairment and social skills can be developed in students with visual impairment that further lead to develop their personality and sense of self.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. To develop a program for improving socialization in the Visually Impaired students.
2. To find out effectiveness of the program.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What Socialization program can be developed for Inclusion of Visually Impaired students?

2. Is the Program developed effective for improving Socialization of Visually Impaired students?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research design
For finding out the effectiveness of SPVI, an Experimental method was used. The design used for the study is a 'One -group Pre-test – Post-test design'.

Sample
Purposive sampling was used for the selection of sample for the experiment. There are only two boys' school in Pune city. One school – Patashibai Lunkad Blind School, Pune, India, was selected for conducting pilot study and the sample was taken for the experiment from the other one - The Poona School & Home for the Blind Boys, Pune, India. Nine VI male students of age 13-15 years who were willing to participate in the study.

Data collection tool
SSSVI – Social Skill Scale for Visually Impaired was used for collecting data before and after the treatment. It was found that a standard battery of tests or methods for assessing social skills considered in this study does not exist. Hence the tool was constructed and standardized by the researcher to serve the purpose.

It is a rating scale was constructed with the purpose to measure social skills of VI students. The tool consists of real life situations for each skill deficits specific to the VI students. For each situation statements were generated that can be responded on five point rating scale on agreement. The SSSVI was constructed in Marathi – local language suitable for the subjects participating in the study.
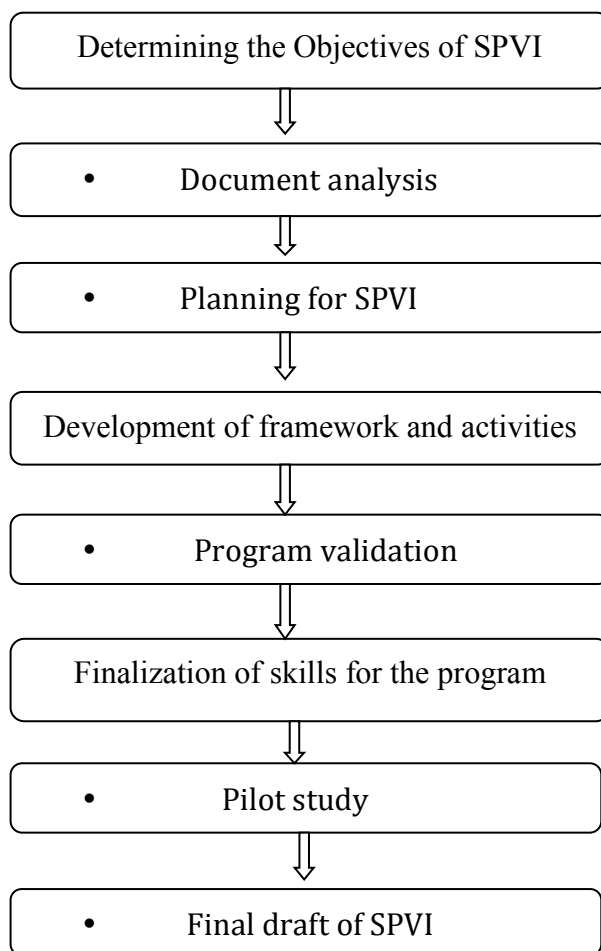
Statistical tools used
Mean, S.D. and t-test was used for testing significance of the difference between means of Sighted and VI students to identify the social skill deficits in VI students.

PLAN & PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

Programme development
For the development of the program i.e. Socialization Program for Visually Impaired – SPVI the Product development method was used. The SPVI is a treatment variable for the present study and the process of development of SPVI is explained in detail with the help of the steps presented in Fig. 1 as follows

Determining the Objectives of SPVI

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• Document analysis

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• Planning for SPVI

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Development of framework and activities

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• Program validation

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Finalization of skills for the program

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• Pilot study

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• Final draft of SPVI

Fig. 1: Flowchart for Development of SPVI

The document analysis was carried out, indicated that training strategies mainly includes direct instruction, modelling, coaching, behavioural rehearsal, role playing and feedback. It was observed that social skills are always taught in groups and is relatively short interventions most often consisting of 8-12 week programme, with duration of each session varying from 1 to 2 hrs. Various experiments were designed mostly as single group, pre-post assessment with participants ranging from 3 to 25 depending on the type of disability or availability of the subjects.

Unfortunately limited literature is available on social skills training specifically for VI, and also for Indian population, made it difficult to draw specific conclusions about practices for adolescents group. However scant evidences support the program developed for this study. The process of content analysis helped in planning the program, determining structure of the program with respect to sessions, duration of the program, and nature of activities. The activities in the SPVI, for each skill are selected on the basis of the purpose of the target skill and session-wise objectives of the program.

Table 1
SPVI: Selection of Activities

Target Skill	Purpose	Session Objectives	Activities
Social skill	Making VI students aware about socialization and improve their interaction	-To introduce concept of social skills to VI students - To make them aware about need and importance of social skills - To introduce concept of Communication & Interpersonal skills to VI students, their need and importance - To introduce concept of Assertiveness and Conflict resolution skills to VI students, their need and importance	1. Interactive games 2. Direct instruction 3. AV Instruction 4. Activity/Worksheets 5. Group Discussion

Expressing feelings	To make students able to convey their feelings appropriately,	-To introduce concept of expressing feelings to VI students
		- To make them aware about need and importance of expressing feelings
		- To make students learn about ways of expressing feelings
		  • -To make students learn
		  • about expressing feelings
		  • -To make students
		  • practice the skill
		  • -To review the skill taught
			1.Game
			2. Direct instruction
			3. AV instruction
			4. Group work
			5. Role play
			6. Social story
			7. Home work
			8. Situation based performance

Taking initiative	To make students able to take initiative on their own, without direction from others, show readiness and take the lead	-To introduce concept of taking initiative to VI students - To make them aware about need and importance of taking initiative and ways to improve their initiative skill -To make students learn about taking initiative -To make students practice the skill -To review on skill taught	1.Game 2. Direct instruction 3. Group discussion 4. Group work 5. Debate 6. Role play 7. Home work
Maintaining Self-control	To make students able to control their feelings and reactions	-To introduce concept of maintaining self-control VI students - To make them aware about need and	1.Game 2. Direct Instruction 3. Activity sheets 4. AV instruction 5. Activity sheets

		importance of maintaining self-control - To make students learn about controlling their feelings, responses and reactions - To make students learn about maintaining self control -To make students practice the skill - To review on skill taught	6. Role play 7. Group discussion 8. Activity sheets 9. Home work
Accepting Differences	To make students able to receive differences willingly and accommodate to discrimination	-To introduce concept of accepting differences to VI students - To make them aware about need and importance of accepting differences - To make students learn about receiving differences willingly, hold dissimilarity as true, agree to unlikeness and accommodate oneself to discrimination - To make students learn about accepting differences - To make students practice the skill - To review on skill taught	1.Group discussion 2.Direct instruction 3. interaction with students 4. Game 5. Role play 6. Home work 7. AV instruction 8. social story
Managing Emotions	To make students able to manage their emotions by recognizing and expressing emotions at right time and right place	-To introduce concept of managing emotions to VI students - To make them aware about need and importance of managing emotions - To make students learn to recognize their emotions, rethink the attitude about the circumstances, express emotions at right time and right place and fix the thoughts and emotions - To make students learn about managing emotions - To make students practice the skill - To review on skill taught	1.Social story 2. Situation based performance 3. Direct instruction 4. Role play 5. Home work 6. AV instruction
All skills (Booster session)	To reinforce students to apply and practice skills	-To reorient students - To discuss progress - To understand and solve difficulties of students	1.Direct instruction 2. Interaction with students 3. AV instruction 4. Expert guidance

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF SPVI

For the development of SPVI, the theoretical foundation for the selected activities was developed. It is presented as follows

Table 2
Theoretical foundation of SPVI

S.N.	Activity	Use in the SPVI	Supporting theory
1	Games	Icebreaker – Name game, Know Each Other, Initiative game, Freeze game, Up & Down	*Game theory: Game based learning* - supports intrinsic behaviour and experiential learning
2	Group discussion / group work	Your feelings, Taking Initiative, Maintaining self-control, Diversity and Differences, Think-Pair Share, Identify your emotions, Being assertive	*Cooperative learning theory, Social Development Theory* – Lev Vygotsky includes social approach for cognitive development, stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partners co-construct knowledge.
3	Situation based performance	Positive thinking, Let's talk, Share experiences, Dealing with emotions	*Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Scenario-based learning* which argues that learning best takes place in the context in which it is going to be used, and situated cognition, the idea that knowledge is best acquired and more fully understood when situated within its context
4	Role play	All skills – Expressing feelings, Taking initiative, Maintaining self-control, Accepting differences, Managing emotions	*Experiential learning theory* – built upon a foundation of constructivist learning.
5	Social stories	Create a story, Managing emotions, Accepting differences, Taking initiative	*Theory of Mind* - the ability of an individual to understand the mental states of themselves and others (Yun Chin & Bernard-Opitz, 2000)
6	Debate	Taking initiative	*Critical thinking & Communication theory-* involves intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or

			communication, as a guide to belief and action
7	Worksheets/ Activity sheets	Self-awareness, Control, My control	*Learning by doing: Hands-on learning* - that directly involves the learner, by actively encouraging them to do something in order to learn about it and encouraging our students to engage their brains during class. Worksheets used in class can also help direct students' learning out-of-class
8	Direct instruction & Interaction with students	All skills – Expressing feelings, Taking initiative, Maintaining self-control, Accepting differences, Managing emotions	*Vygotsky's theory, the Zone of Proximal Development* – skills too difficult for a child to master on his/her own, but that can be done with guidance and encouragement from a knowledgeable person.
9	Home work	All skills – Expressing feelings, Taking initiative, Maintaining self-control, Accepting differences, Managing emotions	*Extended learning theory* – It extends the learning opportunities beyond the school and allows for additional practice of important skills or for the student to explore the concepts more fully on his/her own time, to provide opportunities for problem-solving and critical thinking and to integrate skills
10	Audio-visual instruction (AV)	All skills – Expressing feelings, Taking initiative, Maintaining self-control, Accepting differences, Managing emotions	*The social constructivism* - Lev Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the importance of interaction with peers, teachers and experts in a collaborative learning community in multimedia environments
11	Expert guidance	Interaction with Role Model	*Vygotsky's theory, the Zone of Proximal Development* – skills too difficult for a child to master on his/her own, but that can be done with guidance and encouragement from a knowledgeable person.

These theories thus support the activities identified for improving the social skills of VI students.

Nature of SPVI -
Social skills considered in this programme are

- Communication & Interpersonal skills
- Expressing feelings
- Taking initiative
- Assertiveness & Conflict resolution skills
- Maintaining self-control
- Managing emotions
- Accepting differences
- Strategies used for training are - Direct instruction, Modelling (use of Audio media), Social stories, Cooperative Games, Role Playing and Group Discussion.
- Biweekly sessions (2 hrs. per session, approximately)
- It includes – Introductory session, New skill Sessions and Rehearsal & Follow up sessions (for each specific skill) and Booster session.
- Steps in Social skill training -

Many manualized and packaged social skills training programs provide detailed outlines or scripts that trainers may use in the actual delivery of programs. There are many possible ways in which social skills training outlines may be developed. For the present research the steps finalized for the social skills training are based mainly on the outline presented by Merrell & Gimpel, (1997), in their book – Social Skills in Children & Adolescents – Conceptualization, Assessment, Treatment (p.119), as well as the review of various studies. The steps considered are as follows:
1. Coaching - Introduce the skill and Establish the Rationale (direct instruction, use of Audio/video media, social stories, discussion)
2. Modelling - Demonstrating the skill
3. Rehearsal (Role playing, interactive games)
4. Feedback
5. Home work (Activity sheets, life experiences writing, self-talk)
6. Review
7. Evaluation (Record sheets, role play evaluation sheets)

Based on the planning and framework designed for SPVI, the program was developed for the selected 5 social skills deficits in Visually Impaired students. The overall structure of the programme inspired mainly by the Social Skills Training manual by Kingsep, P., & Nathan, P. and the review of the previous studies. The details are as follows:
- Establishing a rationale for the skill
- Warm- up activities specific to the skill
- Direct instruction of the skill – material for instructions, selection audio/video files
- Write up for activities
- Provision for Feedback - Positive and Corrective
- Home work
- Review of the skill
- Follow up (of previous session in the next session)
- Assessment and record keeping

The programme thus developed validated by experts, followed by pilot study. After modifications the programme was finalized and then implemented.

Implementation of the SPVI
- Prior to the implementation of the SPVI, consent letter was given to get the permission for conducting experiment.
- SSSVI was administered for pretesting
- SPVI was implemented in the duration from 19.12.2015 to 30.01.2016, overall 12 sessions.
- Again the SSSVI was implemented as post-test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

SPSS version 16.00 was used to analyse the data obtained. The data was analysed using t-test of significance to know mean difference between social skills scores on Pre and Post-test of selected sample participated in the experiment.

Null hypothesis
Null hypothesis 1
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test obtained by VI students in SSSVI.

Table 3
Summary table obtained t-values and table t-values

Test	N	Mean	SD	Obtained t-value	Table t-value at 0.01 level	Degree of freedom
Pre-test	9	171.00	11.25	6.76	3.36	8
Post-test	9	201.33	5.87			

Observation – Since the obtained t-value (6.76) is greater than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is a significant difference between mean pre-test post-test scores of VI students. The above observation reveals that this difference (pre-test and post-test) is attributed to the effect of treatment variable – use of SPVI.

Skillwise Analysis and Interpretation for pre-test & post-test
Null hypothesis 2
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post- test obtained by VI students in SSSVI for social skill – Expressing Feelings (EF)

Null hypothesis 3
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test obtained by VI students in SSSVI for social skill – Taking Initiative (TI)

Null hypothesis 4
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test obtained by VI students in SSSVI for social skill – Maintaining Self-Control (MSC)

Null hypothesis 5
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test obtained by VI students in SSSVI for social skill – Accepting Differences (AD)

Null hypothesis 6
There is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test obtained by VI students in SSSVI for social skill – Managing Emotions (ME)

Table 4
Summary table obtained t-values and table t-values
For pre-test & post-test (Skillwise analysis)

Social skill	Test	N	Mean	SD	Obtained t-value	Table t-value at 0.01 level	Degree of freedom
EF	Pre-test Post-test	9 9	14.11 16.78	2.619 1.856	3.024	3.36	8
TI	Pre-test Post-test	9 9	16.44 18.78	2.007 1.481	4.221	3.36	8
MSC	Pre-test Post-test	9 9	14.56 18.00	3.167 2.693	3.766	3.36	8
AD	Pre-test Post-test	9 9	12.44 18.67	2.506 1.414	5.708	3.36	8
ME	Pre-test Post-test	9 9	16.11 19.11	1.269 .782	5.692	3.36	8

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION
For social skill: Expressing Feelings (EF)
Observation - Since the obtained t-value (3.024) is smaller than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 2 is not rejected (accepted) and research hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is no significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores of VI students for the social skill – Expressing Feelings.

For social skill: Taking Initiative (TI)
Observation - Since the obtained t-value (4.221) is greater than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 3 is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is a significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores of VI students for the social skill – Taking Initiative. The above observation reveals that this difference is attributed to the effect of treatment variable – use of SPVI.

For social skill: Maintaining Self Control (MSC)
Observation - Since the obtained t-value (3.766) is greater than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 4 is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is a significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores of VI students for the social skill – Maintaining Self-Control. The above observation reveals that this difference is attributed to the effect of treatment variable – use of SPVI.

For social skill: Accepting Differences (AD)
Observation - Since the obtained t-value (5.708) is greater than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 5 is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is a significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores of VI students for the social skill – Accepting Differences. The above observation reveals that this difference is attributed to the effect of treatment variable – use of SPVI.

For social skill: Managing Emotions (ME)
Observation - Since the obtained t-value (5.692) is greater than table t-value (3.36) at 0.01 level, the null hypothesis 6 is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Interpretation – It can be interpreted that there is a significant difference between mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores of VI students for the social skill – Managing Emotions. The above observation reveals that this difference is attributed to the effect of treatment variable – use of SPVI.

RESULTS
The SPVI programme was found to be effective to improve social skills of VI in all the skills viz. Taking Initiative, Maintaining Self-control, Accepting differences and Managing emotions except the skill Expressing feelings.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS
In this study social skills training is provided to the VI through Socialization Programme for Visually Impaired (SPVI) and found to be effective and useful for developing social skills in the VI. Thompson, J.A. (2008), found that the social skills training with typically developing adolescents show positive changes in social interaction in the participants. Saleh, N.M. & Zainal, K. (2010), suggested acquiring social skills is not natural for VI children, but requires training. Yildiz, M.A., & Duy, B. (2013), investigated the effectiveness of an interpersonal communication skills psycho-education program to improve empathy and communication skills of VI adolescents.

The SPVI included teacher directed instruction making use social stories, videos, skill based activities, role play and home work. On the similar line Prater, M.A. (1998) found teacher directed instruction and role play improved Social Skill while Sansosti, F.J. reported that the use of video modelled social stories found to be effective. Thus the role play, video modelling, and teacher directed instruction that were used in the present study supports their use in social skills training.

CONCLUSION
The present study aimed to investigate effectiveness of Socialization Programme for Visually Impaired (SPVI) on their selected social skills. The results of the experiment revealed that the SPVI programme is effective to improve social skills of Visually Impaired adolescents of age 13-

15 years. Since the sample is not large, the findings of the study may be treated as explorative rather than conclusive.

LIMITATIONS

Based on the fact that there are very limited number of blind schools and consequently less number of VI participants, limited related researches, vague and complex nature of constructs, also unavailability of appropriate tools, the study has few limitations. The SPVI program was developed on the basis of deficits in socialization through comparison and also the suggestions and opinions given by the experts. Effectiveness of the program was determined on the basis of responses given by the VI respondents on pre- and post-tests. The researcher had no control on socio-economic status and other related psychological factors of VI students participated in the study. Since the availability of the sample was less, both totally blind and students with low vision were selected. The study was conducted on a voluntary group of students from school for Visually Impaired in isolated setting (residential school). The social skills were assessed using researcher made tool.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be recommended that based on the social skills deficits in visually impaired adolescents, social skill development training can be provided to improve socialization of these students to provide more positive social environment and their successful inclusion.

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