

**CORRUPTION AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH  
REPUBLIC**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study looked at the efficacy of the House of Representatives' legislative oversight duties in Nigeria as well as corruption. The purpose of the study was to test a hypothesis on the impact of corruption on House of Representatives legislative oversight. The input-output analysis of David Easton and Gabriel Almond's (1966) structural functionalism were used to interpret the data collected for this investigation. The relationship between the phenomena under examination was explained by the study through the use of a descriptive survey approach. Out of the 2,730 people in the study population, a sample of 546 was taken. Based on the researcher's assessment, the respondents who took part in the survey were chosen by the purposeful sampling approach. The questionnaire was the instrument used in the study to collect data. The Likert scale with four points was used for this. The descriptive data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation, and the study's hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. According to the study, Nigeria's House of Representatives' legislative supervision is less effective when there is a culture of corruption. The study suggests that in order to reduce the culture of corruption, excesses associated with House of Representatives operations should be eliminated. Individual and institutional attitudes should also be reoriented. They should also be exposed to training on the appropriate approaches to the discharge of their legislative oversight responsibilities and submit to mentoring by more experienced legislators.*

**Keywords:** *House of Representatives, legislative oversight, effectiveness, and corruption*

**INTRODUCTION**

There is ample evidence that the Fourth Republic of Nigeria's good governance has suffered as a result of legislative-executive conflict brought on by corruption (Momodu and Matudi 2013; Fatile and Adejuwon 2016). Abuse of authority, power, or trust is what corruption in the legislative and executive departments of government entails. This shows up as requests for bribes or satisfaction made by members of the executive and legislative branches in exchange for financial gain. Abuse of office to benefit oneself or one's organization at the expense of the general public is involved. Thus, this manifests itself in various ways, such as redirecting funds intended for legislative constituency projects, governors embezzling money intended for security votes, delaying or completely refusing to pay local government funds as required by the constitution, accepting bribes in exchange for budget approval, funding membership in "juicy" legislative committees, and so forth. According to Ukase (2014), conflicts between the legislative and executive branches, which typically result from corruption and impunity, have a big impact on Nigerian governance. On the other hand, Nigerian corruption in the legislative and executive branches of government is on the rise, and the serious consequences of this corruption are widely known (Agu 2016; Mohammed and Kinge 2015; Ewuim et al. 2014; Tom and Attai 2014). The repercussions include extortion or delays in the passage of crucial legislation, budget padding, confirmation of executive appointees being delayed or refused outright, nonpayment of monthly allocations to local governments, and the acquisition of

pricey luxury properties with public funds in an effort to placate the legislature. Other examples include scurrying to get into important oversight committees within the legislature, misappropriating funds intended for constituents, and engaging in poor governance (Akomoledé 2012; Alabi and Fashagba 2010; Akinwumi et al. 2015).

Moreover, corruption in the executive and legislative branches affects government and the provision of services (Akanbi 2004; Ezekwesili 2013). In particular, poor governance affects Nigeria's socioeconomic development since the way government affects people's lives determines the nation's degree of development (Ibrahim Index of African Governance, 2017). In addition, there is a greater window of opportunity for hazardous corrupt acts due to the National Assembly's growing committee structure and, occasionally, government appointees in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) (Agbakwuru 2014; Nzeshi 2014).

Accounts of corruption in the form of lobbying by the executive arm to ensure that policies that benefit it are established and implemented have been documented about the interaction between the legislative and executive branches in Nigeria. This includes enacting the budget quickly, which has an impact on how well the legislative branch—and specifically the legislative chamber of the Nigerian National Assembly—performs. Thus, this study looks at how corruption affects the efficiency of legislative monitoring in Nigeria's House of Representatives.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of corruption on the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

- i. To what extent has corruption affected the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria's fourth republic?

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

- ii. **Ho<sub>3</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between corruption and the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria's fourth republic.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The concept of corruption**

Since corruption is difficult to define—as we all know—writers have given it many different and contradictory descriptions. According to Ekiyor's (2005) broad definition of corruption, it is the improper use of official authority or influence by a government official for personal gain, career advancement, or any other person at the expense of the public, in violation of the official's oath of office, conventions, or laws currently in effect. It is regrettable that this threat is time- and period-insensitive, occurring at any point in any country's history. Akinseye (2000) called corruption the "mother of all crimes" and distinguished between four types of corruption: nepotism, bribery, graft, and prebendalism. According to Ngwakwe's 2009 definition, corruption is defined as "non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with objectives of earning wealth illegally, either individually or in a group or organized manner," thus violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of government and its administration. This definition was provided by the Economic and Financial Commission of Africa (EFCC), a commission that deals with economic issues. Nkom (1982) defined corruption as the distorting of public affairs for personal gain. According to Nkom, corruption also encompasses bribery, which is the use of unapproved rewards to persuade those in positions of power to act or refrain from acting in a way that benefits the giver's and the recipient's personal gain. It covers things like nepotism and the exploitation of public resources and cash for personal benefit. In a similar spirit, Doig (as referenced in Aluko, 2009) defined corruption as the potential

conflict of interest between a public office and private gain, or the use of an official position, resources, or facilities for personal gain. Public service rules and existing rules, among other internal regulations, typically cover misbehavior by public servants.

From the different definitions of corruption given above, one could argue that corruption in the context of this study is defined as the use of one's official position, money, and other forms of favor to pressure government officials and other stakeholders into doing favors that directly benefit the one seeking the favor rather than the people receiving it.

### **Legislative Oversight**

In order to prevent the misuse of power, the legislature's oversight role extends globally to public institutions, including public corporations, government-owned businesses, ministries, departments, agencies, and important others that the government established and funds with public monies (Ejumudo and Ikenga, 2021). In order to improve effective governance, legislative oversight refers to the appropriate monitoring, assessing, and supervising of government agency or ministry operations. Legislative oversight, according to Ndoma-Egba (2012), is the legislature's ability to examine, keep an eye on, and oversee government programs, agencies, actions, and strategies for implementing policies that are carried out by the executive branch of government. This is to guarantee that a government dedicated to good governance operates in a responsive, transparent, and responsible manner (Ndoma-Egba, 2012). Nwagwu (2014) asserts that the legislative has the authority to supervise how the executive branch administers and executes the law. According to Onuoha (2009), ensuring accountability and good governance is the primary goal of supervision. According to Ehigiamusoe and Umar (2013), the legislative committee structure is primarily used by the legislature to exercise this authority.

Examining these definitional explorations critically reveals that the legislative branch of government is responsible for enacting laws, representing the interests of the people, monitoring the executive branch, and approving or ratifying executive appointees. Legislators frequently conspire with members of the executive branch to engage in unethical behavior while carrying out their designated duties. As a result, governmental policies are not carried out in a way that would guarantee effective governance. Good governance in Nigeria is undermined by the presidential system's operation, which is characterized by abuses of the legislative process and privileges as well as neglect of executive tasks.

### **Corruption and Nigeria's Legislative Oversight Functions**

In Nigeria, legislative oversights include calling public office holders to a public hearing to discuss how they are doing their duties, keeping an eye on the effectiveness and advancement of MDAs, and overseeing government agencies' budgets. The main goals of this are to increase public servant accountability, prevent waste, end redundancy, raise the standard of services provided to the public, and establish a transparent culture. Legislative oversight is a strong mechanism that has been institutionalized to checkmate the excesses of the executive arm of government and government agencies in order to reduce waste in governance, corruption, and absolutism in the exercise of political power, according to empirical evidence from Nwagwu's (2014) work.

To put it mildly, the way legislators are acting toward the MDAs' poor budget performance and the public investigation of public officials is disheartening. This is because committee members have been found guilty of extorting money from public office holders in an effort to conceal corrupt practices that MDA officials are masterminding. Results from the collaborative work of Ehigiamusoe and Umar (2013) showed that during public probing/hearing and budget defense, legislators' actions constituted to intimidating MDA officers, harassing them, and extorting them. These results, which show that Nigerian lawmakers frequently use coercive tactics to compel MDA officers to provide incentives prior to approving their financial allocations, are corroborated by Nwagwu (2014).

Under Buhari's leadership, corruption still exists in the 8th National Assembly. Nwagwu (2014) found that in order to hold their preferred positions of power within the hierarchy of the oversight structures, Nigerian lawmakers frequently employ unethical tactics by wielding excessive influence over the National Assembly's leadership. Specifically, Mattes and Mozaffar (2016) pointed out that politicians frequently forsake their core oversight role and instead embark on pointless travels to investigate matters unrelated to their portfolio once they are granted chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committees in the legislature. The writers claim that obtaining travel expenses was the main driving force.

The fiscal policy process is another area where corrupt activities have a significant impact on the relationship between the government and legislature. According to the constitution, the president can send the legislature a proposal for fiscal policy for appropriation. According to the Constitution's Section 81(1-2):

Estimates of the Federation's revenues and expenses for the upcoming fiscal year must be produced by the President and presented to each House of the National Assembly at any point throughout the fiscal year. The estimates' heads of expenditure—aside from those imposed by this Constitution on the Federation's Consolidated Revenue Fund—must be included in a bill known as an appropriation bill. This bill would authorize the appropriation of funds for the purposes listed in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended, and would authorize the issuance of funds from the Consolidated Revenue Fund to meet those expenditures.

Following the First and Second Readings, the Appropriations Bill would next go through the necessary parliamentary process for discussion. Examining the recommendations made by the various Ad Hoc Committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives is one of the most important phases of the legislative budget process. To defend their sector-specific recommendations, the heads and officers of government ministries and agencies would be invited to sessions held by each of the two chambers of the National Assembly's committees. The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committees would then be compiled by the Appropriations Committees of the two Chambers to create a draft budget that would be discussed during the plenary sessions.

The outcome of the fiscal policy's contents depends heavily on these two phases. The MDA representatives would be required to submit the specifics of every item in the budget proposal's income and expenditure sections at the Committee level. At this point, legislative committee members and MDA representatives frequently band together to raise the suggested funding allotted to each project—not necessarily to enhance its content, but to give room for misappropriation (Falana 2016).

According to Siebrits (2017), one essential accountability mechanism for ensuring good governance is the purse's legislative power. Therefore, according to Fölscher (2006), p. 2, it is a "system whereby a society decides what level of resources should be made available to fund what public goods and ensures that the funds are used as indicated." In the Federalist writings, James Madison extolled the virtues of the ancient legislative authority of the purse as a tool for ensuring fairness in the formulation and application of public policy (No. 58).

Considering the aforementioned, it becomes clear why these tactics are being manipulated to go over Nigeria's budgetary procedures. Applying the widely accepted notion of "budget padding" (Temionu, 2016). This suggests that legislative examination of budget plans is meant to encourage "false entry" into the projects as a means of obtaining personal largesse rather than to raise the standard of governance (Temionu, 2016). Rather than the general people, the beneficiaries of such entrance are the legislators and MDA members. This is a plot to use the government to further private interests.

In Nigeria, this is a customary practice. Senator Babafemi Ojudu of Nigeria provided the following explanation:

After the budget was padded by the budget office and the ministries, it was passed to the National Assembly, which added more padding of its own. The president would get the budget's highlights, which he would then sign. They were adding to it as he was signing, and billions of naira were available for anyone to share (Adefaka, 2016). As a result, the reification of individual self-interest at the expense of public policy began to occur through the legislative and administrative processes of fiscal policy. This conduct challenges the notion that the purse has the authority to enact laws as a means of promoting good governance.

Nwagwu (2014) emphasized that lawmakers have been acting more coercively, intimidating, and corrupting the budget defense process. Specifically, results on legislative oversights in Nigeria demonstrated that the legislature has reduced its powers to an alarm mechanism to blackmail or witch-hunt political opponents extract money from the parastatals and ministries under its supervision for selfish or personal aggrandizement. Legislators in Nigeria are accustomed to cases involving the exchange of cash between heads of MDAs and members of various parliamentary committees during budget defense. They ask MDAs directly for bribes, rewards, and lucrative favors or opportunities. The MDAs and certain oversight committee members frequently work together to inflate or raise the cost of capital projects that are suggested in their budgets.

Legislative members frequently use the necessary checks and balances on proposed budgetary allotments to MDAs as a means of personal gain. On the other side, government organizations voluntarily bribe committee members in order to conceal the inflation of projected capital expenditures and revenue production. The findings from Nwagwu's (2014) research appropriately validated the previous submission. In particular, Nwagwu's (2014) research demonstrates that it is generally concerning that the National Assembly views legislative monitoring of [the] budget as a means of achieving wealth, as it goes against the fundamentals of good governance. Legislators who participate in investigations are guaranteed to profit from them, and the process gives them political standing in the system as they appear to treat the public officials under inquiry as if they are quasi-judicial demigods. For this reason, National Assembly members advocate in the Senate and House of Representatives for lucrative committees (Nwagwu 2014, p. 19).

In their investigation, Stapenhurst et al. (2016) validated the aforementioned submission. They claimed that committee oversight in Nigeria fell short of expectations. They blamed the several ministries, divisions, and agencies (MDAs) under the jurisdiction of these committees for their inefficiency. Because these committees lacked the necessary legislative staff and resources to support their operations, their efficacy was called into question. Stapenhurst et al. (2016) specifically claim that there was little public trust in legislators and that only a small percentage of Nigerians had some or a lot of faith in NASS in relation to public trust and corruption in legislative oversights. Widespread allegations of legislative corruption undermine public trust in the legislature as a body that would operate in the interests of the country. This suggests that there is a strong correlation between the way lawmakers behave and how they oversee MDAs and corruption (in terms of budget and public hearings). The public officers who were appointed by the executive were busy inserting or inflating the cost of items in their proposed budgetary allocations, while they intimidated public officials during public hearings and budget defense to compel and startle public officer holders to accede to their demands (bribes and gratification).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Almond and Powell's (1966) structural functionalism theory was used as the theoretical framework for this investigation. According to structural-functionalism theory, all political systems theoretically carry out a set of necessary functions (Almond and Powell 1966). It primarily uses structures, procedures, mechanisms, and functions to describe the reality of society. Advocates of this theory

believe that in every political system, the executive and legislative branches are essential parts of the government. They carry out specific tasks designated by the constitution. The theory's proponents contend that this strategy was developed with the understanding that political parties, interest groups, and the various levels of government are the essential elements of any political system. Almond and Powell (1966) demonstrate that a political system comprises of functions as well as structures. These functions include political socialization, recruitment, and communication. The process by which cultures transmit their values and ideas to subsequent generations is referred to as socialization. Politically speaking, it refers to the method by which a community instills civic qualities or the customs of productive citizenship. The process through which a political system elicits interest, involvement, and participation from citizens is referred to as recruitment. Furthermore, according to Almond and Powell (1966), communication also refers to the methods by which a system disseminates its knowledge and ideals.

By applying this theory to the study of legislative-executive corruption in Nigeria, it is possible to show how the legislature is not carrying out its constitutional duties in a way that the constitution's authors intended. In order to guarantee a network of operations for efficient service delivery, the three branches of government were designed with the functional separation of powers in mind. The framers of the Constitution assumed that every branch would carry out its designated responsibilities in accordance with the corresponding moral principles. Legislative-executive corruption is therefore a sign of systemic breakdown.

This thesis is predicated on the idea that as institutions carry out their duties, the political system becomes more stable. Therefore, in Nigeria's situation, stability in the political system and improved good governance would result from the legislative institutions abiding by the rules pertaining to the performance of their oversight, representation, and lawmaking functions. That being said, the opposite is true. Corruption has been the bane of government institution underperformance in Nigeria, which consequently impedes good governance. Corruption has made it more difficult for the legislative branch to monitor and rein in the executive branch. Legislators argue with the administration about trivial and financial matters instead than concentrating on public policy.

Therefore, one of the things that typically keeps the legislative and executive branches of government from carrying out their respective roles in an efficient manner is corruption (Alabi and Fashagba 2010). Alabi and Fashagba (2010) noted, in particular, that the legislature's demand for bribes, favors, and satisfaction from heads of MDAs has repeatedly prevented it from performing its expected functions as a watchdog institution or government structure in charge of the control and oversights on the executive. This runs counter to structural-functionalism's philosophy and conviction that poor governance is unavoidable in a nation whose political or governmental institutions are unable to carry out their mandates. Numerous studies have demonstrated the connection between institutional weakness and corruption, particularly the legislative branch's inability to carry out its mandate (Bolarinwa 2015; Mattes and Mozaffar 2016; Nwagwu 2014).

### **Research Method**

The researcher employed primary and secondary sources to gather data on the variables under study from the sample that was selected from the population, which is why the study used a descriptive survey methodology. 2,730 people make up the study's population. Five hundred and forty-six (546) managers and senior employees of the six federal government ministries, departments, and organizations make up the study's sample. The purposive or judgmental sample technique was used to choose the 546 top employees and managers. The three portions of the questionnaire, which were chosen as the instrument for gathering data, allowed the researcher to distribute the questions and items among the independent and intervening factors. The study employed the mean and standard deviation to address all research issues, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was utilized to assess each of the null hypotheses for significance at the 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	128	32.7
	Female	264	67.3
Educational Qualification	OND	49	12.5
	HND/B.A./B.Sc.	222	56.6
	M.A/M.Sc.	79	20
	PhD	42	10
Ministries/Departments/Agencies	Federal Ministry of Works	61	15.6
	Federal Ministry of Power	57	14.5
	Federal Ministry of Housing	51	13.0
	Niger Delta Ministry	87	22.2
	The Nigeria Customs	65	16.6
	Federal Road Safety Corps	71	18.1

**Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2023**

Table 4.1 reveals that 67.3 percent of participants in the poll were female, and 32.7 percent were male. This shows that the poll had a higher female participation rate. According to the respondents' educational backgrounds, 12.5 percent had an OND and those with an HND/B.A./B.Sc. 56.6 percent of the M.A./MSc. holders. held 20 percent, and PhD holders 10 percent. The distribution of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies reveals that the Federal Ministry of Works has the highest percentage of respondents (15.6%), followed by the Federal Ministry of Power (14.5%), the Federal Ministry of Housing (14.0%), the Niger Delta Ministry (22.2%), Nigeria Customs (16.6%) and the Federal Road Safety Corps (18.1%).

**Research Question:** To what extent has corruption affected the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria?

Table 4.2: Respondents' responses on the culture of corruption and effectiveness of legislative oversight of the House of Representatives in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	The oversight functions of the House of Representatives of Nigeria has been hindered by the culture of corruption	2.62	.87	Agree
2	The quality of the oversight functions of the House of Representatives in Nigeria has been affected by the culture of corruption	2.58	.82	Agree
3	The commitment to the oversight functions of the House of Representatives in Nigeria is hampered by the culture of corruption	2.71	.77	Agree
4	The effective performance to the oversight functions of the House of Representatives in Nigeria is has been constrained by the culture of corruption	2.56	.80	Agree

**Source: Fieldwork, 2023**

The data in Table 4.2 displays the standard deviation analysis and mean scores for the House of Representatives' legislative oversight performance and corruption culture in Nigeria. The analysis's findings indicate that respondents had consensus on every issue. The respondents specifically acknowledged that the culture of corruption has impeded the House of Representatives' ability to carry out its oversight responsibilities, affected the quality of those responsibilities, hindered the

House of Representatives' commitment to these responsibilities, and limited the House of Representatives' ability to carry out its oversight responsibilities effectively. The corresponding mean scores are 2.62, 2.58, 2.71, 2.56, and 2.55. This suggests that the corruption culture in Nigeria has impeded the House of Representatives' ability to carry out its oversight duties, affected the oversight functions' quality, hindered the House of Representatives' commitment to these duties, and limited the House of Representatives' ability to carry out its oversight functions effectively.

### Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the culture of corruption and the effectiveness of the legislative oversight responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria.

Table 4.3: Correlation analysis for hypothesis three

		the culture of corruption	the effectiveness of legislative oversight of the House of Representatives in Nigeria
the culture of corruption	Pearson Correlation	1	.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	390	390
the effectiveness of legislative oversight of the House of Representatives in Nigeria	Pearson Correlation	.457**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	390	390

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

If the estimated Pearson r value is higher than the Pearson r critical value, which indicates a rejection of Ho and a retention of Hi, then the null hypothesis is accepted. If not, though, hold onto Ho and reject Hi. With a degree of freedom of 390, the crucial Pearson r value at the 0.05 level of significance is 0.1946.

Table 4.8's results show that the estimated Pearson r value was 0.457. Since 0.457 is higher than the crucial Pearson r value of 0.1946, Ho is disapproved while Hi is approved. This indicates that the efficacy of the House of Representatives' legislative supervision in Nigeria is positively correlated with the country's culture of corruption.

### Discussion of Results

The results of the hypothesis showed a strong positive correlation between Nigeria's House of Representatives' legislative oversight function and the country's culture of corruption. The results of the study by Ehigiamusoe and Umar (2013) which examined the legislative oversight system in Nigeria, are in line with this conclusion. The preservation and distribution of committee reports, delayed budget presentation, passage, and assent, delayed funding distribution to and inadequate capacity utilization of Federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (FMDAs) are just a few of the factors the study cites as contributing to the underwhelming performance of the federal government's capital budgets. are but a few instances. These are all indicators of corruption and show a lack of effective legislative supervision. The study's conclusions show that although oversight activities have increased significantly in Nigeria since 1999, they have not succeeded in reducing corruption or improving MDA budget performance. According to Nwagwu (2014), the legislature has also diminished its essential role to that of a mere alarm system that is employed to extract money from parastatals and ministries under its control for personal or self-serving purposes, or to blackmail or witch-hunt political opponents.

The research conducted by Ana-Maria, Bastida, and Benito (2016) corroborates the conclusions drawn from the investigation into legislative budgetary supervision and budget transparency. The

study discovered that budget transparency as a result of corruption is also impacted by the legal system, political rivalry, and economic status. Onwe (2015) also demonstrated that the legislative branch's inability to enact effective legislation for good governance stems from a number of issues, including a lack of autonomy, the executive branch's usurpation of legislative powers through its oversight role, the issue of godfatherism, and the corrupt tendencies of the majority of legislative house members. The legislative supervision, a crucial component of the legislature's duties beyond passing laws, has been repeatedly undermined and is frequently employed as a hunting hound to carry out various corrupt activities, according to a report by Ejikeme (2014). These results support the hypothesis, which found that the efficacy of the House of Representatives' legislative supervision in Nigeria is significantly positively correlated with the country's culture of corruption.

### **CONCLUSION**

The efficacy of the Nigerian House of Representatives' legislative oversight duties is impacted by the country's culture of corruption. In actuality, one issue that has impacted the operations and functions of Nigerian parliaments, notably the House of Representatives, is corruption. This issue accounts for lobbying and financial exchanges in order to ensure that executive decisions are upheld in the House of Representatives.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Reducing the excesses associated with the House of Representatives' operations and activities is one way to combat the culture of corruption. In order to fulfill their duties and represent the public, those who possess integrity and the ability to serve should be elected. They should also be exposed to training on the appropriate approaches to the discharge of their legislative oversight responsibilities and submit to mentoring by more experienced legislators.

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