

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS OF
AFRICA: A STUDY OF THE CEWOY CARA FOUNDATION, ILODO,
IJEBU IMUSIN, SOUTH/WEST, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

Vocational education are impacting on the availability of improved livelihood which will go a long way to eradicating poverty and hunger the first two main targets for the achievement of sustainable development goals for the world. Poverty and hunger are great challenges and threat to human race particularly in Africa where a large percentage of the populace in most of its countries still live in abject poverty. It therefore becomes mandatory to look for a means of combating the challenge of poverty and hunger through the availability of improved livelihood for the generality of the populace especially rural dwellers that are the hardest hit in poverty and hunger. Appropriate vocational educational skills can contribute to better opportunities for improved livelihood and income. However, it is also important for educators of vocational studies to gain the necessary inserts into global trends in generating vocational skills that will address the challenge of livelihood problems. These are the objectives this paper seeks to achieve. The paper discusses the concept of vocational education, the types of vocational training available for rural women in the Cewoy-Cara Foundation, global trends in vocational education and training; as well as the attendants impacts of the training programs provided by Cewoy cara and vocational studies on opportunities for improve livelihoods for rural women and the role of government/ civil society organizations in the availability and affordability of vocational education and training for rural women and lastly implications for the achievement of sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women. Purposive and total enumeration techniques were used to select all female members as well as few male members of CEWOY –CARA within Ilodo and other communities for the study consisting of a total of 176 respondents. IDIs were conducted for the qualitative study on some purposively selected members as well as the conduct of quantitative survey. The quantitative survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics as 0.05 level of significance while the qualitative data were content analyzed. Results showed that the establishment of the CEWOY CARA Foundation has greatly impacted positively on the livelihood opportunities of the rural women of Ilodo and other communities around it through the training and vocational skill acquisition the centre has afforded members as well as the opportunities for credits and loans which has helped members boost their business and other livelihood potentials.

Keywords: Women* Vocational Studies* Livelihoods* Poverty* Opportunities*

Introduction and background to the study

Poverty and hunger pose a great challenge and threat to human race particularly in Africa where a large percentage of the populace in most of its countries still live in abject poverty. However, a veritable means of combating the challenge of poverty and hunger is through the availability of improved livelihood for the generality of the populace especially rural dwellers that are the hardest hit in poverty and hunger. These are some of the reasons that led to the birth of the Cewoy cara foundation. The Centre for the Empowerment of Women, Youth Development, Care and Rehabilitation of the Aged was established in 2001 to meet some of the yearning needs of the people of Ijebu Imusin Community and its environs. The Centre is particularly concerned with caring for the often-marginalized sets of people; the Aged, Women and the Youth. The Centre is a non-profit-making organization and also not a non-partisan and non-governmental organization. Since its establishment, the center has been committed to the care of the aged, the empowerment of women through vocational training and provision of soft loans to women who are mainly traders and artisans; the protection of vulnerable children from abuse and the provision health care facilities to the aged / nursing mothers.

Main focus areas of the center are the care of the Aged, Economic empowerment, Education of youths and Women through vocational training and workshops, Counseling, Health care, Peace building, Protection of women and children from abuse, Enthronement of Human Rights, Agricultural activities and Enlightenment on the prevention of HIV/ AIDs.

Meanwhile vocational education is impacting on the availability of improved livelihood which will go a long way to eradicating poverty and hunger the first two main targets for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Poverty and hunger pose a great challenge and threat to human race particularly in Africa where a large percentage of the populace in most of its countries still live in abject poverty particularly women. However, a veritable means of combating the challenge of poverty and hunger is through the availability of improved livelihood for the generality of the populace especially rural dwellers that are the hardest hit in poverty and hunger. Appropriate vocational educational skills can contribute to better opportunities for improved livelihood and income. It is also important for educators of vocational studies to gain the necessary inserts into global trends in generating vocational skills that will address the challenge of livelihood problems. These are the objectives this paper seeks to achieve. The paper discusses the need for vocational training in rural communities, the types of vocational training available for rural women in Cewoy cara and how these trainings have positively impacted on the livelihood of members of Cewoy cara as well as other members of the rural communities; global trends in vocational education and training; factors affecting the adoption of global trends and patterns in vocation education in rural areas of Nigeria, role of government/ civil society organization in the availability and affordability of vocational education and training for rural women and lastly implications for the achievement of sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women with regard to their health and well-being. The paper concludes with the remarks that government and other agencies charged with impacting vocational trainings should utilize available resources at their disposal to emphasize

innovative and creative approach to vocational skill acquisition which is likely to bring about positive transformative and sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women

Nature and Activities of the Center

Activities of the center are mainly centered round the care of the aged within the group and other members of communities that require care and support. Drugs and other healthy living products are distributed to members from time to time particularly during our quarterly health and wellness day activities. The Centre also offers Vocational training to members of the group and also provides micro-loans schemes to members to enhance their business and serve as start-up capital after training. The Center provides other empowerment activities and creates awareness programs on economic ventures. Members of the communities are also sensitized periodically about the dangers inherent in contracting HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases, juvenile delinquents etc. In addition to the above, the center also holds quarterly and Annual Health day for members of the communities as well as annual children day activities including the End of Year Community Development Programs. Another unique activity of the center is that the members borrow advice, wisdom, and experiences from the Aged members of the center who periodically tell their real life experiences. The real life experiences are documented and kept for reference purposes. The Center also holds talk shows, seminars etc. The center is also affiliated with other Non –Governmental Organizations for the pursuance of improved means of livelihoods, improved family health care, prevention of Neo-natal Mortality for women, Child Protection, Human Rights activities and women empowerment Programs.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical applications adopted for this study were the Structural Functionalist Theory, the Human capital theory and the Theory of Patriarchy.

Structural functionalist theory

The functionalist perspective is based largely on the works of Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton. According to functionalism, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. The Structural Functionalist Theory argues that a society is made up of different institutions and certain functional requirements must be satisfied toward the survival of such institution by different people within the society. Both men and women have roles to play for the society to function perfectly. That is, Function is the contribution that an item makes to the maintenance of the whole. This brings out the fact that women equally have roles to perform to within societies. It follows that if women are given adequate vocational Training and Development programmes, this will enhance their livelihood potentials and there by allow them to function well within the society. Livelihood enhancement programmes will give women competitive advantage in the labour market.

Human capital theory

Human capital theory can be associated with the resource-based view of the firm as developed by Barney (1991). This proposes that sustainable competitive advantage is attained when the firm has a human resource pool that cannot be imitated or substituted by its rivals. Boxal (1996) refers to this situation as one that confers 'human capital advantage'. But he also notes that a distinction should be made between 'human capital advantage' and human process advantage'.

The added value that people can contribute to their potential is emphasised by human capital theory. It regards people as assets and stressed that investment in people through education will generate worthwhile returns. The theory therefore underpins the philosophy of human resource management which, as developed in the 1980's stated that employees should be treated as assets rather than costs.

Generally, people's effectiveness depends upon making good use of knowledge, which needs to be developed, captured and exchanged (knowledge management) in order to bring about the best potentials in them. From a financial reward point of view, the implication of human capital theory is that investment people make on themselves goes a long way to improve their potentials. Human capital theory encourages the use of skill or competence-based pay as a method of reward. It also underpins the concept of individual market worth. This indicates that individuals have their own value in the marketplace which they acquire and increased through investments in themselves either in vocational training or formal educational development and experience. The market worth of individuals may be considerably higher than the market rate of their jobs, and if they are not rewarded accordingly, they may market their talents elsewhere. Hence human capital development provides a framework for self - development, training programmes and career progression to meet an organization and society's future skill requirements.

Sylvia Walby's Theory of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a practice in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The term was recreated in the past two decades to analyze the origins and condition of men's oppression of women. (Karamae,1992). Originally used to describe the power of the father as head of household, the term patriarchy has been used within post 1960s feminism to refer to the systemic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (Kamarae, 1992: Stancy, 1993 and Aina, 2012) Patriarchy's defining elements are its male dominated, male-identified and male –centered characters. Patriarchal cultures include ideas about the nature of things, men, women and humanity. It is about how social life is and how It is supposed to be, about what is expected of people and about how they feel, about the naturalness of male aggression, corruption and dominance and of female, caring and subordination It is about the valuing of masculinity and maleness and devaluing femininity and femaleness.

Patriarchy is centered on the belief that supports and promotes the idea of superiority of men over women. Or in other words, a sort of power arrangement sustained by strong and deliberate intention aimed at the oppression of women for the benefit of men. Walby (1998) argues that the concept of patriarchy is central to any analysis of gender

inequality. Her analysis of patriarchy incorporates considerations of ethnic differences and presents a more flexible way of understanding patriarchy than earlier approaches. To Walby (1998) understanding inequalities require a deeper understanding of the origin of patriarchy within societies and the social relations that sustains it. She sees patriarchy and capitalism as distinct systems which interact in different ways, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes in tension. She however argues that capitalism has benefited immensely from patriarchy through the sexual division of labor. She focuses more on the depth and the interconnectivity of gender inequality and sees patriarchy as comprising six structures which are interdependent but interact with one another nonetheless. Similarly, Collins and Hean (2001) define patriarchy as a process and context through which male supremacy is promoted by men and institutions. They observed that patriarchy remains a stumbling block for women because it controls access to hierarchical power and characteristics of knowledge claims. Collins and Hean (2001) stated further that unless the patriarchal nature of societies is broken, women will find it difficult to have opportunities to invest in vocation and training which will help them advance in their careers in what is considered a male territory. In this environment, they noted that cultural practices and information flow along male side signifying male authority, placing women as a mere subordinate to men. Unfortunately, the problem with patriarchy is that it is a complementary process that is legitimized by both men and women. This culture has been transformed to organizations and the work place which now makes it a part of organizational culture. In this manner, male dominance becomes a self – perpetuating phenomenon in organizations. Collins and Hean (2001) Much more later, Ritzer (2012) discloses that the claim of the discourse around patriarchy is that women were inferior to men and that this natural inferiority explained their social subordination. Patriarchy therefore presupposes a form of gender oppression in which exist subvention in power relation between men and women. As a consequence, women are believed to be restrained, subordinated, molded, used and abused by men. Hence the need for government and civil societies organizations, such as CEWOY CARA to come to the aid of women and give them opportunities to be trained in order to build viable careers and vocation.

Statement of Problem

Poverty and in adequate means of livelihood has remains major problems that women are confronted with in most rural communities in Nigeria. Young married women do not have money to spend to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to enable them have veritable livelihoods. (Kester, 2012). Hence a lack of effective and desired developmental programmes for women and youths also constitute some of the reasons for why they cannot provide for themselves and constantly remain at the mercy of their husbands. Thus, the widely accepted canon holds that education and vocational training is a good investment that will in the long run foster in an adequate and sustained means of livelihood. Unfortunately, rural women are constrained by several challenges which include limited access to credit, property, lack of educational and technical skill as well as coping with domestic responsibilities. Although some of the problems above are not created by women themselves they nonetheless negatively affect women opportunities and therefore

constitute major challenges to their progression and means of livelihood. As a result of all the challenges, rural women are mostly confined to subsistence farming with little or no additional income or credit facilities to improve their yield and activities. In addition to all the above, older women are so faced with more challenges within the rural communities since they do not have the strength to partake in subsistence farming any longer. They are usually left at the mercy of their children, who at most times also do not have adequate means of livelihood. This was what prompted the establishment and empowering activities of CEWOY-CARA through vocational Training and other empowerment programmes organize from time to members to booth their developmental capabilities in order to enhance their economic well- being and performance in order to have improved livelihood opportunities.

This study therefore investigated how the centre's performance has helped to provide improved livelihood opportunities for members and other rural women within the communities. It is hoped that an investigation into the capacity building element of the centre through vocational training and empowerment activities will reveal how the development of women potentials and livelihood opportunities have improved.

Study Objectives

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the vocational training and empowerment programmes in CEWOY CARA while the specific objectives:

1. Identified the types of vocational training and empowerment programmes available in CEWOY CARA.
2. Examined member's perception on the various vocational training and empowerment programmes available in CEWOY CARA.
3. Investigated the effects of the vocational training and empowerment programmes available for members of CEWOY CARA.
4. Examined the adequacy and appropriateness of the vocational training and empowerment programmes available for members of CEWOY CARA.
5. Investigated the challenges/constraints to the success of the activities of CEWOY CARA to members and the general public

Research Questions

1. What are the vocational training programmes available for members of CEWOY CARA?
2. What are the perceptions of members of CEWOY CARA regarding the vocational training and empowerment programs available for them?
3. What are the effects of the vocational training and empowerment programmes on members' livelihood potentials?
4. How adequate and appropriate are the vocational training and empowerment programmes in CEWOY CARA for members?
5. What are the challenges/constraints to successful participation of CEWOY CARA towards meeting its set out objectives?

Literature Review

Women participation in viable livelihood opportunities are constraints by several challenges in Nigeria particularly in the rural areas where there are fewer opportunities to get employed. Data indicates a sharp contrast between the income generating and livelihood opportunities of women and men persists across multiple sectors. For instance, women participation in the industrial sector is 11% as compared with 30% for men. Women represent 87% of those employed in the service sector, which involves predominantly informal and unregulated forms of employment. Women participation in income generating activities that are predominantly characterized by intense manual labour, such as mining and quarrying is virtually non-existent largely due to gender-related perceptions regarding the social construction of labour and production related activities. (National Bureau Statistics, 2004). Also, in the Federal Civil Service which is the largest single-entity employer in Nigeria, 76% of civil servants are men whereas only 24% are women and women hold less than 14% of total management level positions. Women represent 17.5% and men 82.5% of those employed within the medical field, which generally involves highly skilled and relatively well-remunerated work. (CIDA Nig. GSAA 2006). There is therefore a sharp contrast between the income generating and livelihood of women because they do not have the opportunity of utilizing their full potentials compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, gender roles and division of labour also constitute challenges to women livelihood opportunities. It was observed that institutional practices and perceptions of gender roles also have an impact on the equitable enjoyment of employment privileges and incentives, in both urban and rural settings. For example, tax authorities generally assume that male breadwinners bear the sole responsibility for meeting the financial and material needs of families and neglect to acknowledge the existence of female headed households. Accordingly, tax benefits related to childcare are restrictively granted to male workers whereas female workers (including single mothers and divorced women with children in their care as well as married women, some of whom are family breadwinners), as a result of being denied access to these benefits, tend to pay relatively higher taxes. (CIDA Nig. GSAA 2006). It was also observed that gender – based norms also ascribe women the responsibility of carrying out tasks related to household management (i.e. domestic tasks, such as cooking, caring for children and the elderly, etc.), which does not diminish when women engage in paid employment. This dual burden prevents women from pursuing their careers as well as attaining management and decision-making positions at the same pace and rate as their male colleagues in virtually all sectors and spheres. With regard to the overall economic enhancement opportunities, it was observed that gender inequalities within the overall society, and across all sectors, reflects the wide disparities between men and women, which in turn, contribute to uneven development and the feminization of poverty. Hence among the 70% of the population estimated to be living below poverty line, over 65% are projected to be women. Income and purchasing power is estimated to be US\$1,495 for men as compared to US\$614 for women. It was also noted that men have greater access to high-paying, secure employment. This was why women occupy less than 14% of the overall management positions in the Nigerian Civil Service despite the fact that there are some few women who were appointed as permanent

secretaries. (Beginning from 2001 in line with the affirmative action initiatives). Additionally, approximately, 17.5% of medical doctors are women whereas 82.5% are men. All the above disparities were observed to have significant impact on the economic capacity of women in order for them to be able to contribute to overall economic growth of the country. Other indications of gender inequalities that needed to be reversed and improved upon were also highlighted to include disparities in participation within the formal sector which stands at 87% for men compared to 11% for women, while industrial sector engagement stands at 30% for men compared to 11% for women. The extractive industry was also noted to have zero participation of women notwithstanding its annual business volume of over US\$42M. Ibru (2008) observes that although women entrepreneurs play an increasing role in diversifying production and services in Africa economies, they operate in more difficult conditions than their male counterparts. Women career and vocational training opportunities is specifically impeded by such constraints as limited access to key resources, the legal or regulatory framework and the social cultural environment.

According to the United Nation Millennium Development Goals Report (2005-2015) women's access to paid employment is lower than men in most developing countries including Nigeria. Women are less likely than men to hold paid employment and regular jobs and they more often work in the informal economy, which provides little financial security while those in formal employment remain concentrated at the lower cadre rather than at the management level. Mabogunje (2006) observes that many African women are engaged in the informal sector. He noted that it cannot be denied that women within contemporary capitalist economic arrangements appear to be greatly under-privileged and under-achieving. He observed further that ideological, structural and legal constraints prevent women from participating in modern production activities in the formal sector, while a number of practices also prevent women from effectively participating in business ventures. Mabogunje (2006) further observes that the socially defined gender roles of women confine them to reproduction and the domestic domain. Solanke (2008) observed that the irony in statistics is that women perform two-thirds of the world's work, yet they only receive one tenth of the world's income and own one hundredth of the world property. This he termed as the perpetuation of injustice. Adewumi (2007) notes that poverty is one of the most fundamental threats confronting humanity today as close to one billion people in the developing countries currently live in abject poverty. Adewumi (2007) concludes that more than half of the women are poor due to limited access to credit facilities and educational opportunities as well as well-paid jobs. The causes of poverty among women have their origins in the limitations placed on women by gender division of labor. Women have also been seen to suffer disproportionately from low income, inadequate compensation and maternity leave, low job satisfaction and malnutrition.

Onyeonoru (2005) notes that the roles and opportunities ascribed to males and females in societies determine their choices for progress in modern society, stressing further that while women are burdened with domestic and reproductive activities, which do not count economically, men engage in market-oriented activities that relate with society's definition of advancement. Hence, while men advance steadily, the same cannot be said to

be the case for their female counterparts who are burdened by domestic labor that are unaccounted for nationally and in the international macroeconomic framework.

According to Oppong (1993) women's work had often been hidden in the tasks associated with domestic and marital roles which have led to women's relative invisibility in the official labor statistics of many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This is because their work had been subsumed under women's role as daughters, housewives and mothers. Although they have found succor in their activities and involvements in the informal sector, however employment in this sector can be highly unstable. This disadvantaged position leads to the beginning of the crusade for the equality of both sexes. Social change in industrialization, urbanization and modernization all increased the quest for education and skills by women, hence women's access to education and training has increased, but overcoming the attitudinal and institutional discriminations that bar women from getting to the top or getting into the same occupations with their male counterparts still remains highly challenging. Onyeonoru (2005) stresses that some of the obstacles to women at the place of work are the way work is organized and the challenges that face women who try to reconcile work with family commitments. These obstacles ensure that, they are still concentrated in the most precarious cadres of work all over the world. The review above shows that an intervention is necessary to help boost the livelihood opportunities particularly for women in the rural areas. CEWOY CARA has provided the required intervention strategy through vocational training and empowerment programmes for women in Ilodo and its environs within Ijebu Imusin.

Methodology

The study employed a survey design in order to capture the broad and specific objectives of the study. Amalgams of the quantitative and qualitative technique were utilized for the study. These records were supplemented by journals that bear on the various challenges that were contend with and the need to provide women with opportunities to get trained in order to build viable careers and vocations.

The study locations are Ilodo Ijebu, Ikala and Ijebu Imusin. The choice of the locations is based on the fact that Ilodo is the head quarter of the CEWOY CARA foundation while the two other ancient rural towns are neighboring towns where some members of the Center resides. The fact that the researcher is familiar with the area and that there is ease of access also influenced the choice of the two rural towns in addition to Ilodo. The three towns are rural communities in Ijebu East Local Government of Ogun State in South West, Nigeria, peopled by the Ijebus who are mainly subsistent farmers and petty traders.

The study population consisted of the entire members of the CEWOY CARA Foundation who are mainly females in addition to few males who are members of the youth development wing of the Center.

There was a total enumeration of all members of the Center except members of the youth wing that were not utilized for the study. All the members were sampled within Ilodo Ijebu, Ikala Ijebu and Ijebu Imusin. Presently there are 85 members in the foundation. The 85 members were all sampled to evaluate their views and perception on the effect of the

vocational training empowerment programmes of CEWOY CARA on their livelihood potentials.

Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select samples for the study cutting across all members of the center. The members were stratified on the basis of older members and younger members.

Results

This section presents a detailed discussion of the findings from the field exercise. The study was conducted among all female members of the CEWOY CARA Foundation in Ilodo with a view to evaluating the main influence of the vocational training and empowerment programmes of CEWOY CARA on improved livelihood opportunities for women in Ilodo and environs in Ogun state, Nigeria.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents that were studied shows that 34.5%, 32.2%, 9.0%, 23.4% and 0.9% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 20 - 35 years, 36 - 50 years, 51 - 65 years, 61 -75 years and above 76 years respectively, which indicate that majority fell between the age brackets of 20-50 years. In terms of marital status, 71.9% were married, 26.6% were single, and 1.2% of the respondents were divorced. In term of ethnicity, 84.2% were Yoruba; this is because the center is located in Ilodo, Ogun state which is one of the Yoruba speaking six south western states in Nigeria. 8.1% are Ibo and 3.4% are Hausa. Majority of the respondents were Yoruba. Furthermore, the table shows that majority of the respondents had had only elementary education with 76.4% while 17.7% had secondary school educational qualification. Before joining the Foundation only 5.6% of the members had trained as seamstresses. It can therefore be deduced that a large number of the members had no form of vocational training before they became members of the center.

With regard to the respondents' views and perception on the activities of the CEWOY CARA Foundation. Members representing 91.4% of the respondents affirmed that the vocational training and empowerment programmes of the center has greatly improved their livelihood opportunities. Also, 96.5% the highest numbers of respondents attested to the fact that they have immensely benefitted from the health care activities of the CEWOY CARA Foundation.

With regard to opportunity to secure loans to improve members business, respondents revealed that they now have opportunity to secure loans from two banks as a result of the relationship that the banks have established with the center. Further- more, apart from the loans opportunities from the banks, the center also offers soft loans to members with little or no interest to further enhance member's potentials. Regarding the number of vocational training available for respondents in the center, respondents disclosed that there are about five vocational training programmes that the center had offered to members periodically.

A member revealed that:

“Yes, the center has over five vocational training programmes which have greatly enhanced members capabilities and livelihood opportunities”

Another member had this to say to buttress the view above:

“There is provision of vocational training, health and wellness activities, provision of soft loans etc. for members to benefit from.”

Conclusion

The establishment of the CEWOY CARA Foundation/Center was a welcome development that was meant to address the problem of poverty, lack of adequate income and a lack of health care opportunities for women, their children and the aged within Iloilo and its environs. The initiative has been seen to positively enhance livelihood opportunities for members as well as other women in the rural communities who have benefited immensely from the vocational training and empowerment programmes of the centre. This effort has also reduced gender disparities in the areas and afforded both male and female have equal livelihood opportunities and career enhancement potentials which has yield positive results for the women.

It has been discovered that through the establishment of the center and it renewed effort to improve livelihood potentials for women, a number of banks specifically Catland Micro Finance Bank and Bank of Industry now have confidence in the women by giving them loans to further boost their vocation and business. The opportunity for loan has significantly improved the opportunities for improved livelihood for female members. Unfortunately, it has been observed that like so many other Civil Society Organizations, the CEWOY CARA Foundation gets little or no support from government for all its numerous programmes coupled with the fact that a major challenge for the center is finance. Money is required for the center to meet the needs of members.

At this stage, it is also important that government addresses the need to support civil society organizations that are positively touching the lives of people. For example, government should set up vocational training centers in rural areas particularly for women and assist them with start capital This will be a significant step towards achieving gender equality. For women to achieve their full potentials, national and state government needs to recognize and set up gender equality policies that will cater for the specific needs of women. This would reduce the burden of care giving on women and enable them to have improved livelihood potentials.

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