

Preservice primary school teachers' intention to teach national identity education: evidence from Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT

Fostering national identity (NI) in primary school students is essential for promoting civic awareness and supporting sustainable national development. Early school years are particularly critical for shaping NI, which places additional demands on teachers and the primary education system. Pre-service primary school teachers (PPSTs) often face challenges in translating their intentions to teach national identity (INTNI) into classroom practice. This study investigated the factors influencing these teachers' intentions and the mechanisms through which these intentions develop. Drawing on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and social identity theory (SIT), data were collected from 254 pre-service teachers at a Kazakhstani university and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Results revealed that institutional resources shape teachers' intentions indirectly by enhancing attitudes toward teaching NI, teaching self-efficacy, and national identity awareness (NIA), while direct effects were not significant. Internalization of national values (INV) had a weaker but meaningful impact. The findings highlight the importance of teacher education programs emphasizing professional confidence, positive attitudes, and identity awareness to prepare teachers effectively for implementing NI education in primary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of modern society has been characterized by increasing tensions between multiculturalism and national identity (NI). Contemporary political and social processes are shaped by individuals' efforts to define their place within a multicultural, multireligious, and multiethnic world, as well as by the formation of personal worldviews within these complex contexts. These dynamics are reflected not only in global social and political movements but also in cultural and pedagogical concepts that influence the content and organization of the educational process.

The phenomenon of identity, in its various dimensions, continues to attract scholarly attention across multiple fields of knowledge [1], [2]. Individuals' perceptions of themselves, their social position, and

their relationships with others influence not only personal behavior but also the functioning of social institutions, patterns of interaction, and broader value systems. The development of NI is therefore regarded not only as a social and political objective but also as a pedagogical task [3], [4]. Contemporary society increasingly recognizes that the absence of clear and positive life orientations among the younger generation, together with shortcomings in civic education systems, may generate significant societal challenges. In this regard, fostering NI among young people becomes particularly important [5].

The issue of NI development is especially salient during the early school years [6], placing additional responsibility on the primary education system and primary school teachers. Accordingly, this study focuses on pre-service primary school teachers (PPSTs), who constitute not only a future professional workforce but also a distinct socio-professional group that will significantly contribute to the civic education of primary school students. This highlights the main theme of the work and emphasizes its intellectual contribution. The importance of this study lies in the systematization and deepening of scientific knowledge regarding PPSTs' intention as a proximal determinant of teaching NI to young students. In this research, intention is conceptualized as: i) the conscious readiness of PPSTs to incorporate NI-related content into their teaching practices; and ii) a direct predictor of behavior that allows assessment of the likelihood of implementing NI instruction in their future professional activities. This conceptualization addresses the specific research objectives and clarifies the goals of the study design and approach.

This conceptualization enables the examination of both the strength and direction of individual influencing factors and the identification of alternative pathways for intention formation, thereby providing a multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon under investigation [7]. Scholars argue that the preparation of PPSTs largely depends on teacher education resources (TER), including institutional conditions, educational programs, teaching practices, research and methodological support, and faculty guidance [8]. A high-quality educational environment is believed to foster both behavioral and identity-related prerequisites for PPSTs' intentions to teach national identity (INTNI) [9], [10], highlighting the relevance of the theoretical contribution. Thus, TER may function as an external factor influencing attitudes, identity awareness, and INTNI. At the same time, a significant problem persists within the professional training system, which underscores the practical significance of the study for teacher education programs.

Although the importance of NI in school education is widely acknowledged, insufficient attention is paid to the systematic development of PPSTs' readiness to teach it. There is a lack of empirical research identifying the factors that shape PPSTs' INTNI to young students, as well as limited analysis of the mechanisms and pathways leading to the formation of such intentions. This further demonstrates the study's intellectual contribution. Moreover, current teacher education models remain predominantly oriented toward subject-knowledge approaches rather than toward value-based or identity-oriented educational outcomes. This study makes a twofold contribution: i) it advances theoretical understanding of the mechanisms underlying the formation of INTNI; and ii) it clarifies the role of institutional, educational, methodological, and organizational resources in shaping PPSTs' attitudes, perceived self-efficacy, and national identity awareness (NIA). The novelty of the study lies in: i) the development and empirical validation of a conceptual model explaining factors influencing PPSTs' INTNI in the context of Kazakhstan; and ii) the testing of this model using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) within a regional setting that has received limited attention in prior research. These points directly address the editor's request to highlight the main theme, specific goals, and the substantial/intellectual contribution of the study.

One of the primary objectives of Kazakhstan's education and youth development system is to strengthen students' NI. This objective is intensified by global trends associated with identity crises and social transformation. Additionally, Kazakhstan's emergence as an independent state in the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Union reshaped citizens' collective self-perception. Previously, identity was largely grounded in belonging to a unified multinational state, shared ideology, and the declared participation of citizens in shaping the country's future [11]. Kazakhstan is a multiethnic country currently home to representatives of 124 ethnic groups [12]. In a multicultural society, NI refers to an individual's conscious affiliation with a supra-ethnic national community that integrates ethnoculturally and socially diverse groups on the basis of shared national culture.

In the present study, NI is conceptualized as a civic, supra-ethnic form of identification (Kazakhstani identity) rather than as an ethnic (Kazakh) identity. However, changing sociopolitical conditions have complicated citizens' perceptions of their Kazakh or Kazakhstani identity, with increasing emphasis placed on alternative forms of identification [13], [14]. These processes are further intensified by the nonlinearity and fluidity of social identity dynamics. This situation reflects an ongoing crisis of NI in citizens' self-perception. In response, the state has initiated efforts to construct a unified NI as a foundation for national consciousness and youth education, emphasizing civic education at the primary school level. Researchers note that primary school age represents a particularly sensitive period for the development of ethnic awareness, value orientations, and deeper understanding of personal and collective identity [15]–[17]. It is widely recognized that during this developmental stage, children form foundational worldviews, value

systems, and perceptions of belonging to a nation and state. At the same time, studies indicate that primary school students are often disconnected from cultural traditions and historical heritage and possess limited knowledge of the traditions, norms, and values of other cultural groups [18]–[22].

Currently, the issue of fostering NI occupies a central position in educational research across many developing countries [23]–[25]. However, no empirical studies have systematically examined these processes within the regional context of Kazakhstan [26]–[30]. Five critical research gaps underpin this investigation. First, PPSTs' intentions and readiness to teach NI to young students remain insufficiently understood. Second, the roles of personal attitudes, subjective norms (SN), and perceived pedagogical self-efficacy in shaping INTNI require empirical examination. Third, the influence of TER and teacher education programs on attitudes, self-efficacy, and NIA has not been comprehensively analyzed. Fourth, teachers' personal national values and identity awareness as predictors of pedagogical behavior remain underexplored. Fifth, empirical evidence from multinational or post-Soviet contexts is limited. Addressing these gaps, the present study integrates the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and social identity theory (SIT), incorporating both TER and personal dimensions of NI into a unified framework for analyzing PPSTs' INTNI to young students. Accordingly, the study aims to investigate the factors influencing PPSTs' INTNI and to examine the mechanisms and pathways underlying the development of this intention.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity is a human psychological construct that reflects, in a concentrated form, how individuals perceive their belonging to various social, national, professional, linguistic, political, religious, racial, and other groups [31]. The development of such a high-level identity requires an initially high degree of self-awareness, civic responsibility, socialization, a well-structured hierarchy of values—including humanistic ones—and the presence of both individual and broader social interests [32], [33]. NI is a component of a person's identity associated with a sense of belonging to a particular nation, country, or cultural space [34]. NI is not innate; it emerges from an acquired awareness of shared culture, history, and language within a specific group of people [35]. This process can be further reinforced by a sense of belonging to a state and a commitment to its national ideals and symbols. The education system is a key social institution responsible for consciously shaping the NI of young people. However, the pedagogical dimension of this concept is underrepresented in the literature, which complicates the pedagogical, organizational, and methodological support for teacher development aimed at fostering students' NI.

Primary school students have characteristics that significantly influence the development of their NI. Researchers have identified the following: children regard the teacher, in addition to parents, as an authoritative adult; they display a high degree of imitative behavior; and they show relatively high suggestibility [36], [37]. Moreover, primary school students are particularly vulnerable, trusting, and receptive to new information. The social context plays a critical role in shaping a student's NI, affecting both positive and negative identity components, especially in domains where the child has limited personal experience.

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model of the factors influencing PPSTs' intention to teach NI to young students. The model integrates constructs derived from the TPB and SIT, with TER conceptualized as an institutional factor that shapes key antecedents of intention. Key predictors of intention in the model include: attitude toward teaching national identity (ATNIE), SN, perceived teaching self-efficacy (PTSE), NIA, and internalization of national values (INV), alongside TER. The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- H₁: ATNIE positively influences INTNI.
- H₂: SN positively influences INTNI.
- H₃: PTSE positively influences INTNI.
- H₄: NIA positively influences INTNI.
- H₅: INV positively influences INTNI.
- H_{6a}: TER positively influences ATNIE.
- H_{6b}: TER positively influences PTSE.
- H_{6c}: TER positively influences NIA.
- H₇: TER positively influences INTNI.

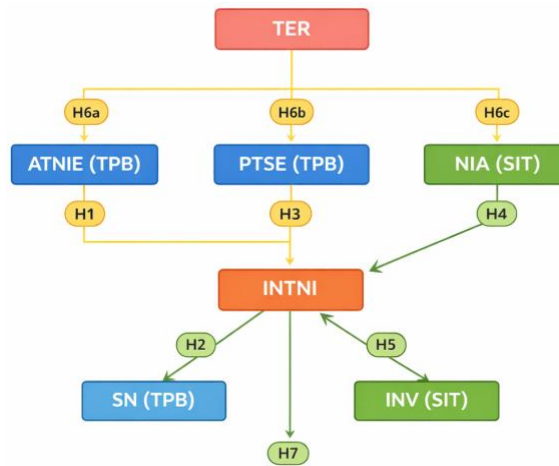


Figure 1. Structure of the conceptual model to teach NI

3. DATA COLLECTION AND METHOD

3.1. Data collection

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine the relationships among institutional, psychological, and identity-related factors influencing PPSTs’ intention to teach NI. A 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) was used to measure all constructs, which were reviewed by three experts in elementary education to ensure content validity and clarity. The survey captured participants’ attitudes toward teaching NI, SN, PTSE, NIA, INV, TER, and intention to teach NI, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey items and associated latent constructs

| Construct | Code | Item |
|-----------|--------------------|---|
| ATNIE | ATNIE ₁ | I believe that NI education is an important component of primary school education. |
| | ATNIE ₂ | Teaching NI education contributes to the moral and civic development of primary school students. |
| | ATNIE ₃ | I consider NI education to be valuable for the overall educational development of children. |
| SN | SN ₁ | My university lecturers expect pre-service teachers to address NI education in primary school classrooms. |
| | SN ₂ | School administrators and educational authorities emphasize the importance of NI education. |
| | SN ₃ | People who are important to me approve of teaching NI education. |
| PTSE | PTSE ₁ | I feel confident in my ability to teach NI education effectively in primary school. |
| | PTSE ₂ | I have sufficient pedagogical knowledge to teach topics related to NI effectively. |
| | PTSE ₃ | I am capable of selecting appropriate teaching methods for NI education. |
| | PTSE ₄ | I feel prepared to explain NI concepts in a way that is understandable for primary school students. |
| NIA | NIA ₁ | I have a clear understanding of my NI. |
| | NIA ₂ | I am aware of the cultural traditions and historical background of my nation. |
| | NIA ₃ | My NI is an important part of how I define myself. |
| INV | INV ₁ | National values play an important role in shaping my personal beliefs. |
| | INV ₂ | National values influence the way I evaluate social and civic issues. |
| | INV ₃ | I consider national values to be relevant for educating younger generations. |
| TER | TER ₁ | My teacher education program includes sufficient coursework related to NI education. |
| | TER ₂ | I receive adequate methodological guidance on how to teach NI education. |
| | TER ₃ | Teaching practice during my studies helps prepare me to teach NI education. |
| INTNI | INTNI ₁ | I intend to teach NI education in my future work as a primary school teacher. |
| | INTNI ₂ | I plan to actively incorporate NI education into my teaching practice. |
| | INTNI ₃ | I am willing to devote time and effort to teaching NI in primary school. |

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from E. Buketov Karaganda National Research University (Karaganda, Kazakhstan). After institutional approval, invitation letters were sent to students meeting the inclusion criteria: i) enrollment in a primary teacher education program; ii) provision of informed consent; and iii) voluntary participation. A census-type sampling approach was used; all eligible students were invited. Data were collected over a one-month period (20 March–20 April 2025), resulting in 260 returned questionnaires, of which 254 were valid (valid response rate=97.86%). The demographic characteristics of participants are summarized in Table 2. The sample size is sufficient for PLS-SEM, ensuring adequate statistical power to test the proposed model.

Table 2. Characteristics of study participants

| Items | Categories | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Female, n (%) | 250 | 98.4 |
| | Male, n (%) | 4 | 1.6 |
| Grade level | Second year | 57 | 22.4 |
| | Third year | 72 | 28.3 |
| | Final year | 125 | 49.3 |
| Place of origin | Urban | 156 | 61.4 |
| | Rural | 98 | 38.6 |

3.2. Method

PLS-SEM was used to test hypothesized relationships among institutional, psychological, and identity-related factors affecting pre-service teachers' intention to teach NI. PLS-SEM is a variance-based approach suitable for analyzing complex models with multiple latent constructs. It allows simultaneous evaluation of the measurement model (reliability and validity) and structural relationships, providing both predictive and theory-development insights. Analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4 software.

4. RESULTS

As shown in Table 3, all constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its indicators. All variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below the conservative threshold of 3.0, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern in the measurement model.

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity indices

| Construct | Items | Loadings | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE | VIF |
|-----------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|-------|-------|------|
| ATNIE | ATNIE ₁ | 0.881 | 0.846 | 0.907 | 0.765 | 2.18 |
| | ATNIE ₂ | 0.872 | | | | |
| | ATNIE ₃ | 0.865 | | | | |
| SN | SN ₁ | 0.842 | 0.821 | 0.892 | 0.734 | 1.76 |
| | SN ₂ | 0.861 | | | | |
| | SN ₃ | 0.832 | | | | |
| PTSE | PTSE ₁ | 0.823 | 0.848 | 0.901 | 0.695 | 1.92 |
| | PTSE ₂ | 0.847 | | | | |
| | PTSE ₃ | 0.832 | | | | |
| | PTSE ₄ | 0.801 | | | | |
| NIA | NIA ₁ | 0.874 | 0.858 | 0.912 | 0.776 | 2.04 |
| | NIA ₂ | 0.889 | | | | |
| | NIA ₃ | 0.872 | | | | |
| INV | INV ₁ | 0.861 | 0.842 | 0.899 | 0.748 | 1.98 |
| | INV ₂ | 0.873 | | | | |
| | INV ₃ | 0.859 | | | | |
| TER | TER ₁ | 0.814 | 0.823 | 0.882 | 0.654 | 1.71 |
| | TER ₂ | 0.836 | | | | |
| | TER ₃ | 0.802 | | | | |
| INTNI | INTNI ₁ | 0.848 | 0.835 | 0.903 | 0.756 | 1.92 |
| | INTNI ₂ | 0.892 | | | | |
| | INTNI ₃ | 0.856 | | | | |

Note: VIF values refer to indicator-level variance inflation factors; all values are below the conservative threshold of 3.0, indicating no multicollinearity issues.

As shown in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its inter-construct correlations, thereby meeting the Fornell–Larcker criterion for discriminant validity. In addition, cross-loading analysis indicated that each indicator loaded highest on its intended construct, further supporting discriminant validity. Furthermore, cross-loading analysis indicated that each indicator loaded more strongly on its associated construct than on any other construct, confirming adequate discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 5 presents the results of hypothesis testing for the structural model. The results show that ATNIE, PTSE, NIA, and INV have significant positive effects on INTNI, highlighting the role of psychological and identity-related factors in shaping PPSTs' intentions. In contrast, SN and the direct effect of TER on INTNI did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that their influence may operate indirectly.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker criterion for discriminant validity results

| Constructs | ATNIE | SN | PTSE | NIA | INV | TER | INTNI |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ATNIE | 0.875 | | | | | | |
| SN | 0.512 | 0.857 | | | | | |
| PTSE | 0.548 | 0.731 | 0.834 | | | | |
| NIA | 0.621 | 0.589 | 0.642 | 0.881 | | | |
| INV | 0.604 | 0.617 | 0.658 | 0.792 | 0.865 | | |
| TER | 0.556 | 0.571 | 0.633 | 0.681 | 0.714 | 0.809 | |
| INTNI | 0.664 | 0.702 | 0.718 | 0.756 | 0.781 | 0.739 | 0.869 |

Table 5. Hypothesis testing results

| Hypothesis | Relationship | β | t | p | Result |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|------|--------|---------------|
| H ₁ | ATNIE→INTNI | 0.288 | 5.21 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H ₂ | SN→INTNI | 0.105 | 1.92 | 0.056 | Not supported |
| H ₃ | PTSE→INTNI | 0.195 | 3.29 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H ₄ | NIA→INTNI | 0.257 | 4.72 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H ₅ | INV→INTNI | 0.134 | 2.01 | 0.046 | Supported |
| H _{6a} | TER→ATNIE | 0.415 | 7.93 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H _{6b} | TER→PTSE | 0.389 | 7.12 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H _{6c} | TER→NIA | 0.356 | 6.38 | <0.001 | Supported |
| H ₇ | TER→INTNI | 0.078 | 1.92 | 0.056 | Not supported |

Although TER did not exert a statistically significant direct effect on PPSTs' intention to teach NI education, its influence appears to operate indirectly through key psychological and identity-related antecedents. Specifically, TER significantly predicted ATNIE, PTSE, and NIA, which in turn were significant predictors of intention. These findings suggest that institutional and curricular resources shape intention primarily by fostering favorable internal dispositions and identity-related orientations rather than by directly motivating behavioral intentions. The direct effects of SN and TER on INTNI were not statistically significant.

The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 6. The mediation analysis indicates that TER influences pre-service teachers' intention to teach NI primarily through internal psychological and identity-related mechanisms rather than directly. Specifically, resources enhance attitudes toward teaching NI, pedagogical self-efficacy, and NIA, which in turn increase teaching intentions. Indirect effects through INV and SN were not significant, suggesting that institutional support is most effective when it strengthens cognitive engagement and identity-related orientations, rather than merely providing structural guidance or external expectations. Overall, the findings highlight the central role of internal dispositions in translating institutional and curricular resources into concrete teaching intentions, emphasizing the importance of designing teacher education programs that actively foster both professional confidence and meaningful identity development.

Table 6. Specific indirect effects

| Relationship | Original sample (β) | t | p | Mediation effect |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------|-------|-------------------------|
| TER→ATNIE→INTNI | 0.120 | 3.45 | 0.001 | Indirect-only mediation |
| TER→PTSE→INTNI | 0.105 | 3.12 | 0.002 | Indirect-only mediation |
| TER→NIA→INTNI | 0.102 | 3.08 | 0.002 | Indirect-only mediation |
| TER→INV→INTNI | 0.056 | 1.85 | 0.065 | No mediation |
| TER→SN→INTNI | 0.022 | 1.10 | 0.272 | No mediation |

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, various mechanisms underlying the intention of future primary school teachers to teach NI education were identified. The results indicate that ATNIE, PTSE, and NIA have significant positive effects on intention to teach NI. These findings are consistent with research grounded in the TPB framework, which highlights the key role of attitudes and self-efficacy in shaping teachers' professional intentions [38]–[41]. The importance of participants' pedagogical self-efficacy supports previous findings that prospective teachers' confidence in their professional abilities is one of the most stable predictors of their willingness to implement values-laden educational practices, including civic and identity education [42], [43]. The significant effects of NIA and INV indicate that the participants' personal identification with their national community plays an important role in shaping their intentions. These results are consistent with the propositions of SIT and with empirical evidence examining the role of identity in pedagogical practice [44]–[47].

The effect of INV was statistically significant but less pronounced than the cognitive variables (ATNIE, PTSE, and NIA), suggesting that values alone do not always translate into pedagogical intentions unless they are supported by professional confidence and a positive attitude toward teaching the relevant content. This interpretation aligns with research showing that value orientations require pedagogical “translation” into practice [48]. SN did not emerge as a significant predictor of intention, indicating that participants relied more on internal beliefs and professional competence than on external expectations from teachers or educational institutions. A key finding is the absence of a direct effect of TER on intention to teach NI, despite significant indirect effects through ATNIE, PTSE, and NIA. This indicates indirect-only mediation and has important theoretical implications, suggesting that institutional resources influence intention primarily through internal cognitive and identity-related mechanisms. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing that educational programs are only effective when they translate into attitudes, professional confidence, and meaningful identity in future teachers [49], [50].

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors influencing pre-service teachers’ INTNI to young students and the mechanisms through which these intentions develop. The findings indicate that institutional support primarily operates indirectly by shaping internal cognitive and identity-related mechanisms—attitudes toward teaching NI, teaching self-efficacy, and NIA—rather than exerting a direct effect on behavioral intention. Personal values had a supporting, though weaker, role. The study confirms that effective teacher education programs translate institutional resources into psychological dispositions and identity-related orientations, supporting frameworks based on the TPB and SIT. Teacher preparation programs should prioritize fostering positive attitudes toward NI education, enhancing pedagogical self-efficacy, and promoting identity awareness. These strategies can guide curriculum design, teacher training, and education policies to better equip future teachers for implementing NI education in primary schools. Despite these contributions, the study has limitations: its cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and reliance on self-report measures may introduce social desirability bias. Future research could incorporate qualitative methods, behavioral observations, or additional variables such as teaching experience, civic engagement, and institutional climate to further enhance explanatory power.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

| Name of Author | C | M | So | Va | Fo | I | R | D | O | E | Vi | Su | P | Fu |
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C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : **O**riting - **O**riginal Draft

E : **E**riting - **R**eview & **E**ditng

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corresponding author may provide study data upon reasonable request.





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