The Impact of the Policy of High School Entrance Exams in Local Working Places on the Occupation Expectations of Migrant Children

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Abstract. The issue of compulsory education for migrant children is widely concerned, which largely determines children's choice of occupations in the future. Yet the *Hukou* policy and low intergenerational mobility in China impeded the right to education and choices of occupations for unregistered residents in local. In 2012, the Ministry of Education released the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places, which means more migrant children can participate in high school entrance exams in their parents' working places, providing more opportunities for educational attainment and choices of occupations for migrant children. The paper uses the logistic model to understand whether the policy itself or the parental expectation influences children's self-expectation of occupation based on 2013-2014 China Education Panel Survey. It finds that the policy will give future occupation expectations to migrant children, and those migrant children from families with non-elite and elite occupation expectations are more likely to choose elite occupations after the policy intervention. Parents who expect their children to pursue elite occupations will make children have more expectations of elite occupations. In addition, the paper finds that the policy does not significantly slow down the intergenerational transmission of occupation expectations among migrant children's families. The findings of this paper provide policymakers with some thoughts and references to consider the issues of educational equity, social stratification, and mobility.

Keywords: The Policy of High School Entrance Exams in Local Working Places, Migrant Children, Occupation Expectations, Intergenerational Transmission.

1   Introduction

In China, migrant children indicate children living with the rural migrant workers in cities. These children left their birthplaces and follow their parents to a new city. According to the sixth Chinese national census in 2010, there are 12.9 million migrant children of senior high school age (15-17 years old) in China. However, the proportion of them receiving high school education is relatively low [1]. According to the floating population dynamic monitoring data of the National Health and Family Planning Commission in 2015, about 30% of the migrant children were absent from school in the high school stage [2].

To secure that migrant children share the same education opportunities as locals, the Ministry of Education issued the Opinions on Doing a Good Job in Enrolling the Children of Migrant Workers with Compulsory Education to Take the Local Higher Education Examination (hereinafter referred to as the Opinions) in 2012. The documents required each region to specify the conditions for migrant children to take the entrance exams in the local area. Subsequently, different regions have successively introduced the policy of high school entrance examination in local working places in different forms of "entry thresholds". It is estimated that 15,436,500 children will be eligible for high school in 2020 [3]. Therefore, the subsequent problem of migrant children after compulsory education involves a huge population, which affects not only the flow of migrant children after graduating from junior high school but also the education fairness in China [4]. Overall, the problem requires a lot of attention.

As a special group in the city, migrant children have a high desire to continue their education. However, existing policies and intergenerational transmission still affect their equity in further education and educational choices, which in turn affect their occupation expectations and career choices. According to Luo's study, the intergenerational mobility of urban residents in China is rather fixed, and there is a clear phenomenon of "children inheriting their fathers' careers" [5]. To push intergenerational occupational transmission, education is a key factor [6]. At this stage, researchers are more likely to analyze the impact of relevant policies and institutions on students' post-compulsory education choices, but there are few empirical studies on students' occupation expectations and career choices [7]. Occupation expectations and choices not only become a matter of family development and labor force level for the migrant population but also affect social harmony and stability [8]. Therefore, in the process of development and improvement of further education policies, the issue of students' occupation expectations and choices cannot be avoided.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places on the occupation expectations of migrant children and to investigate the intergenerational transmission of occupation expectations after the implementation of this policy. This paper uses China Education Panel Survey (hereinafter referred to as CEPS) and selects logistic regression model.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Migrant Children

The policy catered for the migrant children, representing the children of migrant workers and other non-local household registration employees [9]. The issue of the children of migrant workers is a special product of the urbanization process in China and is similar to the concept of migrant children abroad. Research on migrant children in China has focused on compulsory and post-compulsory education issues and educational equity, with education issues being significantly influenced by policy. Since the 1990s, education policies for migrant children have been introduced, alleviating the problem of "difficulty in attending school" during the compulsory education stage, but the problem of difficulty in further education and schooling after the compulsory education stage remains. This means that the post-compulsory educational achievement of migrant children is generally low, with most of them abandoning their studies or going on to vocational and technical institutions, and very few entering general high schools [10]. It has been shown that the educational expectations of migrant children are influenced by the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places [11]. There are many concepts about migrant children in China. Based on the literature, this paper defines migrant children as students who live in cities with both or one of their parents who are migrant workers in cities, but whose household registration is still in rural areas.

2.2   The Relationship between the Policy of High School Entrance Exams in Local Working Places and the Occupation Expectations of Migrant Children

The regional differences in the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places directly reflect the differences in the "entry barrier" for accepting migrant children in high schools in different regions, which affects their choice of post-compulsory education. Existing research has focused on the impact of the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places on the choice of high school education for migrant children, with less research on how the policy affects the occupation expectations of migrant children. According to the text of the policy, priority has been given to opening up vocational and technical education, such as vocational high schools, in order to cope with the squeeze on educational resources brought about by the implementation of the policy, and to provide migrant children with a pathway to vocational success in the city. Some studies have shown that vocational schools offer better returns on education and less investment in education than ordinary high schools for migrant families in cities [12]. For migrant families and their children, choosing vocational education after the compulsory education stage is more conducive to subsequent development in the city, but this limits their occupation expectations to some extent. There are many different types of occupations, among which the concept of the elite is more common to classify occupational levels [13]. Tong's definition is adopted in this paper that defines and classifies elite occupations in terms of political, economic, and technological

dimensions, and uses the concept of "elite occupations" and "non-elite occupations" to classify the types of occupations [14]. Hence, it is posited:

H1: *There is a significant difference in the probability that individuals wish to pursue elite occupations in the future after the implementation of the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places.*

2.3 Occupation Expectations of Migrant Children

Palmer et al. first proposed the concept of occupation expectations in the early 1940s [15]. Wu and Li understand occupation expectations as both an external manifestation of career values and a determinant factor influencing career choice [16]. Gottfredson sees occupation expectations as a dynamic process in which individuals adjust and change to individual and environmental factors related to their careers [17], and Metz sees occupation expectations as attainable career ideas that reflect the career goals they want to achieve [18].

The research suggests that family background, gender differences [19] and factors in the school and social environment [20] all influence adolescents' own occupation expectations. In countries influenced by collectivist environments such as China, adolescents' career choices are mainly influenced by interpersonal relationships, particularly by parental and social expectations [21][22], and some studies have further found that adolescents growing up in collectivist environments are more likely to follow the career paths planned by their parents for their children [23][24]. Thus, parents in collectivist environments can influence and interfere with adolescents' occupation expectations. It has also been shown that same-gender parental occupation is a significant influence on the formation of adolescents' occupation expectations. This shows that family background factors have a profound impact on adolescents' occupation expectations. It is worth mentioning that some studies have argued that the special characteristics of the families of migrant children also affect their occupation expectations, with the cost of education and the lag in educational outcomes forcing them to think ahead about their career paths. Hence, the paper tries to explore whether parents' occupation expectations on children will influence children's occupation expectations.

H2: *Children whose parents have expectations of elite occupations will significantly have more chances to expect to choose elite occupations than those whose parents have expectations of non-elite occupations.*

2.4 Intergenerational Transmission of Occupations in Migrant Families

The intergenerational transmission of occupations in migrant families focuses on the mechanisms of association between the parents and offspring of the migrant population in terms of occupation expectations and careers and their patterns of change, discussing how and to what extent the occupational expectations and occupational influences of the parents are transmitted to the next generation [25]. Occupation is an important factor influencing intergenerational transmission. Since the late 19th century, studies of intergenerational transmission have calculated intergenerational occupational mobility rates based on survey data to consider intergenerational mobility between father and

son generations [26]. Other studies have explored the impact of paternal occupation and educational attainment on the occupational and educational attainment of offspring based on both innate and acquired factors [27]. In the Chinese context, although the influence of institutional and policy factors on intergenerational occupational mobility is evident, with institutional and structural constraints on occupational mobility [28] and class entrenchment still present across all classes, both intergenerational social mobility and intergenerational inheritance have increased since the reform and opening up [29]. China's unique household registration system has also contributed to the high intergenerational mobility of farmers [30]. Thus, the weakening or strengthening of intergenerational occupational transmission is often closely related to education and policy.

Tong argues that after compulsory education, adolescents' occupation expectations show a clear pattern of intergenerational inheritance. A large body of empirical research has shown that the 'break' between elites and non-elites is becoming increasingly evident, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the children of non-elites to break out of this hierarchy [31]. Hence, it is posited:

H3: *After the implementation of the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places, the migrant children of parents with elite occupations are significantly more likely to want to work in elite occupations in the future.*

The research focuses on the occupation expectations of migrant children, exploring whether the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places has some impact on their occupation expectations and further considering whether the interaction of the policy and parental occupation expectations can have an impact on the intergenerational transmission of occupation expectations, although such mobility opportunities are more influenced by individual ability and qualification factors [32].

3   Research Design

3.1   Data Source

CEPS is a large-scale panel survey project designed and implemented by Renmin University of China to provide nationally representative and multi-level basic data support for academic research and policy formulation related to education, family, and society. CEPS has five parts in its questionnaire, including students and their parents or guardians, classroom teachers, primary classroom teachers, and school officials. The implementation of the survey was school-based, and 112 schools and 438 classes were randomly selected for the survey in the selected 28 county-level units nationwide, with all students in the sampled classes enrolled, and a total of about 20,000 students were surveyed in the baseline survey.

The data source of this paper is the baseline survey data of CEPS from 2013 to 2014. The study population of this selection is children who move with their families. Based on the CEPS questionnaire questions "current household registration place" and "current place of residence", a total of 3379 samples of children who move with their families were selected. Since this paper is about the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places, the sample of students should be 9th-grade students. 1144 valid

samples were obtained after selecting and deleting those samples with missing or in-complete information.

3.2   Variable Definition

Independent Variables.

The Policy of High School Entrance Exams in Local Working Places. The independent variable is the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places, which is measured by the student questionnaire of CEPS: "According to the local policy, can you apply for high school in your city (prefecture-level city)?", including "1 You can apply for key high schools", "2 You can only apply for general high schools, but not key high schools", "3 You cannot apply for both key and general high schools", "4 You don't know", indicating the different forms of policy.

In this paper, "affected by the policy" was assigned the value of 1 ("1 You can apply for key high schools", "2 You can only apply for general high schools, but not key high schools") and "not affected by the policy" was assigned a value of 0 ("3 You cannot apply for both key and general high schools", "4 You don't know").

Parental Occupation Expectations. Parental occupation expectations of migrant children, as measured by the CEPS student questionnaire: "What kind of job do your parents most expect you to do in the future?". It is divided into two levels: elite occupations contain state institution staff, government civil servants; enterprise/company managers; scientists, engineers, and professional athletes; non-elite occupations contain teachers, doctors, lawyers; designers; art performers, skilled workers, and others. Students who choose "they don't care or clear" is considered that parents do not have strong expectations about the occupations of their children, so this paper includes "they don't care or clear" in the category of non-elite occupations.

Interaction of Policy and Parental Occupation Expectations. The interaction of policy and parental occupation expectations is the interaction of two independent variables, policy, and parental occupation expectations, transformed into four categorical variables based on the CEPS student questionnaire: "According to the local policy, can you apply for high school in your city (prefecture-level city)?" and "What kind of job do your parents most expect you to do in the future?", including "1 Affected by policy, Elite occupation", "2 Affected by policy, Non-elite occupation", "3 Not affected by policy, Elite occupation".

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable is the occupation expectations of migrant children themselves. It is divided into two levels: elite occupations contain state institution staff, government civil servants; enterprise/company managers; scientists, engineers, and professional athletes; non-elite occupations contain teachers, doctors, lawyers; designers; art performers, skilled workers, and others. Students who choose "I don't care" considered to lack clear career planning and orientation for themselves and

do not have strong occupation expectations for themselves, so this paper includes "I don't care" in the category of non-elite occupations.

Social-demographics Variables. The control variables include three aspects: (1) individual characteristics, including gender, whether they are only single children in their family, health status, and grade ranking in class; (2) family background, including household type, family economic status, parents' highest education level, parents' input, and parental confidence on their children; (3) school characteristics, including the nature of the school and the local ranking of the school. All the above variables were obtained from the CEPS database, and some of them were recorded according to the needs of the study. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Variable Definitions

Variable Name	Variable Explanations	Variable Categories	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable				
ocpstu	occupation expectations of migrant children	1 Elite; 0 Non-elite	0.38	0.49
Independent Variables				
zi	policy variable	1 Affected; 0 Not affected	0.62	0.49
expfam	career expectations from family	1 Elite; 0 Non-elite	0.29	0.45
Social-demographics Variables				
Individual Characteristics				
stsex	gender	1 Male; 0 Female	0.50	0.50
stonly	only single-children in their family	1 True; 2 False	1.70	0.46
health	health status	1 Not good; 2 Good; 3 Excellent	2.70	0.55
rankstu	grade ranking in class	1 Low; 2 Mid; 3 High	2.11	0.85
Family Background				
sthktype	household type	1 True; 0 False	0.67	0.47
steco_3c	family economic status	1 Not good; 2 Good; 3 Excellent	1.89	0.49
pedu (years)	parents' highest education level	1 0-6; 2 7-9; 3 10-12; 4 >12	2.30	0.83

Variable Name	Variable Explanations	Variable Categories	Mean	SD
pinput	parents' input	1 Low; 2 Mid; 3 High	2.84	0.45
pconf	parental confidence on their children	1 Low; 2 Mid; 3 High	2.01	0.70
School Characteristics				
schtype_2c	nature of the school	1 Public School; 2 Private School	1.12	0.32
schrank_3c	the local ranking of the school	1 Low; 2 Mid; 3 High	1.81	0.67

3.3   Research Methods

This paper uses binary logistic regression to analyze the effects of policy and parental occupation expectations on the occupation expectations of migrant children separately, and then further explores the effects of interaction of policy and parental occupation expectations on the occupation expectations of migrant children.

4   Results Analysis

4.1   Descriptive Analysis

Table 2. Difference Analysis of Occupation Expectations of Migrant Children

VarName	Categories	Occupation Expectation		Pearson Chi
		Elite	Non-elite	
		Percentage (%)		
Individual Characteristics				
stsex	Male	64.16	40.79	59.0129***
	Female	35.84	59.21	
stonly	True	33.33	28.61	2.8468
	False	66.67	71.39	
health	Not good	3.65	4.67	1.1561
	Good	21.46	22.95	
	Excellent	74.89	72.38	
rankstu	Low	25.80	34.42	18.2396***
	Mid	24.20	28.19	
	High	50.00	37.39	

VarName	Categories	Occupation Expectation		Pearson Chi
		Elite	Non-elite	
		Percentage (%)		
Family Background				
sthktype	True	66.89	67.00	0.0013
	False	33.11	33.00	
steco_3c	Not good	18.95	17.42	6.5468*
	Good	71.69	76.91	
	Excellent	9.36	5.67	
pedu (years)	0-6	15.53	12.04	4.6326
	7-9	50.68	55.10	
	10-12	22.15	23.23	
	>12	11.64	9.63	
pinput	Low	2.74	3.54	1.1396
	Mid	8.90	10.20	
	High	88.36	86.26	
pconf	Low	18.49	27.20	11.9175**
	Mid	53.88	50.00	
	High	27.63	22.80	
School Characteristics				
schtype_2c	Public School	88.13	88.10	0.0002
	Private School	11.87	11.90	
schrank_3c	Low	31.28	35.13	3.7561
	Mid	51.83	51.70	
	High	16.89	13.17	
Independent Variables				
zi	Affected	65.98	59.49	4.8337*
	Not affected	34.02	40.51	
expfam	Elite	56.16	11.76	260.1800*
	Non-elite	43.84	88.24	
X	0 Not affected, Non-elite	15.75	36.26	261.7118***
	1 Affected, Elite	37.90	7.51	
	2 Affected, Non-elite	28.08	51.98	
	3 Not affected, Elite	18.26	4.25	

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

The results of chi-square test are shown in Table 2. Significant differences exist in the occupation expectations of migrant children in terms of individual characteristics, family background, school characteristics, policies, parental occupation expectations and interactions.

In terms of individual characteristics, there are significant differences in the occupation expectations of the migrant children mainly in two aspects: gender ($\chi2 = 59.0129$, $P < 0.001$) and the ranking of grades in the class ($\chi2 = 18.2396$, $P < 0.001$), but there are no significant differences in whether they are only children and their health status. In terms of family background, there are significant differences in family economic status ($\chi2 = 6.5468$, $P < 0.05$) and parents' confidence in their children's future ($\chi2 = 11.9175$, $P < 0.01$), while there are no significant differences in household registration type, parents' highest education level and parents' input. In the aspect of school characteristics, there is no significant difference in the occupation expectations of migrant children. In addition, there are significant differences in the three variables of policy ($\chi2 = 4.8337$, $P < 0.05$), parents' occupation expectations ($\chi2 = 260.1800$, $P < 0.05$) and their interaction "X" ($\chi2 = 261.7118$, $P < 0.001$).

4.2   Regression Analysis

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analysis

VarName (Reference group)	Model 1 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 2 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 3 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 4 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P
Stsex (Female)				
Male	2.765 (2.147-3.560) .000***	2.819 (2.186-3.635) .000***	2.376 (1.793-3.148) .000***	2.420 (1.824-3.211) .000***
Rankstu (Low)				
Mid	1.197 (.853-1.680) .299	1.169 (.832-1.643) .367	1.143 (.784-1.665) .448	1.132 (.774-1.653) .523
High	1.823 (1.338-2.485) .000***	1.748 (.279-2.390) .000***	1.547 (1.096-2.185) .013*	1.506 (1.062-2.136) .022*
Steco_3c (Not Good)				
Good	.857 (.619-1.187) .353	.862 (.622-1.194) .371	.994 (.692-1.427) .973	1.001 (.697-1.438) .996
Excellent	1.531 (.888-2.638) .125	1.551 (.898-2.676) .115	1.317 (.713-2.433) .379	1.336 (.723-2.469) .355
Pconf (Low)				
Mid	1.396 (1.009-1.933) .044*	1.377 (.994-1.907) .054	1.446 (1.006-2.079) .047*	1.431 (.994-2.059) .054
High	1.402 (.956-2.054) .084	1.368 (.932-2.009) .109	1.310 (.852-2.017) .219	1.287 (.835-1.983) .253
Zi (Not Affected)				
Affected		1.306		

VarName (Reference group)	Model 1 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 2 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 3 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P	Model 4 Ocpstu OR (%95 CI) P
		(1.004-1.670) .046*		
Expfam (Non-elite)				
Elite			8.576 (6.317-11.642) .000***	
X (Not affected, Non-elite)				
Affected, Elite				10.312 (6.754-15.746) .000***
Affected, Non-elite				1.292 (.914-1.828) .147
Not affected, Elite				9.582 (5.743-15.990) .000***
Likelihood ratio test	-714.273 ***	-712.277 ***	-606.013 ***	-604.919 ***
N	1144	1144	1144	1144

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

As shown in Table 3, it is binary logistic regression analysis. Model 1 is used to analyze the influence of control variables such as individual characteristics, family background, and school characteristics on the occupation expectations of migrant children. Model 2 analyzes the independent influence of policies on the occupation expectations of migrant children based on the controlling variables. Model 3 analyzes the independent influence of parental occupation expectations on the occupation expectations of migrant children in the same situation. Model 4 analyzes the influence of the interaction between policy and parental occupation expectations on the occupation expectations of the migrant children in the same situation.

The likelihood ratio test results of regression models showed that Model 1 ($\chi 2$ = -714.237, P < 0.001), Model 2 ($\chi 2$ = -712.277, P < 0.001), Model 3 ($\chi 2$ = -606.013, P < 0.001) and Model 4 ($\chi 2$ = -604.919, P < 0.001) all passed the significance test, indicating that at least one independent variable in the four models has statistical significance.

It can be seen from Table 3 that the socio-demographic variables in Model 1 are partially significant, among which gender variables (P < 0.001), student ranking variables (P < 0.001) and parental confidence variables (P < 0.05) are all considered to have a significant impact on the occupation expectations of the migrant children.

After controlling for factors such as individual characteristics, family background and school characteristics, the policy in Model 2 has a significant impact on the occupation expectations of the migrant children (P < 0.05). Specifically, compared with the children not affected by the policy, the children affected by the policy are 1.306 times more likely to want to engage in elite occupations (OR = 1.306). This proves that the

implementation of the policy has a positive impact on the occupation expectations of the migrant children, and the children affected by the policy are more willing to engage in elite occupations, which means that H1 is valid.

The results of Model 3 show that after controlling for other variables, parental occupation expectations have a significant effect on the occupation expectations of migrant children ($P < 0.05$), where children who are expected by their parents to have an elite occupation are 8.576 times more likely to want to choose an elite occupation than children who are expected by their parents to have a non-elite occupation in the future (OR=8.576). This illustrates that parental expectations of their children's occupation largely influence their children's future occupation choices, which means that H2 is valid.

Model 4 is to analyze the influence of the interaction between the policy and the parental occupation expectations on the occupation expectations of the migrant children. Taking the categories that are "not affected by the policy and non-elite occupations" as a reference, the results show that both the categories that "affected by the policy and elite occupations" ($P < 0.001$) and "not affected by the policy and elite occupations" ($P < 0.001$) have a significant impact on migrant children's occupation expectations. However, "affected by the policy but non-elite occupations" ($P > 0.05$) had no significant effect on occupation expectations of migrant children. Therefore, it can be considered that the interaction between the policy and the parental occupation expectations has a significant impact on the occupation expectations of the migrant children. Specifically, it can be explained that compared with the reference group, the children who are affected by the policy and whose parents expect them to engage in elite occupations are 10.312 times more likely to expect to engage in elite occupations in the future than the former (OR = 10.312), which means that H3 is valid. Meanwhile, the children who are not affected by the policy and whose parents expect them to engage in elite occupations are 9.582 times more likely to want to engage in elite occupations than the children of the reference group (OR = 9.582). When not affected by the policy, parents' high expectations will affect children's willingness to pursue elite occupations. It is worth noting that when the policy and parents' high expectations work at the same time, children are also more willing to pursue elite occupations. In other words, the policy in fact boosts children in elite migrant families to have more career confidence and chances and strengths these elite families' social and economic status, meaning the intergenerational transmission of occupation expectations is not slowed down in China.

5   Conclusion

Based on the models, the three independent variables all have a significant impact on the occupation expectations of migrant children. However, the effect of the policy (OR=1.306) as an explanatory independent factor is pale into significance when compared with the effect of the occupation expectations from parents to their children (OR=8.576) as an explanatory independent factor. On top of that, when parents have high occupation expectations for their children, no matter the migrant children are af-

fected by the policy (OR=10.312) or not affected by the policy (OR=9.582), the probability of choosing the elite occupations by the migrant children is significantly improved. Meanwhile, it also proves that regardless of the impact of the policy, parental occupation expectations for their children are still a powerful factor influencing their children's own occupation expectations. On this basis, the policy has strengthened this influence, making the migrant children more willing to pursue elite occupations. In other words, the policy in fact boosts the occupation pursuits of children from migrant families with high expectations.

Based on the questionnaire data from CEPS for ninth graders in 2013-2014, the main conclusion that can be drawn from the logistic regression model is that the policy of high school entrance exams in local working places significantly affects the occupation expectations of migrant children. Nevertheless, the policy does not slow down the intergenerational transmission of migrant children's occupations under the influence of family background. This demonstrates that the current policy can help migrant children achieve their occupation expectations by providing them with expectations and confidence; however, the policy does not reduce the class solidification caused by differences in family background.

The further research can be done on the underlying relationship between the policy and the occupation expectation from parents. For the migrant children who are not affected by the policy, but whose occupation expectation were enhanced, the investigation can be established on whether the parents' occupation expectation is their interpretation based on the policy of high school entrance exams.

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