

# Ethics and social responsibility in higher education organizations: A review of scientific literature 2017-2021

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## Abstract

The objective of this research was focused on the theoretical analysis of sources of scientific information. For this purpose, a review of the longitudinal scientific literature of the concepts of ethics and social responsibility from 2017 to 2021 was carried out, suggesting an orientation of the definitions, in time of pandemic. The study was guided by the new alternatives, trends and current preferences due to the dynamic scenarios in contrast to the changes that unify the different terms derived from the concepts of the study variables. The methodology was based on a search of articles published in the Scopus and Science Direct databases. The approach applied made it possible to integrate the follow-up and research that facilitated obtaining 498 articles. Eligibility criteria were applied to the total of these documents, leaving 15 effective articles for the study. The countries from which the final articles were obtained were: United Kingdom, Switzerland, United States and the Netherlands. The results show that there is a close relationship between ethics and social responsibility. It is concluded from the study that there are options for improvement in higher education organizations in order to positively influence society with professionals with solid values and morals.

**Keyword:** Ethics; social responsibility; moral education

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## 1. Introduction

Internationally, universities are immersed in the application of ethics and social responsibility as a basis for educational management indicators in higher education organizations.

Institutional ethics highlights the limits to the ability of the application of moral education to access the moral complexity implemented in companies around the world (Jauernig, Uhl and Valentinov, 2021).

Morality in the current society is guided by formal institutions in the conduct of individuals, thus institutional ethics emphasizes the limits to the ability on the basis of traditional morality to access the complexity of ethical practice (Jauernig, et al, 2021)

It is important to point out that probably many elements linked to the term ethics have been written and researched, and currently it continues to have a very important impact on companies. The topic continues to be of interest among researchers, as it is highly relevant for educational entities such as universities in aspects aligned with social responsibility.

In the educational scenario, social responsibility starts from the referent of the social approach given to educational organizations facing the great moral and social commitment starting from the basis of development and changes in the economic order in current times. The society guides the communities that interrelate in the environment called company, society, State and implicit risks, which would also lead to see the ethical dimensions from other perspectives, in addition to the own capacities of university students as an important part for the insertion in societies

with responsibility and ethics (UNESCO, 1998).

The notion of responsibility worldwide is very complex, multidimensional, and evolving, as well as changing, it is related to many similar definitions that have evolved over the years, varying according to geographical areas, and it was first envisioned more than 70 years ago. It was born in the charitable organizations of merchants and industrialists, reaching up to the present day, with many definitions that link social benefits as part of the success of organizations oriented to give a better quality of life to the members of the society with the slogan of a constant corporate responsibility (Ziogas y Metaxas, 2021).

Social Responsibility and ethics are closely related, however, every action that has an impact on higher education organizations such as universities, as well as events that occur outside the campus, must be analyzed, for which it is important to apply the principles, norms and values. It is essential that the university takes a role of brilliant protagonist founded on social support, with the commitment to create new knowledge in order to improve and positively influence society by generating professionals with conscience, morals and values.

The proposal of education guided by sustainable development and social responsibility in universities enters with renewed airs as the most important construct to improve society based on ethics. It is oriented in the good practices in the university campus, to guide the intention to orient in the practical field and to innovate with strategies of constant

changes in favor of improving and overcoming aspects such as the climatic impacts, deterioration of the environment, waste management for recycling, with a mixture of actions guided to the new generation integrating teachers, students and administrative personnel of the universities with the commitment to achieve the development of multitasking integrating diverse areas in the daily process (Olarte y Ríos, 2015).

The Social Responsibility guides the strategies applying the position of ethics with morals oriented to the intelligence of each individual that conforms the organizations, having the human capital as stars within a changing society and culture; however, a constant problem arises, due to the fact that people who act with a high level of ethics and morals are often beaten, isolated and criticized by social, educational and organizational factors in the midst of a society that would be in constant search to create awareness regarding the development of social responsibility with ethics within the educational organizations at a higher level.

The literature would show the importance of constant training of institutional policies based on ethical standards with a high level of solid values that would better guide the members of the organization. Factors such as morality, dignity, integrity and honesty, would guide in the good application of the sources of institutional models that have already implemented this style, which would propose a change in the type of teaching in universities with the integration of high-impact academic activities articulated with the disciplines taught to improve the organizational culture thereby obtaining a good overall performance, according to Barth, et al. (2014).

The new approach will allow reflection to build the bases with new

regulations based on current trends with concepts to carry out more actions that give a 360 degree turn with knowledge, conviction and leadership, combining actions to discover new approaches with the positioning in the academic world from the development of university curricula linked to practical courses to articulate the management of social responsibility and ethics in career courses in universities with the main objective of training people with integral values that contribute to society indicators based on sustainable economic development.

The University would present proposals to improve self-sustainable projection approaches to local governments linked to the improvement of the quality of life with the university extension articulated with training activities in various educational centers and private companies. The central function would be to guide the complete training for the generation of knowledge, decisions and interactions within the local community with possible management linked to a real experience with the requirement of social responsibility and ethics.

The objective of the research was to describe the various terminologies of implementation of Social Responsibility and ethics in higher education organizations between the years 2017 to 2021, from a review of the scientific literature that generates a positive impact on their management.

## **2. Methodological considerations of the research**

The type of study is a review of the scientific literature based on the adaptation of the methodology known as PRISMA [Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses] (Urrútia and

Bonfill, 2010).

The research question established to conduct the methodological process was the following: what are the benefits of ethics and social responsibility in higher level educational organizations between the years 2017 to 2021 described in the scientific literature?

The basis of the methodology lies in the review of scientific literature as a strategy to analyze the information that arises from the fact of knowing the results of the research. The selection of the literature and the filtering of articles according to the quality and transparency of the research with this profile, under the pillars of the scientific method, results in a comprehensive and systematized research process.

Therefore, methodologies are proposed to define the various ranking processes, in addition to the proper selection of scientific literature, considering primarily the criteria of quality, content, novelty and assertiveness to achieve a good decrease in biases during the process of choosing important research articles, taking into account the content of the reviews so that the information read and extracted from the basic guidelines of the nature and characteristics and the importance of the variables of the study could be captured. With this, it could be synthesized that the findings are oriented according to the degree of impact of the research to adopt the appropriate suggestions in relation to the question of the origin of the research raised (Urrútia, et al, 2010).

### **3. Selection of the study**

The research work has been oriented to analyze the concepts of ethics and social responsibility in the scientific literature from a perspective of selection of the study for the

elaboration of the sources of information. A review of the last five years on studies related to research on ethics and social responsibility in universities was carried out.

The following inclusion criteria were considered for the selection process:

a.- At the beginning, the search for sources of research information was carried out; therefore, it was considered prudent to respect the title and field of action of the topic proposed in the research process. Keywords were taken into account to cover a broad aspect of the topic: ethics, social responsibility; and moral education. Improving with processes optimal results with respect to the final selective search.

b.- The research articles on the study variables in the global context are in digital version (DOID) and in English, Spanish and Portuguese. As for information resources, the databases consulted were Scopus and Science Direct. This search yielded 498 scientific articles related to the study variables. Of these, 15 articles were selected, and the sample consisted of scientific articles related to ethics and social responsibility.

c.- The period of publication will be from 2017 to 2021, with the objective of identifying the main ethical and social responsibility issues applied to higher education organizations in the last five years, and orienting the sources to analyze the issue raised in the research problem.

d.- Likewise, studies referring to variables in non-corporate contexts in relation to higher education organizations were excluded.

e.- Items with permitted and public access in the Scopus and Science Direct search portal.

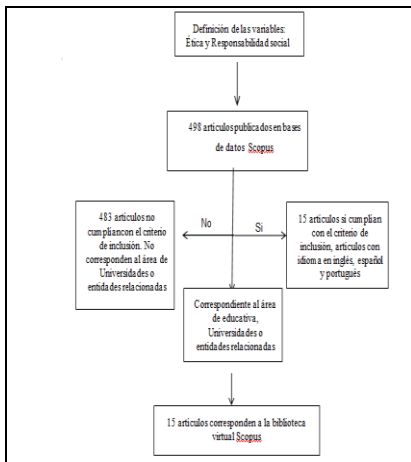
In the selection of the Scopus and Science Direct databases, the descriptors with the following terms in relation to the research question accompanied by the pre-established combination, with the help of the Boolean operators AND and OR according to detail, were considered in the selection of the databases:

- In English:

(KEY (*ethics*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("*Moral development*") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (*moral*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("*Social responsibility*") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("*education Social*") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("*social training*") )

- In Spanish:

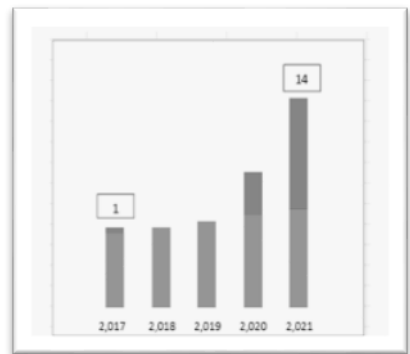
(CLAVE (*ética*) O TÍTULO-ABS-CLAVE ("*Desarrollo moral*") O TÍTULO-ABS-CLAVE (*moral*) Y TÍTULO-ABS-CLAVE ("*Responsabilidad social*") O TÍTULO-ABS-CLAVE ("*educación Social*") O TÍTULO-ABS-KEY ("*formación social*") )



**Figure 1:** Flowchart of the procedure for search and selection of document information

In the analysis process, Figure 1 shows the selection of the articles reviewed, the total corresponding to the area related to higher education organizations and associated companies, the records chosen were 15 scientific articles from high impact databases.

In the analysis regarding the period of publications, recorded in Figure 2, they indicate that they start with one article in the year 2017, and 14 articles in the year 2021. Indicating that 100% of the authors of the articles reviewed are directly related to the study variables.

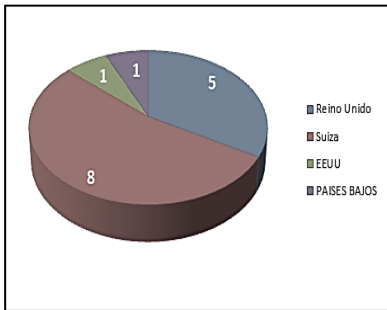


**Figure 2:** Number of scientific articles by year of publication

## 4. Results

The research was carried out in accordance with research ethics and 15 scientific articles were collected in the process of selection, review and filtering. In the context of the ordering, the review was oriented towards the The evaluation of geographical location shows that Switzerland is the country with the highest

number of related publications, with eight publications. It is followed by the United Kingdom with five publications, followed



**Figure 3:** Number of scientific articles by country of origin

Choosing articles from different indexed journals from over the years 2017-2021 gives us an alternative longitudinal and orderly assessment regarding the definitions of the Study Variables as part of the orderly mink process executed.

The tool used was the manual filtering

by the United States and the Netherlands with one publication each.

of the titles, abstracts, introduction, and keywords of the research articles selected according to the proposal made in the review of the scientific literature.

After reading the 498 articles, the final sample of 15 scientific articles was selected for acceptance according to the inclusion criteria applied in the study. Therefore, it was decided that the unit of analysis would be each article in order to detail in an orderly and analyzed way each definition based on the study variables presented from the most recent to the oldest study (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Detail of the terms used in the search for information

Terms used to identify the concept of "ethics and social responsibility".	
Ethics	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Ethics	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Ethics and Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative

Ethics and Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility.	Educational companies - Universities
Social responsibility.	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Educational companies - Universities
Ethics	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative
Social responsibility	Partner companies and organizations - collaborative

Source: Own elaboration.

The collection of the articles had the beginning at the end of the year 2017 until the first quarter of the year 2021. As evidenced, articles from public source scientific literature in the Scopus and Science Direct databases were applied.

The articles were placed in groups with iii. direct relation to the terminology of the variables studied. Likewise, the articles were ordered according to the authors who applied similar terms in accordance with the objective and scope of the iv. research.

For data coding, we proceeded to complement the analysis of the contents of the v. scientific articles by performing a more complete and orderly data extraction.

After the extraction of the most striking articles, the coding of the filtered articles was carried out. The articles were coded according to the characteristics of the publications with details such as: author(s) of the article, title, methodology, country, year of publication, base data and result (Table 2)

This literature review was carried out with the purpose of providing five important contributions to the specialists in the researched topic described below:

- i. i. A detailed and orderly compilation of definitions of ethics and social responsibility with key words and current search sources was provided.
- ii. ii. Terms were applied when referring to the

method of reviews with a collaborative analysis with the contributions of the most respectable authors integrating the works executed by them from different fields in business environments.

iii. The sample of 15 scientific articles was found by grouping the elements with the most important characteristics according to the study variables.

iv. A list of innovative concepts supported by the various authors was presented in accordance with the literature read.

Suggestions were made for the methodology based on the concepts of the study variables that had already been carried out in several recent research studies, but were not applied with the proposed search style.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

As a result of the analysis performed, it was concluded that there would be evidence supported in the 15 articles in the databases of high impact indexed journals such as Scopus and Science Direct (Table 2), according to the premise of the Prisma method for the execution of the review of scientific literature with formal concepts regarding ethics and social responsibility in the context of pandemic which

would be permanently adapting, admitting based on the dynamic character of the current environment, since the evolution and development of the environment added to the current difficulties required a latent update of the data, sources of information with current aspects that would be articulated in harmony with the variables of study.

Scholars based on the analysis of ethics would usually agree that companies in general are faced with a wide range of possible social expectations that seek to attempt to morally satisfy society through various means of communication that direct social responsibility policies and ambitions towards corporate success, i.e., they are directed to the interest of the sector involved (Jauernig, Uhl, & Valentinov, 2021).

The strong need to develop a Social Responsibility (SR) with ethical implementation starts from the point of view of business activity, thereby opening a wide tray of options for the categorization of existing quantitative indicators with the evaluation method covering the multidimensional notion. Through the new model, which combines quantitative indicators, is used to measure external and internal factors during the period from 2009 to 2016 that would be reflected in the policies aimed at the implementation of ethics in companies, with the high degree of understanding of moral obligations in integral (Ziogas and Metaxas, 2021).

The directional attention of deontology and conceptualism frames normative ethics based on the philosophy of the study that would empirically test a theoretical model of probable hypocrisy in organizations that is perceived with two important causalities: the individual moral philosophy of deontology and the consequence of unsuitable acts in contemporary society (Shim and Kim, 2017).

A remarkable consequence of developing the analysis of actions associated with responsibility within organizations where individuals would probably still retain values for the development of responsibility with a prospective of being future citizens with high moral standards in order to pressure companies in states, regions and cities to take very serious measures to address the moral crisis in pandemic

environment and even to attribute Social Responsibility (SR) with some prospective directed to individuals in order to achieve the expected gradual change (Piazza, 2021).

Therefore, in the literature review conducted, the experts affirm that the topic focuses on the challenges guided to be able to meet the objective of applying ethics and social responsibility in organizations, thus achieving a better society with positive management indicators. With the creation of a synergy through a relationship of the variables of study facing external factors such as the pandemic and the current consequences.

In order to make a firm commitment between the parties involved in the application of the study variables to achieve a good performance and execution of the common objectives would close the gaps that until today would remain latent being very difficult to remedy individually causing the collaborative work.

The realization of the study has been very profitable at a personal and organizational level to be able to help stop immoral acts or lack of ethics, posed the constant challenge with the good practices of ethics and social responsibility in organizations with educational profile, in view of this, trends of thoughts are born because many questions and challenges that shake the foundations of good habits arise due to constant change.

Therefore, it is through good practice, with experiential guides in model companies is the best tool for students and members of universities to learn by being present, open and committed to face any positive or negative factor that may occur.

Thus, through the practice in the companies it would be projected in the future with the collaborators who would be individuals with self-awareness so that they can face the new challenges with acceptance and realism also seeing those probable limitations, adapting to the environment with ethics and social responsibility.

Likewise, the relationship of the objective of the research could be evidenced, supported in

the diverse studies evaluated on ethics and social responsibility which would have a high influence with very good significance in the organizations and could have the impact in different situations and scopes.

Finally, the definitions of the variables have established that if they are closely related to the activities of the organizations, emphasizing in the context of higher education organizations, universities and in all the personnel involved, there is a link directly associated with morals and values, which would fulfill the object of the research.

**Table 2**

List of selected scientific articles

Author	Title	Methodology	Country	Year	DATA BASE	Result
Johanna Jauerniga, Matthias Uhlb and Vladislav Valentinov a	The ethics of business hypocrisy: an experimental approach.	Qualitative Experimental	United Kingdom	2021	Science Direct	The moral and ethical evaluation of different behaviors by agent type. Post-hoc tests revealed that the different behaviors were evaluated significantly differently across all conditions.
Loannis Ziogas and Theodore Metaxas	Corporate social responsibility in Southern Europe during the financial crisis and its relation to the financial performance of Greek companies	Qualitative	United Kingdom	2021	Scopus	Social responsibility should be analyzed specifically on the aspect and dimension examined, as it can vary according to external factors. The adoption of good practices and methods of CSR implementation results in political-financial systems with optimal social and cultural characteristics integrated into CSR with emerging societies.
KyuJin SHIM and Jeong-nam KIM	The impacts of ethical philosophy on the perception of corporate hypocrisy and communication intentions towards CSR.	Experimental	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	The study tested a structural model of corporate hypocrisy as a mediator between personal ethics orientations i.e. poses a viewpoint based on deontological and orientation regarding the intention to share opinions, the research was developed after including all hypothetical paths among the variables:
Alessandro Piazza	Collective responsibility in the cooperative governance of climate change	Qualitative Descriptive	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	Climate change is important as long as personal conduct is based on the pillar of morality and individual social responsibility, generating a new conception of morality based on our co-responsibility to prevent factors that impact on the variables under study.

Paulina Guerrero and Arturo Luque	Social responsibility, sustainability and public policy: lessons from debris management after the Manabí earthquake in Ecuador	Qualitative Descriptive	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	Corporate social responsibility (CSR), public policies, and sustainability are intertwined at various levels and have a global impact due to their implications and various relationships that impact society. The gaps in crisis management were highlighted, probably generated by the lack of ethics and social responsibility in various processes that are governed to achieve public welfare in general.
Matteo Rossi, Giuseppe Festa Salim Chouaibi Monica Fait and Armando Papa	The effects of business ethics and corporate social responsibility on the voluntary disclosure of intellectual capital.	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	United Kingdom	2021	Scopus	The results have revealed that the adoption of an ethical and socially responsible approach is positively associated with the extent of DV on CI. This finding may help mitigate information asymmetry and conflict of interest that may arise with corporate partners. Therefore, IC-VD may constitute a test of ethical and socially responsible behaviors.
Pyounggu Baek and Taesung Kim	Socially responsible human resources in action: learning from companies included in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index 2018/2019.	Qualitative Descriptive	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	The research offers the opportunity to undertake future research used for organizational performance and the behavior of the collaborators of the organizations with this could prove the benefits and would be a solid contribution to the labor commitment of the collaborators. However, the absence of contextual variety was observed, of these previous studies that still would not be sufficiently lush, therefore the business mentality should have theoretical bases with previous studies that give support to the analysis of the influence of CSR in various items but for the absence of the commitment of employees is that the so-called boycott would occur that would affect customers affecting the image and trust of organizations.
Byung Jik, Min Jik and Tae Hyun	The power of ethical leadership": the influence of corporate social responsibility on creativity, the mediating role of psychological safety and moderation...	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	Ethics has a direct influence on CSR variants. Ethical leadership could be improved with respect to decision making with values, and it is suggested that psychological tests could be applied to collaborators as an important guide to detail the relationship between CSR and ethics with the role of leadership in the organization's processes. This could be positively moderated with respect to the study variables, emphasizing the valorization of the role of the attitude with ethical leadership that affect CSR activities in

Hannah Jun and Seoyoung Moon	An analysis of the integration of sustainability into business school curricula: evidence from Korea.	Qualitative Descriptive	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	an appropriate way.  The results offered a general progress regarding sustainability in business schools, focused on the application of ethics with this could develop curricula linked to social responsibility in a uniform way, however, many limitations could be observed, therefore it is suggested that the results obtained from the learning with attitudes based on values for a high level of awareness guided in ethics and sustainable responsibility.
Antoaneta Vărzaru, George Bocean and Marian Nicolescu	Rethinking corporate responsibility and sustainability in light of economic performance.	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	Ethics is a key pillar for the good management of top management in corporations with three dimensions of responsibility, activities and moral conscience. Corporate responsibility must be supported by the performance based on values oriented for the best decision making, therefore the processes, policies, rules and regulations supported by the area of finance would be fulfilled by applying the current available data. The research was transversal based on the application of the variables of study being close to the feasibility of the execution of future research.
Mahbobeh Mohammadi , Mehdi Bagheri , Parivash Jafari and Leila Bazrafkan	Challenges and motivational facilitators of social responsibility in medical students at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences: a qualitative study.	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	Netherlands	2021	Scopus	The result of the investigation based the study on the management oriented to improve the application of the policies for their administration towards the students, likewise the results could be oriented in the correct planning of the university studies managing to find the best programs that adjust to the sustainable responsibility with values which would generate a positive impact in the academic formation with theoretical and practical foundation generating in the students with good effects in the early horizon.
Mustafa Changar and Tarik Atan	The role of transformational and transactional leadership approaches in environmental and ethical aspects of CSR.	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	Switzerland	2021	Scopus	The study was intended to demonstrate that the implementation of transactional leadership positively influences environmental CSR based on ethics. The study hypotheses in contrast to the literature show that among the study variables there is an influence with CSR activities. Likewise, the study was applied to students and employees of businesses with entrepreneurship guided by the theme of transactional leadership, demonstrating the impact on sustainable CSR.
Hyemi Shin, Charles	The moral rationality of	Quantitative	United States	2021	Scopus	The research was applied to the professionals of the companies regarding the

Cho, Marion Brivot, and Jean Gond	discourses of professionalism: the case of corporate social responsibility practitioners in South Korea.	Quasi-Experimental	United Kingdom			application of CSR, who make decisions every day combining innovation and values with a high level of morality, but at the same level, there is a need to generate awareness to act ethically in the dynamic and varied range of companies, so each person has their own identity guided in the decision to do the right thing according to civic values to generate a society with CSR.
Yibin Li, Guiqing Zhang and Longjun Liu	Corporate Social Responsibility Platform and Employee Innovation Performance: A cross-layered study mediated by employee entrepreneurship.	Quantitative Quasi-Experimental	United Kingdom	2021	Scopus	The research has been oriented on the basis of morally oriented behavior. The study had revealed that employees with social conscience act positively in relation to social responsibility and entrepreneurship, so today's organizations should apply CSR as part of the indicators that cause an improvement in their management and organizational image, cultivating ethics and values with a high degree of morality that would correspond to the quality standards with values associated with sincere labor demand and supply, encouraging the launching of new enterprises with CSR, improving the community and its environment.
Johan Roos	Practical wisdom: making and teaching the case for governance for sustainability	Qualitative Descriptive	United Kingdom	2017	Science Direct	The research would come to guide and give impetus to education with respect to business schools in universities, which will be adapted to the new in favor of global trends with it would be accredited. While I am certain that the processes with ethics and social responsibility would be complementary, in the future they would become the basis of academic quality to be able to have standards according to the profile of important companies around the world, generating social awareness.

Source: Databases (Scopus and ScienceDirect)

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