

# Analysis of The Implementation of Behavioristic Learning Theory in the Transformation of Student Discipline

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the growing challenge of student discipline and moral development in contemporary education, where discipline is viewed not merely as rule compliance but as a structured behavioral outcome shaped through learning processes. The purpose of this research is to describe efforts to form students' discipline character through the implementation of behaviorism theory in the learning process at MTs Raodhatut Thalibin Tohri Mamuju. This study employs a qualitative method with a literature study approach combined with systematic observation, involving teachers and students as research subjects. Data were collected through literature review, classroom observation, and documentation, and analyzed using content analysis focusing on stimulus-response patterns, reinforcement, habituation, and punishment strategies. The findings reveal that the implementation of behaviorism theory through structured classroom management, consistent reinforcement (rewards), habituation practices, and non-physical sanctions effectively fosters students' discipline. Furthermore, this approach contributes significantly to the development of students' responsibility, self-regulation, and awareness within a child-friendly and non-violent educational framework, although careful application is required to avoid overdependence on external rewards.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the construction of student discipline through a behavioristic approach within a child-friendly educational framework. In today's educational context, schools face increasingly complex challenges related to moral degradation, low learning motivation, and weak student discipline. Discipline is not merely obedience to rules, but a structured behavioral outcome formed through continuous interaction between stimulus and response. In classroom practice, teachers often encounter low student engagement, poor time management, and lack of responsibility, indicating the need for systematic behavioral conditioning grounded in learning theory (Muhlis, n.d.; Rohmaniyah & Rohmani, 2025; Schunk, D.H., 2012). Recent studies have consistently demonstrated the relevance of behavioristic theory in shaping student discipline. Research shows that reinforcement strategies both positive and negative play a significant role in improving student discipline and engagement. For instance, a study in the *International Journal of Learning and Teaching*, found that structured reinforcement is an effective method for developing disciplined behavior while minimizing negative student responses (Budiarto & Sunardi, 2024). Similarly, experimental and action research studies (2025) indicate that reinforcement techniques, including rewards and behavioral feedback, significantly improve students' discipline and participation levels (Fauzan & Setiawati, 2025). Other findings highlight that behavioristic approaches, such as stimulus-response exercises and reward systems, can enhance both discipline and cognitive outcomes in learning environments (Syah et al., 2026). In addition, recent research within the Merdeka Curriculum context shows that positive

reinforcement increases motivation and engagement, although it must be applied carefully to avoid dependency on external rewards (Rizki, Yundarwati, & Wangi, 2026). Furthermore, contemporary studies emphasize that behaviorism contributes not only to discipline but also to the development of prosocial character and inclusive education environments (Nahrowi, Santoso, & Anwariyah, 2025).

However, despite these advancements, there remains a significant research gap. Most previous studies tend to focus on the technical effectiveness of reinforcement and conditioning strategies, without deeply addressing ethical, legal, and contextual challenges particularly in relation to child protection policies in Indonesia. The prohibition of physical and psychological punishment under Law Number 35 of 2014 creates a dilemma for teachers in implementing behavioristic discipline strategies. Moreover, prior research has not sufficiently integrated behavioristic approaches with child-friendly, humanistic, and holistic educational paradigms. There is also limited exploration of how discipline can be constructed through non-punitive, ethical conditioning strategies that promote internal responsibility rather than external compliance. Therefore, this research is significant and urgent as it seeks to reconstruct a behavioristic-based discipline model that aligns with contemporary educational values, legal frameworks, and student-centered learning principles. The study aims to contribute practically by providing teachers with effective, ethical, and non-violent strategies for managing student discipline. Theoretically, it bridges classical behavioristic theory with modern educational demands, particularly in promoting autonomy, responsibility, and character development. If this gap is successfully addressed, the research will support the creation of a more conducive and sustainable learning environment that not only improves discipline but also fosters long-term moral and behavioral development among students. Based on the above problems, this article aims to describe efforts to form students' discipline character through the implementation of behaviorism theory in the learning process at MTs Raodhatut Thalibin Tohri Mamuju. This topic remains relevant as discipline character continues to be a dynamic and ongoing discourse in education. Therefore, this study is guided by the following research questions: 1. How is behaviorism theory implemented in the learning process to foster students' discipline? 2. What forms of reinforcement, habituation, and stimulus-response strategies are applied by teachers in shaping students' discipline? 3. To what extent does the implementation of behaviorism theory contribute to the development of students' discipline character within a child-friendly educational framework?

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature study approach combined with systematic observation to explore the implementation of behaviorism theory in shaping students' discipline character at MTs Raodhatut Thalibin Tohri Mamuju. The research subjects consist of teachers and students, where teachers act as key informants who provide information regarding the application of behavioristic strategies in the learning process, while students become the focus of observation to identify changes in disciplinary behavior. Data collection is carried out through three main techniques, namely literature study, systematic observation, and documentation. The literature study is conducted by examining scientific journals, pedagogical textbooks, and relevant previous studies related to behaviorism theory and student discipline. Systematic observation is used to directly observe teacher-student interactions, especially in the application of reinforcement (rewards), punishment (sanctions), and habituation processes in classroom learning. Documentation techniques are used to complement the data through school regulations, policies, and records related to student discipline.

The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis, which focuses on identifying patterns of stimulus-response interactions between teachers and students. The analysis process is carried out through several stages, including data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions, in order to produce a systematic and in-depth understanding of how behavioristic approaches are implemented in shaping students' discipline character. The research procedure begins with problem identification, followed by a literature review to build a theoretical framework, then designing the research approach. Furthermore, data are collected through literature study, observation, and documentation, which are then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results of the analysis are interpreted to explain the formation of students' discipline character, and finally formulated into conclusions and implications of the study. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of theoretical concepts as well as empirical practices related to the implementation of behaviorism learning theory within a child-friendly educational context.

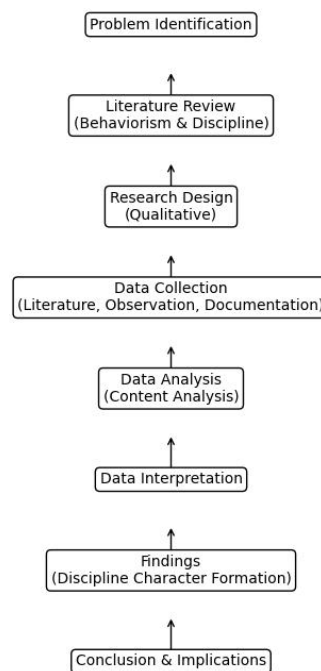


Figure 1. Methods

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The implementation of behaviorism theory in the learning process at MTs Raodhatut Thalibin Tohri Mamuju is carried out through a structured and consistent approach that emphasizes observable behavioral change. Teachers play a central role as facilitators and controllers of the learning environment by designing learning activities that involve clear rules, measurable expectations, and immediate feedback. In classroom practice, discipline is fostered through repeated exposure to structured routines such as punctual attendance, timely task submission, and orderly classroom behavior. These routines are not applied incidentally but are systematically integrated into daily learning activities so that students gradually internalize discipline as a habitual behavior rather than mere compliance. The stimulus-response mechanism is evident when teachers provide direct responses to student behavior, whether in the form of appreciation or correction, thus reinforcing desired actions and minimizing undesirable ones. In terms of specific strategies, teachers apply various forms of reinforcement, habituation, and

stimulus-response techniques to shape students' discipline. Positive reinforcement is commonly used, such as verbal praise, additional points, or simple rewards to acknowledge students who demonstrate disciplined behavior. This approach encourages students to repeat positive actions because they associate them with pleasant outcomes. In addition, habituation strategies are implemented through continuous practice of disciplined behaviors, for example by starting lessons on time, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and following agreed-upon rules. Over time, these repeated practices form stable behavioral patterns. On the other hand, punishment is applied in a non-physical and educative manner, such as giving constructive warnings, reflective tasks, or additional responsibilities. These sanctions are designed not to intimidate students but to help them understand the consequences of their actions. The combination of these strategies reflects a balanced application of behaviorism that prioritizes consistency, clarity, and gradual behavioral shaping. Students' responses to the implementation of behavioristic approaches indicate a generally positive trend in the development of discipline. Many students show increased awareness of rules, improved time management, and greater responsibility in completing tasks. The presence of consistent reinforcement helps students clearly distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, which in turn supports the formation of self-regulation. Although some students initially depend on external rewards, over time they begin to demonstrate intrinsic motivation as disciplined behavior becomes part of their daily routine. This shift suggests that behavioristic strategies, when applied consistently and appropriately, can move beyond external control toward internalized discipline.

However, the implementation of behaviorism theory is not without challenges. Teachers must carefully balance the use of reinforcement and punishment to ensure that the learning environment remains supportive and child-friendly. One of the main challenges is avoiding over-reliance on rewards, which can lead to dependency and reduce intrinsic motivation. Additionally, teachers need to ensure that all disciplinary measures align with child protection principles, avoiding any form of physical or psychological harm. This requires teachers to be creative in designing non-violent and educative disciplinary strategies. Differences in student characteristics also present challenges, as not all students respond equally to the same stimulus, requiring teachers to adopt flexible and adaptive approaches. The implementation of behaviorism theory contributes significantly to the development of students' discipline character within a child-friendly educational framework. The consistent application of reinforcement, habituation, and stimulus-response mechanisms helps create a structured learning environment that supports behavioral development. More importantly, when these strategies are applied ethically and thoughtfully, they not only improve observable discipline but also foster students' sense of responsibility, self-control, and awareness of consequences. Thus, behaviorism theory remains relevant and effective, provided that it is adapted to contemporary educational values that emphasize student well-being, inclusivity, and holistic character development.

## **Discussion**

### **Theoretical Analysis of Stimulus-Response (S-R)**

Mechanisms in Discipline According to behavioristic learning theory, there are several main principles related to stimulus and response (Sipayung & Sitohang, 2022) Stimulus: A stimulus is an event or condition that encourages a response from an individual. A stimulus can be anything that can be detected by the senses, such as sounds, images, or touch. A relevant stimulus in the context of learning is a stimulus related to the learning environment. Response: A response is an action or response shown by an individual to a stimulus. Responses can be physical movements, behaviors, or mental responses. The response generated by the individual can be

either a desired response or an unwanted response, depending on the influence of the stimulus. Association: Behavioristic learning theory posits that individuals learn through the process of association between stimulus and response. When a particular stimulus is exposed to the individual repeatedly, the individual will associate the stimulus with the response that occurs afterwards. This process of association forms the relationship between stimulus and response in the individual's mind. Reinforcement: Reinforcement is an important concept in behavioristic learning theory. Reinforcement is a stimulus or event that increases the likelihood of the same response occurring in the future. Reinforcement can be a reward or a positive reward, such as praise, recognition, or a physical reward, or a negative reinforcement, such as eliminating unwanted consequences. By providing proper reinforcement, individuals are more likely to learn and show desired responses. Punishment: In addition to reinforcement, punishment is also a relevant concept in behavioristic learning theory. Punishment is a stimulus or event that reduces the likelihood of the same response occurring in the future. Punishment can be negative consequences, such as reprimands, corporal punishment, or reduction of privileges. By using appropriate punishment, individuals are likely to avoid unwanted responses. In behavioristic learning theory, the learning process is considered to be the result of the interaction between stimuli and responses. Individuals learn by associating stimuli with responses, and reinforcement or punishment can affect the frequency or tendency of those responses. These principles are still relevant in learning psychology today and have provided an important foundation in understanding how humans learn and adapt to their environment.

According to (A. S. Haryati, Setiawati, & Putri, 2024) Behavioristic concepts are the result of stimuli and responses that change behavior. Learning is a change in a person's ability to behave as a result of a combination of stimulus and response. If a person has shown a change in behavior, then he is admitted to have succeeded in learning something. For example, a child can't count a multiplication table. Even if he tries hard and his teacher is diligent in teaching him, if a child cannot do multiplication exercises, he is considered to have not learned. Because he is not able to provide learning results with a change. In addition, in behavioristic theory, stimulus as input and response as output are considered as the main elements in the learning process. What happens between the stimulus and the response is not considered important because it cannot be observed or measured. Therefore, any form of stimulus given by the teacher and the response generated by the students must be observable and measurable. This theory strongly emphasizes the importance of measurement as a way to find out if there has been a behavioral change in the learning process (Al Falihah, Salsabila, Wildan, & Yunus, 2024) So this theory, in learning, what is important is the input in the form of stimulus and the output in the form of a response. Stimulus is anything that the teacher gives to the student, while the response is in the form of a reaction or response from the student to the stimulus given by the teacher. The processes that occur between stimulus and response are not important to note because they are unobservable and cannot be measured. What can be observed is the stimulus and the response, therefore what the teacher gives (stimulus) and what the learner receives (response) must be observable and measurable. This theory prioritizes measurement, because measurement is an important thing to see whether or not these behavior changes occur (Huda, 2023).

Based on this concept, stimulus is the main input and the output is the response. In this case, the stimulus is everything that the teacher gives to the student, such as math tables, props, certain procedures that students use in learning something. There is no relationship between stimulus and response because it cannot be observed or measured based on behavioral theory. The only things that can be studied are stimuli and responses, so everything that the teacher presents and what the student realizes everything must be analyzed in their behavior. Theoretically, the Stimulus-Response (S-R) mechanism in student discipline rests on the assumption that

disciplinary behavior is the result of environmental formation, not just an innate talent. In this perspective, schools function as behavioral laboratories where teachers design various stimuli in the form of formal regulation and verbal instruction to trigger specific responses from students. The success of this mechanism relies heavily on the concept of the Law of Effect, where responses followed by satisfactory consequences will tend to be repeated, while responses followed by unpleasant consequences will tend to be abandoned. Thorndike (Aeni, Apriyanti, Athaillah, & Kemaliah, 2024) stated that there are 3 principles in learning Thorndike, namely: The Law of Effect states that responses followed by satisfaction or reward are likely to be amplified and will be more likely to occur in the future. In contrast, responses followed by negative consequences or punishments are likely to be suppressed and will occur less in the future. The Law of Securities emphasizes the importance of reinforcement in shaping behavior. Here are three circumstances that indicate the applicability of the law of effect (Octaria & Yustiana, 2025): a) Positive Reinforcement: The first circumstance that indicates the applicability of the Law of Effects is when the behavior is followed by satisfactory consequences or positive reinforcement. For example, if a person performs a certain action and the result is a desired satisfaction or reward, then it is likely that the person will be more likely to repeat the behavior in the future. For example, if a child studies hard and gets good grades in school, he or she may be motivated to continue studying hard because of the satisfactory results. b) Negative Reinforcement: The second circumstance that indicates the applicability of the Law of Effects is when the behavior is followed by the elimination or avoidance of unpleasant consequences or negative reinforcement. For example, if a person performs a certain action and the result is to reduce or eliminate the source of discomfort or stress, then it is likely that the person will be more likely to repeat the behavior in the future. For example, if a person is working on a homework and their mother stops nagging after the assignment is done, then the person may be more likely to do homework quickly in the future to avoid criticism. c) Punishment: The third circumstance that indicates the applicability of the Law of Effects is When the behavior is followed by unpleasant consequences or punishments. If a person performs a certain act and the result is an undesirable or unpleasant consequence, then it is likely that the behavior will be suppressed or reduced in the future. For example, if someone commits an offense and is subject to fines or other penalties, then that person may be inclined to avoid such behavior in the future to avoid unpleasant consequences. In the three above circumstances, the law of effects explains that behavioral consequences have an important influence in shaping an individual's tendency to commit or avoid certain behaviors.

This process is then reinforced through a reinforcement scheme to ensure that the response is not temporal. In a professional context, an educator not only demands compliance, but manages reinforcement strategically. Positive reinforcement, such as appreciation or social recognition, plays a role in building mental associations that "discipline provides added value for students". Instead, the use of negative reinforcement such as a reduction in the workload of tasks when students demonstrate responsibility can be a catalyst for students to avoid pressure in a productive way, so that disciplinary behavior patterns begin to settle in their cognitive structure. As we understand that reinforcement is the regulation of stimuli and responses that bring associations in learning". This means how teachers can manage the stimulus given to students and receive responses from students so that there is a good interaction during the teaching and learning process (PBM). The reinforcement used by the mentor teacher is in the form of praise for students who are active and obedient to the rules of the class. Mentor teachers also provide reinforcement for students who are not disciplined during the teaching and learning process. For example, the mentor teacher asks the student to stand at the back of the class to think about the reason why until he or she is asked to stand at the back. Even though such reinforcement has been given, there

are still students who are not able to calm down in learning in the classroom (Peea & Tangkin, 2023).

However, from the point of view of researchers, the S-R mechanism often faces challenges at the internalization stage. The main danger of this approach is the formation of "mechanistic discipline", in which students only behave well when there is external supervision or stimulus. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to carry out the process of fading (gradual reduction of stimulus) and integrate moral values into the stimulus. The goal is for behavioral control to shift from external control (teacher/rules) to internal control (self-awareness), so that the discipline that emerges is no longer just a reflex response, but a manifestation of a deeply internalized character. Applicatively, synchronization between consistent stimuli and modeling is the key to the effectiveness of this mechanism. Without consistency, students will experience cognitive confusion that weakens the S-R association. Thus, the professionalism of teachers in managing this "stimulus environment" is the main determinant of whether student discipline will grow into a sustainable school culture or just become pseudo-obedience under instructional pressure.

### **Positive Reinforcement vs Consequences**

Positive reinforcement is a strong principle and can provide great benefits when applied. For all teachers from preschool to doctoral level, use Positive Reinforcement. But we must avoid making students so dependent on reinforcement, especially if we start a structured program for students. We want them to work because of natural reinforcements (T. Haryati & Syahidin, 2023). And Positive reinforcement in the context of positive discipline refers to the use of strategies that reinforce desired behaviors through praise, recognition, or other positive incentives in response to appropriate actions (Asep & sitti hanifah, n.d.). The strategy for implementing positive discipline in schools requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach. One of them, the development of clear and measurable positive disciplinary policies and procedures is an important first step. The policy should include rules that can be understood by all members of the school community, procedures to deal with rule violations fairly and consistently, and mechanisms to involve students, parents, and school staff in the policy-making process (Asbari, Novitasari, Wardoyo, & Lafendry, 2024). This approach emphasizes improving positive behavior by paying good attention and appreciating students' efforts and achievements. With positive reinforcement, teachers and parents provide feedback that strengthens students' intrinsic motivation to continue the desired behavior. Through praise and recognition of good efforts, positive reinforcement not only builds students' self-esteem and motivation, but also creates a positive learning environment, supports positive growth, and forms harmonious relationships between authorities and disciplined individuals. In this case, reinforcement plays a role in strengthening the emergence of responses. If gain is added (positive gain), then the response will be stronger. Conversely, if the gain is reduced (negative gain), the response remains amplified. For example, when students are given additional tasks and this makes them more active in learning, then the additional tasks are a form of positive reinforcement. Meanwhile, if the reduction of assignments actually increases students' motivation to learn, then this is a form of negative reinforcement. Data shows that positive reinforcement (such as praise, achievement points, or recognition in front of the class) is more effective in the long run than physical punishment. Punishment tends to only suppress temporary behavior without changing mindset, while positive reinforcement builds pleasant associations with disciplined behavior.

### **Habit Building (Shaping)**

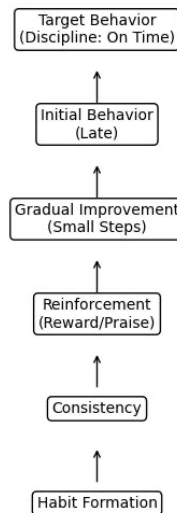


Figure 2. Habit

The shaping technique, introduced by B.F Skinner through experiments on animals and humans, offers a systematic approach to shaping desired behaviors in a structured and measurable way (Lu & Hamu, 2022). In the context of education, this technique aims to address the problem of student tardiness by forming the habit of arriving on time to school (Cecilia & Wicaksono, 2024). B.F. Skinner said shaping is the process of forming complex behaviors by using the gradual reinforcement of behaviors that are getting closer to the desired behavior. Shaping, or the formation of these behaviors, is the process by which complex or unnatural behaviors are learned through the gradual reinforcement of behaviors that are close to the desired final form. This concept was introduced by Skinner as a way to teach behaviors that are unlikely to arise spontaneously through positive or negative reinforcement. The shaping process is carried out through several structured stages. The initial stages usually involve establishing the initial behavioral standards that are closest to the goal (Habsy et al., 2024). If students are about 30 minutes late each day, the early stages of shaping may involve providing reinforcement when students arrive on time at 15 minutes before the start time. The next stage will gradually decrease tolerance until it reaches the desired time, which is to arrive on time. According to (Edy, Sunaryati, & Sumarta, 2023). Shaping uses differential reinforcement that combines the basic principles of reinforcement and removal. Differential reinforcement means providing reinforcement only for behaviors that are close to the desired behavior, while inappropriate behaviors do not gain reinforcement. This entails identifying small steps that can be measured and improved gradually until the final behavior is reached. The main focus in the shaping process is on the behavioral goals, not on the previous stage. This means that each step should be based on achieving better behavior than before, and reinforcement should be provided based on the progress made (Andayani & Madani, 2023). For example, if a student manages to arrive 10 minutes earlier than usual, they should get positive reinforcement for that progress, even if they haven't been fully on time. The application of shaping techniques to change late behavior in students requires the right conditioning to be successful. Conditioning in this context is not only limited to giving instructions or reprimands, but rather a series of systematic steps that are carefully designed to shape student behavior gradually (T. Haryati & Syahidin, 2023). This process involves a structured approach, in which the desired behavior, namely discipline in coming to school on time, is formed through small stages that can be managed and achieved by students.

Shapping techniques, which involve the gradual reinforcement of behaviors that are getting closer and closer to the target behavior, have shown promising results in lowering a supportive environment that will reinforce the desired behavior and help students to maintain the discipline that has been formed (Habsy et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for educators to involve relevant parties in this process, for example by providing parents with information about the strategies used and how they can support them at home (Andayani & Madani, 2023). The success of conditioning in shaping techniques is highly dependent on consistency in the application of reinforcement. This consistency is a key element because it creates an order that allows the subject to understand and relate clearly between the expected behavior and the positive outcome they receive. Without consistency, subjects may become confused or not fully understand the relationship between their actions and the accompanying consequences, which can hinder the process of forming the desired behavior (Fadlilah & Saraswati, 2024). For example, if the goal is to reduce the delay in coming to school, then whenever the subject manages to arrive earlier than usual, reinforcement should be provided immediately. This form of reinforcement can be a verbal compliment, a small appreciation, or another form of recognition that is meaningful to the subject. The most important thing is that the subjects receive reinforcement as soon as the positive behavior occurs, so that they can easily associate their efforts with pleasant outcomes. (Saâ, Afifulloh, & Santoso, 2023). This consistency also helps to establish a positive pattern of repetition, which will ultimately reinforce new behaviors. When subjects get reinforcement every time they try to reduce delays, they feel recognized and rewarded for their efforts (Paputungan, Rosyikhoh, & Jamaluddin, 2024). This recognition motivates them to keep trying, and over time, this effort turns into a habit. This is where shaping shows its power: not only in producing instant behavioral changes, but in creating new habits that last a long time (Saâ et al., 2023). With this method, students feel that discipline is something they can achieve (achievable). Instead of feeling like a failure because they couldn't get right right away, they felt proud of having made it through the small stages, which psychologically built a new identity as a "disciplined student".

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the implementation of behaviorism theory in the learning process is carried out through structured classroom management, consistent rule enforcement, and immediate feedback on student behavior. Teachers apply various strategies such as positive reinforcement (praise and rewards), habituation through repeated disciplined practices, and non-physical punishment in the form of educative sanctions. These stimulus-response patterns effectively guide students to understand and gradually adopt disciplined behaviors in their daily learning activities. Furthermore, the study reveals that the implementation of behavioristic approaches contributes significantly to the development of students' discipline character within a child-friendly educational framework. This contribution is reflected not only in students' compliance with rules, but also in the emergence of self-awareness, responsibility, and self-regulation. Although challenges such as potential reward dependency exist, the overall approach proves effective when applied ethically and consistently, making it relevant for fostering sustainable discipline in contemporary education.

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