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Organizational Citizenship Behavior : A Review of Literature

Priya Chandel* **Dr. Sangeeta Jain****

*Junior Research Fellow, Institute of Management Studies, DAVV, Indore (M.P.) INDIA
** Professor, Institute of Management Studies, DAVV, Indore (M.P.) INDIA

Abstract: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) has become a central topic in organizational behavior and human resource management, focusing on voluntary employee actions that go beyond formal job requirements to improve organizational effectiveness. OCB research has grown to encompass multiple dimensions, including employee attitudes, leadership, organizational justice, support, culture, and engagement. Evidence shows that factors such as job satisfaction, commitment, trust, and psychological empowerment are strongly associated with OCB, which, in turn, contributes to individual performance, team effectiveness, and overall organizational outcomes.

However, recent research has raised concerns about the potential downsides of OCB, such as stress, pressure, and citizenship fatigue, indicating that the benefits are not universal. The scope of OCB research has broadened to include contexts such as higher education, public organizations, digital workplaces, and sustainability. Persistent research gaps include conceptual ambiguity, measurement issues, the impact of digitalization, cross-cultural differences and the negative aspects of OCB. The review concludes that future research should adopt a balanced and contextualized approach, considering both organizational advantages and the potential costs to employees.

Keywords: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, OCB, Organizational Behavior, Employee Engagement, Human Resource Management.

Introduction - Organizations are complex social systems in which employee performance extends beyond the completion of formally assigned work. Although job descriptions specify employees' responsibilities, organizations also depend on voluntary behaviors such as helping colleagues, sharing information, supporting organizational initiatives, cooperating with others, participating in organizational activities, and maintaining a positive attitude during difficult situations. These behaviors may not always be explicitly included in formal job descriptions; however, they can substantially contribute to organizational functioning. Such voluntary contributions are generally described as Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

The importance of OCB arises from the recognition that formal organizational systems cannot prescribe every behavior necessary for effective functioning in organizations. Katz (1964) argued that organizations require employees to engage in spontaneous and cooperative behavior beyond formal role requirements. In complex work environments, employees must voluntarily assist one another, communicate information, adapt to unexpected circumstances, and demonstrate concern for collective objectives.

Smith et al. (1983) provided one of the earliest empirical foundations for the OCB. Their research examined the behaviors that employees perform voluntarily to support organizational functioning. Subsequently, Organ (1988) developed the concept more systematically through his influential work,Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome. Organ conceptualized OCB as discretionary individual behavior that is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system but contributes to effective organizational functioning.

This concept has subsequently developed considerably. Organ's (1988) conceptualization included five dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. Williams and Anderson (1991) subsequently distinguished between OCB directed towards individuals (OCB-I) and OCB directed towards the organization (OCB-O). Other scholars have examined citizenship behavior alongside related concepts, such as contextual performance, prosocial behavior, extra-role behavior, and organizational spontaneity.

The extensive development of the field is demonstrated by Podsakoff et al. 's (2000) review, which examined the theoretical and empirical literature on OCB and identified numerous antecedents and consequences. LePine et al. (2002) subsequently conducted a meta-analysis and found substantial relationships among several OCB dimensions,

raising questions concerning whether the dimensions are as distinct as they were originally proposed.

The growing literature demonstrates that OCB remains relevant, but the context in which citizenship behavior occurs is changing. Employees now work in hybrid, remote, digital, project-based, and gig economy environments. Organizations increasingly rely on employee engagement, knowledge sharing, adaptability, collaboration, and voluntary support. Simultaneously, scholars have begun to question whether OCB is always positive.

Therefore, the purpose of the present review is not merely to describe OCB but to examine how the concept has evolved, what factors influence it, what outcomes it produces, and what gaps remain in the contemporary research.

Objectives of the study: This review was guided by three objectives.

1. To examine the conceptual development and evolution of Organizational Citizenship Behavior.
2. To identify the major dimensions and theoretical perspectives associated with OCB,
3. To synthesize the major antecedents and consequences of Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Review Methodology: This study uses a narrative and critical literature review method, aiming to combine existing and developing research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior rather than conducting a statistical meta-analysis. The article includes the basic literature that laid the foundation for the OCB construct, as well as more recent research that shows what has happened recently. To identify important studies, systematic reviews, and empirical work, consideration was given to major databases and scholarly sources were considered. Special attention was paid to studies that looked at conceptualization, dimensions, antecedents, consequences, leadership, organizational justice, employee engagement, organizational support, employee well-being, and emerging types of citizenship behavior.

The review was organized thematically into the following sections:

1. conceptualization and evolution of OCB.
2. dimensions of OCB;
3. theoretical foundations.
4. antecedents of OCB;
5. consequences of OCB;
6. contemporary research themes.

The review includes basic studies together with some of the research that was published between 2015 and 2026, and the more recent literature is especially helpful in showing how OCB research is addressing the changes in work environments and the new organizational issues that have arisen.

Conceptualization and Evolution of OCB

1. Early foundations: The origins of OCB can be linked to Katz (1964), who maintained that organizations need behaviorsthat go beyond the formal prescriptions of role. Because formal rules cannot foresee every situation that employees encounter, organizational effectiveness partially relies on employees'willingness to cooperate, help one another, and contribute voluntarily.

Thisis of great importance because it questions the limited view of performance. Employees cannot be judged based on the completion of formal tasks alone. Additionally, the social environment in which tasks are performedaffects the outcomes of the organization.

2. The contribution of Smith, Organ, and Near: In 1983, Smith et al. provided an empirical foundation for the OCB construct, demonstrating that employees engage in discretionary actions that support organizational functioning. Their contributions laid the groundwork for understanding citizenship behavior as a separate field of organizational research.

3. Organ's conceptualization: Organ (1988) considerably extended the construct by defining OCB as behavior that is not directly or explicitly acknowledged by the formal reward system but yet contributes to organizational effectiveness.

This conceptualization emphasizes three important features.

1. Discretionarybehavior exists in that employees have some degree of choice as to whether or not to carry out the behavior.
2. The behavior associated with the extra-role nature goes beyond the job's formal requirements.
3. Organizationsbenefit from this behavior because it helps them to function.

It has become increasingly difficult to maintain the distinction between in-role and extra-role behavior since organizations have become more team-oriented and flexible, causing actions that were previously seen as extra-role to turn into expected parts of performance.

Therefore, the Organ demanded greater conceptual clarity in research on OCB.

4. OCB-I and OCB-O: Williams and Anderson in 1991 presented another significant classification by differentiating between employee organizational behavior directed at individuals and that directed at the organization.

OCB-I involves helpingco-workers, assisting colleagues, and supporting employees.

OCB-O involves behaviors such as adhering to organizational procedures, showing punctuality, participating in organizational activities, and guarding organizational resources.

The value of this classification lies in the fact that it acknowledges that citizenship behavior can have different objects.

Dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organ's (1988) framework specifies five dimensions.

1. Altruism: Altruism refers to the voluntary provision of assistance to one's colleagues. Employees may offer

support in resolving work-related problems, assisting new employees, sharing knowledge, or providing help during periods of increased workload.

Altruism enhances organizational effectiveness by fostering cooperation and reducing interpersonal conflict.

2. Conscientiousness: Conscientiousness is demonstrated through behaviors that exceed basic organizational requirements. Examples include consistent punctuality, responsible meeting attendance, adherence to organizational procedures, and prudent use of organizational resources.

3. Sportsmanship: Sportsmanship is characterized by employees' willingness to tolerate inconvenience or challenging organizational conditions without excessive complaints.

This dimension is particularly valuable during periods of organizational change.

4. Courtesy: Courtesy encompasses actions that are intended to prevent interpersonal difficulties. Employees demonstrate courtesy by sharing relevant information, consulting colleagues prior to actions that may affect them, and exhibiting consideration for others.

5. Civic virtue: It involves active and responsible participation in the governance of the organization. Employees who exhibit civic virtue remain informed about organizational developments, participate in meetings, offer suggestions, and demonstrate concern for organizational interests.

Theoretical Foundations of OCB

1. Social Exchange Theory: Social Exchange Theory is frequently applied in OCB research, emphasizing reciprocity;employees who receive favorable treatment from supervisors or organizations feel compelled to reciprocate their behavior. Organizational support, fairness, and recognition promote voluntary contributions, as demonstrated in a 2021 Taiwanese study that linked organizational justice, trust, and supervisor-subordinate relationships to OCB.

2. Organizational Support Theory: This theory focuses on employees' perceptions that the organization values their contributions and well-being of its employees. Strong perceived support encourages citizenship behavior, although a 2020 study found it more strongly linked to organizational commitment, suggesting complex pathways to OCB.

3. Organizational Justice Theory: Organizational Justice Theory posits that perceptions of fairnessacross distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational domainsinfluence attitudes and behaviors. Research, including Al-ali et al. (2019), consistently finds that justice, particularly interpersonal justice, predicts OCB.

4. Social Identity Theory: Social Identity Theory suggests that employees who closely identify with their organization are more likely to engage in behaviors that support organizational goals.

5. Conservation of Resources Theory: Conservation of Resources Theory highlights that OCB requires time and energy, and when resources are depleted, excessive OCB can result in fatigue. Bolino et al. (2015) found that support and team dynamics moderate the relationship between OCB and organizational citizenship fatigue.

Antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

1. Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is a key predictor of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Organ's (1995) meta-analysis found that positive job attitudes, including satisfaction, perceived fairness, commitment, and leader support, reliably predict OCB. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to assist their colleagues and contribute to organizational effectiveness.

2. Organizational Commitment: Employees with strong organizational commitment are more likely to exceed formal job requirements because they identify with organizational goals. Commitment also mediates the relationship between organizational factors and OCB, as highlighted by Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2019).

3. Organizational Justice: Organizational justice, particularly perceptions of fairness, is a well-established antecedent to OCB. Employees who perceive fair treatment are more likely to engage in citizenship behaviors, although the impact varies by the type of justice and organizational context.

4. Perceived Organizational Support: When employees believe that the organization values their contributions and well-being, they are more inclined to reciprocate through OCB, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship.

5. Leadership: Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting OCB. Transformational, ethical, authentic, and servant leadership styles encourage citizenship behaviors by fostering trust, fairness, and shared objectives. Recent studies have confirmed the positive influence of various leadership styles on OCB.

6. Employee Engagement: Engaged employees who are psychologically connected and involved in their work are more likely to display OCB. Psychological empowerment—meaning competence, autonomy, and impact—also supports voluntary organizational contributions.

7. Organizational Culture: A organizational culture that emphasizes teamwork, trust, and cooperation nurtures OCB among employees.

8. Trust: Trust in supervisors and colleagues is fundamental for encouraging extra-role behavior. Employees are more willing to go above and beyond when they trust their leaders and their peers.

9. Personality: Traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness are linked to higher levels of OCB, although the organizational context can influence how these traits are expressed.

Consequences of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

1. **Individual Performance:** OCB can enhance individual performance by improving knowledge sharing, collaboration, and social support. However, excessive citizenship activities may detract from one's core job responsibilities.
2. **Team Performance:** OCB fosters assistance and cooperation, improving team coordination, information flow and interpersonal relationships. Podsakoff et al. (1997) highlighted the positive impact of OCB on workgroup performance.
3. **Organizational Performance:** OCB contributes to organizational effectiveness by reducing the need for managerial intervention, improving coordination and adaptability, and enhancing the organizational climate. This is particularly valuable in knowledge-intensive and service organizations, where cooperation and adaptability are essential for success. Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit OCB, which can further strengthen organizational attachment and performance.

Selected Literature Synthesis

The table 1 provides a selected literature synthesis for developing this review paper.

Table 1 (see in last page)

Contemporary Research Themes

1. **OCB and employee engagement:** Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) encompasses actions by employees that extend beyond formal job requirements and contribute to organizational effectiveness. Examples of OCB include assisting colleagues, demonstrating initiative, and adapting to organizational changes. Research indicates a strong association between employee engagement and OCB. Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit OCB becauseof their sense of connection with their work and organization. This increased discretionary effort fosters a positive work environment and supports the achievement of the organization's objectives.

The significance of the relationship between OCB and employee engagement has increased in recent years.

Dey (2023) examined OCB among employees in India's banking sector and identified a significant relationship between OCB and employee engagement. The study further demonstrated that conscientiousness was particularly stronglyassociated with engagement.

Kumar et al. (2023) extended this analysis to gig workers in India andinvestigated organizational commitment behavior as a mediating variable between employee engagement and productivity. Their findings indicate that engagement influences organizational commitment behavior, which subsequently impacts productivity.

These studies demonstrate that OCB is relevant beyond traditional employment contexts.

2. **OCB and organizational justice:** Justice is a central theme in the OCB literature.

Hasyim and Palupiningdyah (2021) looked at organizational justice, organizational commitment, LMX, and OCB among employees in Indonesia and found that LMX was important in explaining the relationship between justice and OCB.

A 2022 study also examined the relationship between organizational justice and OCB andidentified work engagement as a mediating factor.

The literature suggests that justice influences OCB primarily through psychological and relational mechanisms rather than solely through direct effects.

3. **OCB and leadership:** Leadership is still a Leadership remains a central focus of OCB research. into transformational, ethical, authentic, servant, inclusive, and self-sacrificial leadership styles.

Inclusive leadership Inclusive leadership has been associated with challenge-oriented OCB through the mediating roles of work engagement and an innovative organizational climate.p has also been connected with OCB via affective commitment.

Recent research on ethical leadership demonstrates that leaders can promote citizenship behavior by influencing employees' psychological resources. For example, a 2025 study examined ethical leadership in small- and medium-sized enterprises from both cognitive and affective perspectives.

6. **OCB in public organisations:** OCB in the public sector constitute a significant area of research.

De Geus et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review and argued that research on OCB in the public sector should incorporate concepts and characteristics that are unique to this context. They identified public leadership, bureaucratic red tape, public service motivation, cross-sectoral differences, and negative consequences as promising areas for future research.

7. **OCB in the gig economy:** Traditional OCB research typically assumes stable organizational relationships; however, the rise of gig work challenges this assumption, Kumar et al. (2023) investigated OCB among gig workers in India and demonstrated its relevance to productivity.Future research should examine whether workers with weaker organizational attachment differ in their motivations compared to traditional employees

The paradoxical effects of OCB : An increasing body of literature has explored whether observing co-workersengaging in OCB produces unintended consequences.

Toirova et al. (2026) investigate the paradoxical effects of coworker OCB. While coworker citizenship can inspire positive behaviors, this study also examined whether it may justify negative behaviors through mechanisms such as vicarious moral licensing.

This represents a significant conceptual advance, as OCB not only affects the individual employee but also establishes social norms and influences the behavior of other co-workers.

Thus, future OCB research should consider the

following:

Employee OCB → Coworker perceptions → Social norms → Subsequent employee behavior.

This shift reflects a transition from an individual-level perspective to a more social and multilevel understanding of the OCB**.**

OCB and Artificial Intelligence: Artificial intelligence is an emerging research area.

Gupta et al. (2026) explored the prediction of employees' OCB using artificial intelligence. Their study demonstrated that machine learning methods can analyze employee behavior beyond traditional statistical techniques. AI may affect OCB in two main ways:

First, AI can alter the nature of citizen behavior. Employees may help co-workers use AI systems, share prompts, create digital resources, or support technology adoption.

Second, AI may change the way OCB is measured. Organizations can use digital traces, collaboration platforms, and analytics to better understand employee behavior.

However, using AI to predict employee citizenship raises important ethical concerns regarding privacy, surveillance, fairness, and autonomy.

Research Gaps: Despite extensive research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), several important gaps persist. Conceptual ambiguity remains, as OCB is frequently conflated with related constructs such as contextual performance, extra-role behavior, prosocial behavior and organizational spontaneity. Clearer distinctions between these concepts are needed in future studies. Measurement inconsistency also poses a challenge, with varying dimensions and scales across studieshindering the direct comparison of findings. The adoption of standardized measurement approaches would strengthen this field.

Additionally, the predominant reliance on cross-sectional research designs limits the ability to assess the causality between antecedents such as job satisfaction, commitment, engagement, leadership, and changes in OCB over time. Longitudinal studies are required to address this issue. The literature also lacks sufficient cross-cultural comparisons, despite evidence that OCB may differ across cultural contexts, such as between collectivist and individualist societies.

Another significant gap is the limited focus on employee well-being, as most research has centered on organizational outcomes rather than examining the potential negative effects of OCB, such as stress, burnout, and work-family conflict. The issue of citizenship pressure, where OCB becomes expected rather than voluntary, warrants further exploration to distinguish genuine discretionary behavior from perceived obligations. Employee experience is emerging as a potential antecedent of OCB, and future research could investigate the links between employee experience, engagement, OCB, and organizational effectiveness, integrating these insights into contemporary HR practices.

Moreover, higher education remains an under-researched context for OCB, highlighting the need for studies on faculty and staff citizenship behaviors and their relationship with institutional effectiveness. As digital and hybrid work environments become more prevalent, there is a need to reassess whether existing OCB dimensions adequately capture the new forms of workplace citizenship. Finally, multilevel research is limited; future studies should explore how individual OCB aggregates influence team dynamics, organizational climate, and overall organizational performance.

Future Research Scope: Building on the reviewed literature, several future research directions are recommended to advance the understanding of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). First, further studies should explore the relationship between employee experience and OCB, examining whether employee experience predicts OCB and whether employee engagement serves as a mediator in this relationship. The role of spiritual intelligence as a potential antecedent of OCB also warrants investigation, particularly in organizations that prioritize values, meaning, ethics, and purpose. Future research should assess whether spiritual intelligence influences OCB directly or indirectly through factors such as employee engagement, organizational commitment, or ethical orientation.

Additionally, there is a need for research on OCB in higher education, focusing on citizenship behaviors among faculty and academic administrators. As workplaces increasingly integrate artificial intelligence, examining the impact of AI on helping behavior, knowledge sharing, cooperation, and voluntary contributions is essential. The phenomenon of citizenship fatigue should be further investigated, particularly the moderators that may protect employees from its negative effects, such as organizational support, psychological resources, autonomy, and supportive leadership.

Cross-cultural studies comparing OCB across different countries and cultural contexts, including India, China, the United States, and Europe, can provide valuable theoretical insights. The intersection of OCB and sustainability, particularly in the context of environmental citizenship behavior, represents a promising area for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine how citizenship behaviors evolve as employees become more familiar with the organizational culture and relationships. Additionally, research utilizing multilevel models should investigate the progression from individual-level OCB to outcomes at the team and organizational levels. Finally, future studies should assess whether the relationship between OCB and employee well-being is linear, curvilinear, or context-dependent to better understand its impact on employees.

Discussion: This review demonstrates that organizational

citizenship behavior (OCB) has developed from a narrowly defined concept of voluntary extra-role behavior to a broad field within organizational research.

The existing literature indicates that employees contribute to organizational functioning in ways that are not fully captured by formal job descriptions. Organ's (1988) framework provided an initial basis for understanding these behaviors, which subsequent research expanded through the introduction of the OCB-I (individual-directed) and OCB-O (organization-directed) dimensions.

The literature highlights the significance of employee attitudes, consistently linking job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational justice, and perceived organizational support to citizenship behavior. Social Exchange Theory largely explains these associations, as employees who perceive favorable treatment often feel obligated to reciprocate through positive behaviors.

Leadership constitutes a major area of inquiry, with studies examining transformational, ethical, authentic, servant, and inclusive leadership concerning OCB. Leadership influences citizenship behavior by shaping trust, perceptions of fairness, motivation, engagement, and organizational identification.

Employee engagement has emerged as a significant factor. Engaged employees are more likely to exceed their formal job requirements. Empirical studies in Indian service organizations and the banking sector confirm the association between eRecent research has extended the study of OCB to new contexts, including public organizations, the gig economy, and digitally enabled workplaces that are enabled by digital technology.

The traditional assumption that increased citizenship behavior is universally beneficial is now under greater scrutiny. Excessive citizenship demands may lead to employee fatigue, stress, and work-family conflict due to finite personal resources.

The emergence of concepts such as citizenship pressure and citizenship fatigue suggests that organizations should avoid indiscriminately maximizing OCB. Instead, they should foster environments where citizenship behavioris both voluntary and sustainable.

This distinction has significant implications for management practices. Managers should recognize voluntary employee contributions without converting them into informal-performance expectations. Additionally, organizations must ensure that employees who engage in discretionary behaviors are not systematically assigned heavier workloads.

The literature therefore shows that a balanced model of citizenship behaviour should be adopted in which organizational benefits and employee well-being are taken into account at the same time.

Conclusion: Organizational Citizenship Behavior remains a key research focus in organizational behavior and human resource management. Since its introduction in the early 1980s, the concept has evolved from emphasizing voluntary extra-role behavior to a more multidimensional view of employee contribution.

The review indicates that OCB is influenced by factors including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, justice, perceived support, leadership, culture, trust, engagement, psychological empowerment, and personality traits.

The literature demonstrates that OCB leads to positive results. Helping, cooperation, civic participation, conscientiousness, and courtesy enhance team functioning, organizational climate, and overall effectiveness.

However, recent research challenges the assumption that citizenship behavior is inherently positive in nature. Citizenship pressure, compulsory participation, and fatigue indicate that excessive expectations can negatively impact employees' performance.

Current research is expanding OCB's scope of OCB to areas such as environmental sustainability, higher education, public organizations, gig work, CSR, employee experience, and artificial intelligence. These developments demonstrate that the OCB remains a dynamic and adaptable construct.

Future research ought to pay special attention to employee experience, digital Future research should focus on employee experience, digital work, AI-enabled organizations, cross-cultural differences, higher education, employee well-being, citizenship fatigue, and multilevel relationships, a complex relationship involving employees, colleagues, leaders, and organizations. If organizations are to promote sustainable citizenship, they must establish environments in which employees are willing to go beyond their formal duties without feeling that they are required to do so. In this way, organizations will be able to gain the benefits of citizenship behavior while at the same time safeguarding employee well-being.

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Table 1

Authors & Year	Major Focus	Context/ Method	Major Contribution
Katz (1964)	Spontaneous behavior	Conceptual	Established the importance of extra-role behavior
Smith et al. (1983)	Nature and antecedents of OCB	Empirical	Provided early empirical foundation
Organ (1988)	OCB conceptualization	Conceptual	Developed major OCB framework
Williams & Anderson (1991)	OCB-I and OCB-O	Empirical	Distinguished individual- and organization-directed OCB
Podsakoff et al. (1997)	OCB and group performance	Empirical	Linked OCB to work-group performance
Podsakoff &MacKenzie (1997)	OCB and organizational performance	Review	Explained performance mechanisms
LePine et al. (2002)	OCB dimensionality	Meta-analysis	Questioned strict independence of OCB dimensions
Bolino et al. (2015)	Citizenship fatigue	Multi-wave study	Demonstrated possible employee costs
Park (2019)	Work engagement	Empirical	Connected power and engagement with OCB
Organ (2018)	Contemporary trends	Review	Examined developments in OCB research
Thakre & Mathew (2020)	Empowerment and engagement	Empirical	Linked empowerment, engagement and OCB
Wang & Zhang (2023)	Environmental OCB	Megaprojects	Examined leadership and environmental citizenship
Dey (2023)	OCB and engagement	Indian banking	Found OCB associated with engagement
Kumar et al. (2023)	Gig work	Empirical	Examined OCB as mediator of engagement-productivity relationship
Choong et al. (2025)	Self-efficacy and trust	Education	Extended fairness-based OCB explanation
Gupta et al. (2026)	Artificial intelligence	Comparative study	Applied AI techniques to predict OCB
Hong (2026)	Citizenship pressure	Empirical	Examined sources and consequences of pressure

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