

# The Effect of Organizational Factors on Employee Happiness Among Millennials in the United Arab Emirates Utility Sector

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**Abstract:** In this study, we investigate the effect of organizational factors—namely work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives—on the happiness of millennial employees in utility organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This generation plays a crucial role in organizational success, yet is often associated with high turnover and low engagement. Additionally, the UAE's decline in workplace happiness rankings raises concerns about employee satisfaction across sectors, including among millennials. A quantitative method was employed to gather data from a sample of 120 utility-sector employees, born between 1980 and 2000, distributed across five branches in the northern region of the UAE. A simple random sampling technique was applied, and regression analysis via SPSS was used to test the hypotheses. Findings reveal that organizational factors significantly affect millennial employee happiness. These results underscore the importance of fostering a positive work environment to enhance productivity and retention. It is recommended that UAE organizations and policymakers prioritize millennial well-being to drive innovation, performance, and sustainable growth.

**Keywords:** Career Development, Employee Happiness, Millennials, Monetary Incentives, Work Flexibility.

## 1 Introduction

The subject of happiness in the workplace is gaining increasing attention worldwide, and the term has become one of the most trending in contemporary discourse [47]. In academic contexts, numerous writers, thinkers, and researchers in the organizational domain have reported that promoting workplace happiness has become a goal that many organizations strive to achieve [62]. In this regard, various organizational factors significantly contribute to employees' happiness. These factors enhance employee satisfaction and motivation, ultimately leading to a happier workforce [10]. For instance, work flexibility allows individuals to manage their personal and professional lives more effectively, which improves both job satisfaction and productivity [23].

Career development opportunities boost employee engagement and retention, which in turn contributes to greater workplace happiness [66]. Likewise, monetary incentives such as bonuses and rewards motivate employees, acknowledge their efforts, reinforce loyalty to the organization, and contribute to their happiness [75]. These organizational factors foster a healthy work environment where employees feel valued and supported, enhancing their well-being and overall happiness. Research has shown that such factors help millennials improve themselves and feel satisfied with their jobs [69],[13], influencing their experiences, satisfaction, and well-being in the workplace [27].

Today, millennials have high expectations of the organizations they work for [35], and finding a job that brings them happiness has become one of their top priorities [24]. This generation is characterized by several positive attributes, including high self-confidence, a strong desire to excel, and an optimistic outlook [79]. Millennials are also known for their adaptability to change, strong sense of self-worth, and eagerness to innovate [72]. They are highly accomplished, value work-life balance, and are vocal about their expectations [44].

Moreover, millennials show a strong interest in work and a high level of ambition regarding career development [14]. They are eager to learn and continuously improve their skills—readily participating in webinars, attending training sessions, and working overtime to achieve personal and professional growth [63]. Understanding and analyzing these traits can help researchers and practitioners assess how they impact various aspects of millennials' professional lives. This generation is also technologically savvy, driven by more than just salary, and accustomed to having a voice and presence within the workplace. They are optimistic, active on social media, and seek meaningful work and interactions [80]. As such, employers should recognize that investing in employee happiness is key to attracting and retaining millennial talent [28].

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Despite growing interest, the perceptions of millennials regarding job happiness and the factors that influence it remain relatively underexplored in academic research [26]. The literature reveals a limited number of studies focused specifically on workplace happiness among millennial employees. This segment began to attract scholarly attention after the publication of *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* by Strauss and Howe in 2000, which first defined and categorized the millennial generation [33]. However, there remains a noticeable gap in studies addressing job happiness in the Middle East, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as most existing research is based on Western contexts [6].

Given that millennial employee happiness remains low in the UAE despite governmental efforts, it is crucial to examine the organizational factors that may enhance happiness within this group. Only a few studies have explored the organizational factors influencing millennial workplace happiness [26],[33],[40],[59],[82]. Moreover, the literature suggests that millennials prioritize several factors that were not fully addressed in prior studies, and their influence on workplace happiness remains unclear. In light of this gap—particularly in the UAE context—this study aims to contribute to existing knowledge by investigating specific organizational factors that may impact millennial happiness, such as work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of these factors on the workplace happiness of the Emirati millennial generation in the UAE's utility sector.

## 2 Employee Happiness in UAE

The UAE is considered one of the leading countries globally in terms of happiness and quality of life. In 2016, the government launched its national agenda for the next five years, with one of its key pillars focused on advancing the Human Development Index. The goal was to be among the best countries in the world in this regard, alongside its aspiration to become one of the happiest nations—where citizens feel deep pride in belonging to the UAE. As part of this effort, the governments of the seven Emirates collectively introduced the “National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing” and released the *Guide to Happiness and Well-being in the Workplace* [32]. In 2017, the UAE appointed a Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing to lead this national direction [32].

Furthering its commitment, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation launched the Labor Happiness Program, which included several initiatives aimed at improving workers' happiness. These included the “Best Workers Housing” initiative, the “Happiest Work Environment” initiative, the “Happiest SIM” initiative, and the “Happiest Bus” initiative [70]. Collectively, these efforts elevated the UAE's ranking on the World Happiness Index from 28th place in 2016 to 21st in 2020 [22]. Additionally, in 2020, the UAE was ranked as the happiest country in the Arab world for the sixth consecutive year, according to the *World Happiness Report* [71].

Despite these achievements, the UAE's ranking on the World Happiness Index declined to 25th place in 2021 [34]. Focusing specifically on workplace happiness, the latest *Cigna 360° Well-Being Survey* revealed that 50% of employees in the UAE expressed an intention to change their jobs within the next 12 months—considerably higher than the global average of 31%. This trend was especially prominent among the younger generation aged 18 to 34, with 55% expressing similar intentions. Among the 35 to 59 age group, 45% also reported plans to change jobs within a year, compared to the global average of 25%. Additionally, the same study showed a decline in financial well-being for this age group, dropping from 57% in 2020 to 55% in 2021 [25].

These figures highlight a growing challenge in job happiness, particularly among younger employees in the UAE—most notably the millennial generation, which currently dominates the workforce. In response, the UAE government has taken measures to improve work-life balance. On December 7, 2021, it announced a shift to a four-and-a-half-day workweek, a change that took effect at the beginning of 2022. This initiative aims to enhance employees' work-life balance and overall societal well-being, which in turn is expected to improve workplace performance and boost the country's economic competitiveness [74].

There are several compelling reasons why studying the factors that promote workplace happiness among the millennial generation is important. First, millennials now make up the largest portion of the workforce, and their job satisfaction directly influences productivity and organizational success [78]. Understanding what drives their happiness can help organizations foster positive work environments that attract and retain top millennial talent [61]. Moreover, millennials have different values and priorities compared to previous generations, and examining their workplace happiness offers insights into the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce [49].

By identifying the factors that contribute to millennial happiness, employers can tailor their policies and practices to better meet the needs and expectations of this generation. This can lead to improved job satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower employee turnover. Ultimately, investing in millennials' happiness can be a strategic move that enhances organizational performance and long-term growth. Therefore, this study represents a novel academic effort to explore how organizational factors within the UAE utility sector influence the happiness of millennial workers.

### 3 Organizational Factors

#### 3.1 Work Flexibility

Flexible work schedules and remote work options are key organizational factors that enable employees to balance their personal and professional lives, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity [8]. In today's fast-paced and evolving work environment, work flexibility is becoming increasingly important [17]. With the rise of remote work and advances in technology, employees are seeking greater control over how and where they work. This shift is driven by the desire for a better work-life balance, increased productivity, and the ability to tailor work schedules to individual needs [7].

Work flexibility deserves particular attention from researchers due to its significant impact on employee satisfaction, well-being, and overall job performance. By examining both the benefits and challenges of flexible arrangements, researchers can help organizations implement effective strategies that support both employees and business objectives [23].

Encouraging work flexibility can offer numerous advantages to organizations [42]. It boosts employee morale and satisfaction, which in turn enhances productivity and performance. When employees have the autonomy to manage their schedules and work from various locations, they are more likely to feel trusted and valued by their employers. This trust fosters a positive workplace culture and strengthens employee commitment and loyalty [56].

Organizations in the UAE's utility sector, in particular, should prioritize work flexibility. The sector is known for its demanding and high-pressure environment. By offering flexible work arrangements, these organizations can help reduce stress and burnout among employees. This not only improves job satisfaction but also contributes to higher performance levels, ultimately benefiting organizational outcomes [31].

In summary, work flexibility plays a critical role in promoting employee happiness [15]. When employees are given the freedom to choose their work hours or work remotely, they often experience lower stress levels and a stronger sense of control over their work-life balance. This autonomy enables them to better manage personal responsibilities, such as childcare or appointments, contributing to greater job satisfaction and overall well-being [43]. Furthermore, flexible scheduling fosters a positive workplace culture where employees feel empowered and appreciated—further enhancing happiness at work [23].

#### 3.2 Career Development

Career development opportunities—such as training programs, promotions, and skill-building initiatives—are essential for fostering employee engagement and retention [73]. Career development represents a core element of both personal and professional growth. It involves the continuous acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve career prospects and readiness for advancement. In today's rapidly evolving job market, staying current with industry trends and upgrading skills is essential for competitiveness and adaptability [37]. Whether through formal education, on-the-job training, or networking, career development is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling professional journey.

Investing in career development brings numerous organizational benefits. It creates a motivated and engaged workforce. When employees feel that their growth is supported, they are more likely to remain committed and productive. Organizations that prioritize development also stand out as attractive employers capable of retaining top talent [60].

The UAE's utility sector has several reasons to focus on career development. As a competitive field, it requires access to a skilled workforce. By implementing career development programs, organizations can differentiate themselves in the market and attract professionals seeking opportunities for growth. Additionally, these programs enhance the organization's reputation as an employer of choice, which helps in both attracting and retaining talent [36].

Career development also contributes directly to employee happiness by providing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. When individuals have opportunities to grow in their roles, they are more likely to feel engaged and motivated [83]. This sense of progression leads to higher job satisfaction and overall happiness. Moreover, providing career development signals that the organization values its employees' long-term success and well-being [77]. Employees who feel supported in their goals are more likely to be happy and fulfilled, which positively influences their productivity and commitment. Ultimately, a motivated and satisfied workforce helps the organization achieve its strategic objectives and sustain long-term success [64].

#### 3.3 Monetary Incentives

Monetary incentives are powerful tools for motivating employees to reach specific goals and performance targets [48]. These incentives may take various forms, including bonuses, commissions, or performance-based pay [5]. By offering financial rewards, organizations aim to encourage enhanced productivity, higher sales, or improved performance.

Monetary incentives not only recognize hard work but also provide tangible benefits that can positively influence employees' professional and personal lives.

The importance of monetary incentives as a research focus lies in their strong influence on motivation and behavior in the workplace [12]. Organizations that effectively implement financial incentive programs benefit from higher retention rates and the ability to attract top performers. When employees know their efforts will be recognized and rewarded, they are more likely to remain committed and strive for excellence. This contributes to increased efficiency and organizational success [4].

Additionally, monetary incentives provide objective measures for evaluating and rewarding performance. They help create a merit-based culture where employees are acknowledged according to their contributions. Such transparency fosters fairness and motivates continuous improvement.

In the UAE's utility sector—where competition for skilled professionals is high—monetary incentives are particularly vital. These rewards can help attract and retain talent in a sector where expertise is critical to operational success [1]. Furthermore, aligning monetary incentives with performance goals ensures that employees are working towards the same strategic objectives as the organization [2]. This alignment promotes a results-oriented culture that encourages employees to exceed expectations.

Monetary incentives also play a key role in enhancing workplace happiness. When employees are financially rewarded for their efforts, it not only boosts their morale but also increases their job satisfaction [48]. Recognition through incentives reinforces employees' sense of value and achievement, contributing to a more positive and motivated workforce.

## 4 Employee Happiness

Employee happiness is a critical factor in the success and growth of any organization, as happiness in the workplace significantly influences employee engagement, which in turn contributes to organizational success [20]. When employees are happy, they tend to be more motivated, engaged, and productive [19]. They are also more likely to remain with the organization, contributing to its long-term success. Fostering happiness in the workplace is one of the most effective ways to achieve full engagement among the workforce [46].

Organizations should prioritize employee happiness because happy employees are more inclined to deliver exceptional customer service, which leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty [68]. Therefore, creating a positive work environment is in the best interest of any organization. This can be achieved through initiatives such as regular team-building activities and opportunities for professional development. Supporting employee satisfaction and personal growth can inspire enthusiasm and dedication in the workplace [67]. As a result, organizations not only retain a motivated and satisfied workforce but also attract top talent. This gives them a competitive advantage and contributes to overall success. Ultimately, prioritizing employee happiness leads to a healthier work environment and enhances organizational performance [30].

In the UAE, particularly in government entities within the utility sector, several factors drive the need to prioritize employee happiness. The competitive nature of the sector makes it imperative to attract and retain highly skilled professionals. By fostering a positive workplace culture, government organizations can draw top talent and increase employee retention [45]. Studies in the UAE indicate that low levels of happiness are associated with low productivity, whereas higher happiness levels correlate positively with higher productivity [11]. Happy employees in utility service organizations are more likely to be engaged and committed, which results in improved efficiency and performance. This is especially important in the utility sector, where reliability and responsiveness are vital to delivering essential services to the public.

Employee happiness among millennials is a particularly crucial consideration in today's workforce. This generation values work-life balance, opportunities for growth, and a sense of purpose in their careers [82]. Organizations that support employee happiness by providing flexible work arrangements, mentorship opportunities, and regular feedback are more likely to attract and retain talented millennials [16].

Organizations that support employee happiness by providing flexible work arrangements, mentorship opportunities, and regular feedback are more likely to attract and retain talented millennials [51]. They are less willing to sacrifice happiness for job security or routine roles. Additionally, having grown up in a digital age with immediate access to information and global opportunities, millennials are more selective in choosing employers that align with their values and offer a positive workplace experience [18].

To evaluate these claims, it is essential to measure the impact of key organizational factors—namely work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives—on the happiness levels of millennial employees in the UAE.

## 5 Hypotheses Development

### ***Hypothesis 1: Work flexibility has a significant effect on employee happiness.***

The literature is rich with studies examining the interrelationship between organizational factors—such as work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives—and employee happiness. Work flexibility, in particular, has been shown to significantly influence employee well-being, with flexible work schedules enhancing job satisfaction and overall workplace experience [56]. When employees are granted the autonomy to choose when and where they work, they are better able to balance their personal and professional lives. This sense of control over their schedule often leads to reduced stress levels and increased job satisfaction.

Moreover, flexible work arrangements allow employees to pursue hobbies, attend to personal obligations, and address work-life balance challenges, contributing to a greater sense of fulfillment and overall happiness [54]. Studies also show that work flexibility fosters positive engagement, making employees feel trusted and valued [76]. When employers prioritize flexibility, it demonstrates an understanding of employees' work-life needs and respect for their time and commitments [52]. This, in turn, increases job satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to higher levels of happiness in the workplace.

Ultimately, when employees have the option to choose their work schedule or work remotely, they experience better work-life balance, which enhances life satisfaction and workplace happiness [41]. This flexibility enables employees to manage their responsibilities and commitments more effectively, which in turn reduces stress and increases overall employee happiness. This study assumes that providing work flexibility by affording work-life balance and scheduling work to be convenient for workers should promote a pleasant work environment and make the majority of employees happy doing their work. Based on these findings and assumptions, this study will examine this hypothesis within UAE utility sector organizations.

### ***Hypothesis 2: Career development has a significant effect on employee happiness.***

Career development also plays a vital role in fostering employee happiness. Its broader objectives include promoting mental health and well-being at work [57]. When employees are given opportunities for professional growth and advancement, they are more likely to feel valued, motivated, and engaged—all of which contribute to workplace happiness [53]. Career development initiatives also equip employees with essential skills and knowledge, which builds confidence and instills a sense of achievement [56]. Such investments in growth and learning can significantly contribute to a positive work culture and overall employee happiness [29].

Organizations that prioritize career development foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement, benefiting both individuals and the organization. This enhances job satisfaction and cultivates a workplace environment in which employees feel happy and fulfilled [65]. Furthermore, strong career development programs help organizations attract and retain high-performing talent, as employees are more likely to stay with employers who invest in their growth [55].

In summary, career development contributes to employee happiness by making employees feel valued and supported in their long-term goals. When employees are recognized for their efforts and offered development opportunities, their sense of satisfaction and gratitude increases [39]. This results in higher levels of happiness, motivation, and productivity. Accordingly, this hypothesis will be examined within the UAE utility sector context.

### ***Hypothesis 3: Monetary incentives have a significant effect on employee happiness.***

Monetary incentives are another significant factor that influences employee happiness. When employees receive financial rewards such as bonuses or salary increases for their contributions, it enhances both their satisfaction and sense of happiness [21]. The opportunity to earn additional income can serve as a powerful motivator, encouraging better performance and greater engagement [3].

However, organizations must balance monetary incentives with non-financial elements such as a positive work environment and growth opportunities. These non-monetary factors are equally essential in promoting happiness [48]. Still, monetary incentives can significantly contribute to employee well-being in multiple ways. They provide tangible recognition for effort and success, reinforcing feelings of value and appreciation. This sense of validation can enhance self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall happiness at work [38].

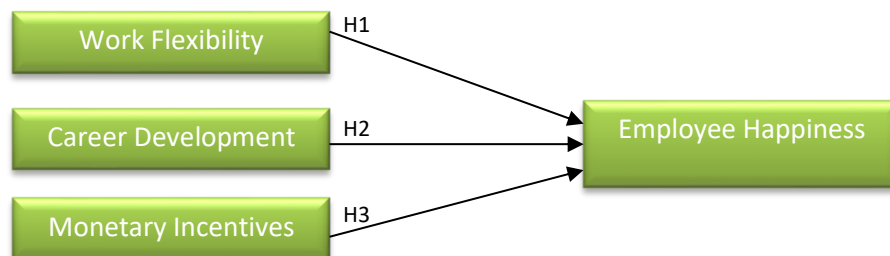
Additionally, financial rewards offer a sense of security, reducing financial stress and enabling employees to focus more effectively on their work [9]. Employees who feel financially stable are more likely to be content in their roles, further contributing to workplace happiness [81]. Accordingly, this hypothesis will be explored in the context of UAE utility sector organizations.

In conclusion, the findings discussed above indicate that organizational factors—namely work flexibility, career



development, and monetary incentives—have a significant influence on employee happiness. Work flexibility helps employees maintain work-life balance and reduces stress; career development fosters motivation and long-term engagement; and monetary incentives offer both recognition and financial security. Together, these factors create a positive and supportive work environment that enhances employee happiness.

Therefore, this study proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the combined effect of these organizational factors on the happiness of millennial employees in UAE utility organizations, as shown in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1:** A framework of millennial employee happiness in utility organizations

## 6 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach to analyze the effect of organizational factors on millennial employee happiness in the utility sector. The target population included employees working in the utility sector across the northern Emirates. Specifically, the study focused on a total population of 1,566 millennial employees, defined as individuals born between 1980 and 2000.

The population was proportionally distributed across five geographic regions: Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, and the central area. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which served as the primary instrument for this study. A sample of 120 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation.

For data analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. Regression analysis was applied as the primary statistical method to examine the relationships between the independent variables (organizational factors) and the dependent variable (employee happiness).

## 7 Results and Discussions

A simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses and assess the relationships between the variables. The evaluation of direct relationships was conducted using R-square, ANOVA, and regression coefficients. The model summary provides initial insights into the strength of the regression relationship between each pair of variables. The data presented in Table 1 detail the strength of the relationships between the organizational factors—work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives—and employee happiness.

**Table 1:** Summary of Regression Analysis

Relationships	ANOVA (F-value)	R-Square	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig. p-value
H1: Work flexibility → Employee happiness	254.971	0.360	0.734	0.581	0.00
H2: Career development → Employee happiness	143.931	0.212	0.584	0.522	0.00
H3: Monetary incentives → Employee happiness	198.445	0.401	0.605	0.635	0.00

The initial evaluation of the values in the model summary table provides insights into how well the regression model explains the variability between the variables. The  $R^2$  values were found to range between 0.312 and 0.430. These figures indicate the percentage of total variation in employee happiness that can be explained by the predictors—namely, work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives. Specifically, changes in work flexibility account for 36.00% of the variation in employee happiness, career development accounts for 21.20%, and monetary incentives explain 40.10%.

of the variation.

In terms of significance, Table 1 shows that all relationships between the organizational factors and employee happiness are statistically significant ( $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 \leq 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients indicate moderate effects. Work flexibility significantly predicts employee happiness ( $\text{Beta} = 0.581$ ), career development also shows a significant positive effect ( $\text{Beta} = 0.522$ ), and monetary incentives present the strongest predictive value ( $\text{Beta} = 0.635$ ).

The results of the ANOVA analysis further assess the model fit for each relationship. The interpretation of the ANOVA output reveals the degree of correlation between the organizational factors and employee happiness. The F-values presented in Table 1—ranging between 143.931 and 254.971—represent the ratio of two mean square values for each relationship. Since these F-values are greater than 1.00, it suggests that the variation in employee happiness is not due to random chance. Based on these results, Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported, confirming that organizational factors in UAE utility organizations have significant relationships with millennial employee happiness.

These findings align with previous research. For instance, it has been found that employees who have greater control over their work schedules report higher levels of workplace well-being [56]. Supporting employee preferences for flexibility can enhance both well-being and productivity [58]. Similarly, Mohammed and Abdul (2019) concluded that career growth opportunities, flexible work options, and employee development contribute significantly to workplace happiness. In line with these conclusions, Alketbi and Alshurideh (2023) found that monetary incentives and salary increases are key drivers of workplace happiness and foster stronger employee connection to the organization. Another study identified salary and benefits as the most influential factors contributing to happiness among millennials [50].

Mayangdarastris and Khusna (2020) also reported that having a clear career path and access to development opportunities directly influence job satisfaction for millennials, helping them feel valued in the workplace and thereby increasing happiness. Supporting this, another study identified rapid career development opportunities as the leading factor influencing millennials' job happiness [57].

While the current study supports these previous findings, it also adds new evidence showing that these organizational factors—when combined—have a substantial impact on workplace happiness among millennial employees in UAE utility organizations. In other words, work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives collectively play a significant role in enhancing happiness at work. Millennials especially value work flexibility, as it allows them to achieve better work-life balance and manage their time more effectively.

## 8 Conclusions

The review of the literature reveals that the number of millennial employees in the workforce is increasing steadily and is expected to represent more than half of the global workforce in the near future. However, their growing presence also poses challenges for organizations due to high turnover rates and relatively low job engagement. In this context, improving millennial employee happiness emerges as a key strategy to mitigate these issues.

Accordingly, this study examined the impact of organizational factors—namely work flexibility, career development, and monetary incentives—on the happiness of millennial employees in utility organizations in the UAE. The findings show that these organizational factors have a significant positive effect on employee happiness. This underscores the importance of fostering happiness among millennial workers as a means to enhance their engagement, motivation, and performance.

It is strongly recommended that the UAE government, as well as industry leaders, place greater emphasis on addressing the needs and expectations of this vital labor segment. The happiness and well-being of millennial employees directly influence productivity and contribute to improved organizational performance. By creating a positive and supportive organizational environment, industries across sectors can attract and retain top millennial talent—ultimately driving innovation, sustainable growth, and a healthier workplace culture.

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