



## THE PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS TO THE ROLE OF GRADUATE OF RELIGIOUS STUDY TO RELIGIOUS HARMONY IN MEDAN CITY

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**Abstract.** *This research is to describe a perception and an expectation of stakeholders to the role of the graduate of the study of religions in creating the harmony of religious people. The background of this study is the responsibility of The State Islamic University of North Sumatra, especially the study program of study of religions to contribute in creating the harmony and to resolve the conflict among religious people in Indonesia. On the other hand, this study program is never been evaluated since being established. The study location is in Medan city which is a plural city and a high risk of conflict. The research subject is the government representative, representative of religious scholars, religious instructor, interfaith practitioners, and lecturer. This research basically uses a quantitative descriptive method. However, in explanation of numerics and the description of stakeholders' expectation, it uses the qualitative approach. The theories of role, and perception are discussed. Conceptual framework and operational definition are discussed. This study finds that the perception of stakeholders is very positive to the graduate of the study of religion on their role to create the harmony of religious people. Nevertheless, among perception of knowledge, attitude, and skill, the perception of stakeholder on the skill of graduate is the lowest. The skill in creating harmony is a skill of analysis, development, communication, and management. It needs an attention from the University to improve the curricula and learning method. The expectations of stakeholders are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** Religious Harmony, Role of Graduated Study of Religion, Perception, Expectation, Skill, attitude and knowledge

### INTRODUCTON

Inter-religious harmony in Indonesia is currently facing a threat that is quite alarming. Religious sentiment is used as a medium of political power in various regions. On the same side, Indonesian society is easily incited on the news that ignites divisions between believers. Respati revealed that people are more likely to believe in hoaxes if

the information is in accordance with their opinions or attitudes<sup>1</sup>. The Indonesian government continues to build harmony between religious groups through policies that do not favor one belief and encourage harmony, strengthen systems in supporting policies, and through harmony and welfare programs. The Ministry of Religion for example issues a policy of inter-religious harmony by strengthening the insight of multicultural religious communities. Among them are the emphasis on religious education that has nuances of rahmatan lil'alam and inclusive from early childhood education to higher education. The Indonesian government also continues to encourage universities to produce scholars who can play a role in building inter-religious harmony in the community.

One of the higher education institutions that produces graduates and is believed to have competence in designing and building harmony between religious groups is the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, especially in the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, Religion Study Program (SAA Study Program). The SAA Study Program annually produces 10-30 graduates who then spread to various cities in the city to devote their knowledge to the community. Until December 2017 it was known that the number of graduates of the Religion Study which was originally a Comparative Religion study program was 620 people where the first graduates were in 1982. It was known that the Religion Study Program was initially named the Comparative Religion Study Program under the auspices of the Ushuluddin Faculty. The Ushuluddin Faculty itself was officially under IAIN North Sumatra in 1974. From the explanation of the former Dean of FUSI UIN SU it is known that the Comparative Religion Study Program was established in 1982. However, there are about 3 years of comparative religious studies, which have now become Religion Studies, that do not accept new students. Based on the narrative of the head of the Religion Study program, Dra. Husna Sari Siregar, MA, the number of SAA students until 2018 is 180 students. The graduates of the SAA Study Program since 1982 have taken a role in nation-building by working as lecturers, preachers, employees of the National Zakat Agency, madrasa teachers, and employees of the Ministry of Religion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Respati, S., in Dedi Rianto Rahardi, 2017, *Perilaku Pengguna dan Informasi Hoax di Media Sosial*, Jurnal Manajemen dan Kewirausahaan, Vol 5. No 1. Fakultas Ekonomi Bisnis, Malang, Universitas Merdeka Malang, p.66

<sup>2</sup> Data based on the result of preliminary interview at Religious studies of FUSI UIN SU, on 17 Mei 2018.

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However, since the founding of the SAA Study program in 1982, which was originally called the Comparative Study Program of Religion, until 2017 it has never been explored how the views of society and government on the competence and implementation of competencies in the wider community. Even though the community and the government are users of graduates of study programs in religions. Surely the SAA graduate users hope the graduates will meet the expectations of the community and the government, especially in terms of skills in building and maintaining harmony among religious groups.

Medan City where UIN SU is a city that is quite vulnerable in inter-religious conflicts. Although there is no surface conflict between religious groups, the intensity of differences and utterances of hatred between people shows an escalating escalation. Even the Jakarta regional election has an impact on the division between people in Medan which can be seen in daily life and from communication traffic in social media. Of course in this situation the role of graduates of religious studies is very much needed in building harmony in the people of Medan. For this reason, this paper will examine the views of the community, religious leaders and the government on the role of graduates of SAA in building inter-religious harmony in the city of Medan. The following will also be explored what public expectations are on the competency of SAA graduates to build and maintain inter-religious harmony in the city of Medan.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The perception of someone is formed influenced by factors of human self and stimulus surrounding environment. An object can be perceived differently between one person and another, this is caused by several things as stated by Sarlito W. Sarwono as follows:

- a. Attention, usually someone does not capture all the stimuli around him at once, but focuses his attention on just one or two objects
- b. Set of thoughts, someone's hopes of stimulation will arise if there is a signal, for example, a runner who has been drawn from the start, will form the thought that there will be a gun sound as a sign that he must run.
- c. Needs, momentary needs and those that are permanent in oneself will influence their perceptions
- d. Value system, the system that applies in a society also influences its perception

e. Psychiatric disorders, this will lead to misperceptions called hallucinations.

It is explained by Robbins<sup>3</sup> that even though individuals look at the same object, they can perceive it differently. There are a number of factors that work to shape and sometimes reverse perceptions. These factors are from:

- 1) Perceptors
- 2) Object or perceived
- 3) Context of the situation in which the perception is carried out

According to Sarwono, someone who has a certain role such as a doctor, student, parent, woman, etc., is expected to have someone behave according to that role. A doctor treats a doctor. So because the status is a doctor, he must treat patients who come to him and behavior is determined by his social role.<sup>4</sup>

W. J.S Purwadarminta states Harmony is an attitude or tolerant in the form of respecting and allowing a position, opinion, views, beliefs and others that are different from the establishment. From the conception of harmony it can be extracted from harmony, namely the conditions and processes created and the maintenance of patterns - patterns of interaction that vary among autonomous units (elements / sub-systems). Harmony reflects reciprocal relationships characterized by mutual acceptance, mutual trust, mutual respect and respect, and an attitude of understanding togetherness.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, inter-religious harmony also has challenges, where it must be recognized that every religion wants to expand its worshipers or followers. Islam and Christianity for example are two religious proselytizing that carry out their missionary mission. This is likely to cause friction and mutual suspicion. Another obstacle in harmony between religious people is feeling themselves and the most true religion. This is also mentioned as truth-claim. As a pioneer of harmony, individuals or groups who are the actors of the role of building harmony must build an understanding that each religion has their own truths and beliefs. Thus the role actors can stand between parties who want to build harmony. The next challenge in building harmony is the fact that among religious believers do not understand the teachings of their own religion or the teachings of other religions. This misunderstanding is then implemented suspiciously in other religions, mocking and insulting God or other religious methods of worship. So

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<sup>3</sup> Robbins, Opcit. P. 1.49.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, P. 89

<sup>5</sup> Ridwan Lubis, 2005, *Cetak Biru Peran Agama*, Jakarta, Puslitbang, 2005. P.7-8

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the opposite, someone who takes the role of building harmony must have the knowledge and understanding of the teachings of one's own religion deeply, and know and appreciate the teachings of other religions, in order to understand the values contained by each different religion, and also understand the universal values of each Religion that can be capitalized is an important instrument in building inter-religious harmony

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research method used is a mix - quantitative and descriptive qualitative methods. The depth of hope in the role and skills of SAA graduates in building harmony is also used by qualitative methods. The basic principle is the same, as Neuman said "Either quantitative or qualitative styles, data are empirical representation of the concept, or measurement links data to the concepts".<sup>6</sup>

The subject of this study was the people of Medan city represented by clerics, clerics, teachers, pastors and community leaders totaling 32 people in 21 sub-districts of Medan City and the Medan City government represented by the Medan city religious ministry office, as well as the religious affairs office in the city sub-district Field. The subject of this study was determined based on purposive sampling, namely the taking of respondents with the consideration that the research subjects knew the comparative religion study program or the study of religions in the Ushuluddin Faculty and UIN SU Islamic Studies. The method of data collection is done by using open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis is done through descriptive likert coding and analysis. While qualitative data is analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis techniques, namely through the stages of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing and verification of data found.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Perception of Roles and Ability of Graduates in Building Harmony**

Until December 2016, the population of Medan city was 2,229,408, of which 1,128,388 were women. Judging from the composition of the faithful in Medan, it can be seen that there were 1,207,541 Muslims, 418,876 Protestants, 143,637 Catholics, 209,646 Buddhists, 43,509 Hindus and 53 other religions including Confucians.

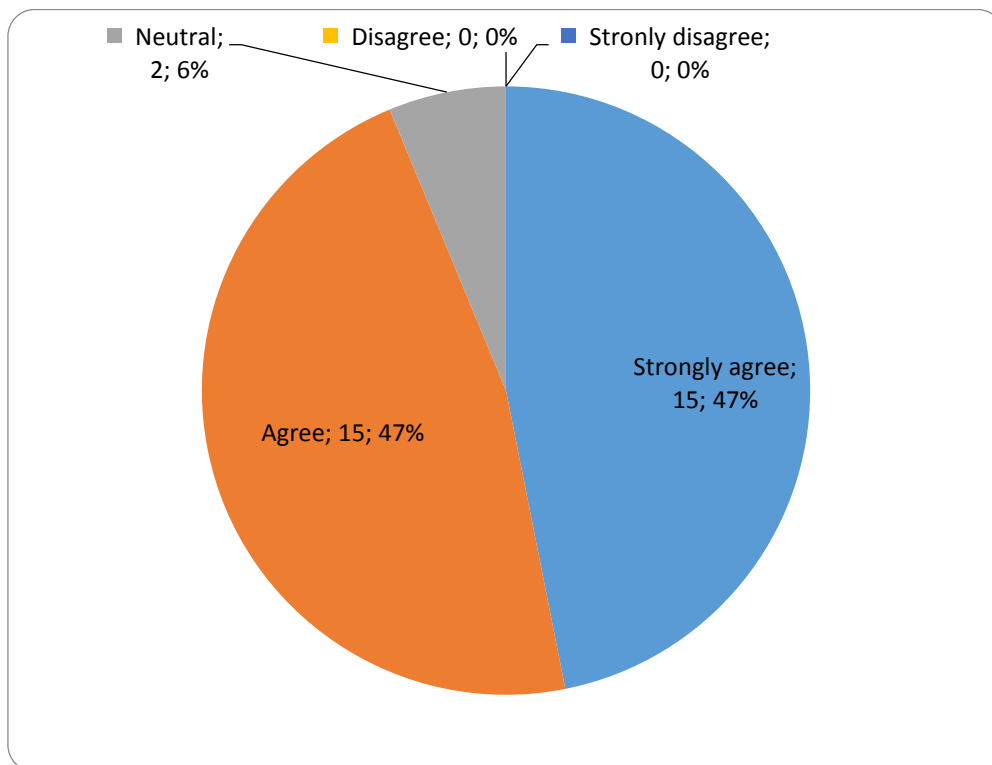
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<sup>6</sup> Neuman Lawrence, 2004, *Basic of Social Research, Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, University of Wisconsin, USA. P.108

Perception of the role of graduates of the SAA study program in building inter-religious harmony in the city of Medan is measured from 1) Roles and abilities in analyzing harmony situations, 2) Roles and abilities of Involvement and Ability to build harmony, 3) Roles and Ability to communicate between religious people and 4) Roles and Capabilities in managing harmony. From the results of data analysis it is known that from the four categories of respondents' perceptions are very positive on the role and ability of SAA graduates in building inter-religious harmony in the city of Medan. The percentage score of stakeholders' perceptions which are always in the range of 82 - 91% shows a very positive perception.

As an example of stakeholder perceptions that SAA graduates have very positive knowledge of harmony between religious people with a percentage score of 88.1% SAA graduates

**Diagram of Perception that SAA Graduates Have Knowledge of Inter-Religious Harmony**



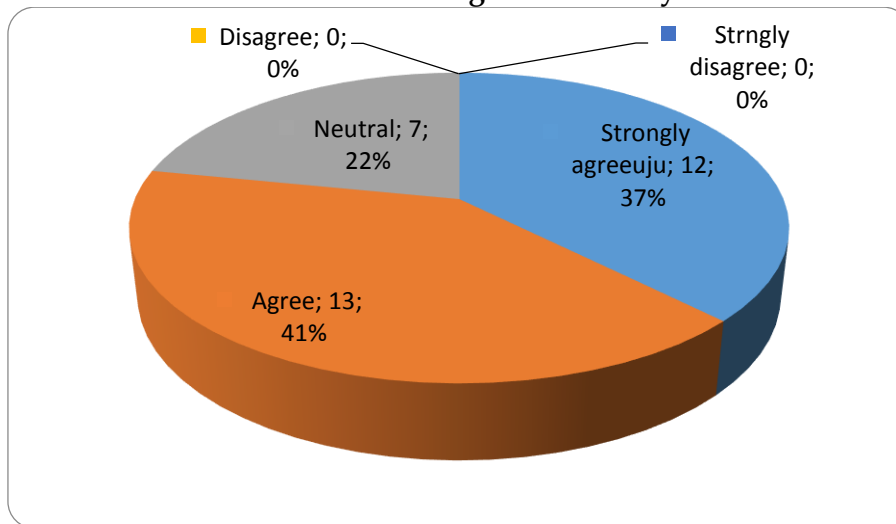
The research result data of 2018

Therefore, in terms of skills in mapping and analyzing harmony, stakeholder perceptions were also very positive reaching 83.12%. The diagram below shows this perception.

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**Diagram of Perception That SAA Graduates Have Skills in Solving and Analyzing Situations of Inter-Religious Harmony**



The Source of Research Data 2018

Stakeholders stated that SAA graduates should have strong Islamic knowledge. Thus in the learning process while still in college must be equipped with Islamic knowledge and science that strengthen the recognition of diversity in Indonesia. This was stated by an Al Wasliyah Islamic education practitioner in an interview in August 2018.

While other subjects who came from Islamic religious instructors, said that universities must provide knowledge about religious harmony related to nation building. To note that the SAA FUSI UIN SU study program has Conflict Resolution and Social Workers courses for VII semester SAA students. Education practitioners in higher education have the perspective that SAA students should be included in the research and carry out workshops on harmony.

Bhikhu Dirapuno, a Buddhist monk from the Theravada temple stated, "It is recommended that universities provide direct knowledge and understanding of the situation of religious life and harmony in the community concerned. Thus, students

learn directly from the community, not only to hear from third parties or read from books".<sup>7</sup>

The next category in measuring stakeholder perceptions of the role and skills of SAA graduates in building inter-religious harmony in the city of Medan is the views of stakeholders on the skills of SAA graduates in managing existing conflicts.

Perception table that SAA graduates have skills in managing conflict

No	Statements	%
1	Strongly agree	40,62
2	Agree	46,88
3	Neutral	12,5
4	Disagree	0
5	Strongly disagree	0
	Total	100

Source: Resaearch data 2018

With a score percentage reaching 85.63%. Then stakeholder perceptions are very positive. Stakeholders said that SAA graduates should have good communication skills, especially being able to interact with followers of other religions.<sup>8</sup>

#### Description between categories of role and ability perceptions

Of the four categories of perceptions of the role of SAA graduates in building inter-religious harmony, a percentage of each category can be obtained. To analyze descriptive comparison of percentages between categories can be seen in the table below:

Comparison Table Percentage of Perception categories on the Role and Ability of Graduates of Religion in Building Inter-Religious Harmony in Medan City

Role Categories	Roles	Ability Categories		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skills
Harmony Analysis	85,63%	88,1%	86,25%	83,12%
Harmony Deveopment	85%	88,75%	85%	82,5%
Inter-reliogion Communication	85,62%	89,37%	86,25%	83,12%

Source: Research data of 2018

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Bikhu Dirapuno in kuil Theravada, Cemara Asri Residents, Medan, September 2018.

<sup>8</sup> The result of interview with the lecturer of UIN SU, September 2018



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The comparison table between the categories above shows that the stakeholders' perceptions in the knowledge category of SAA graduates are the most positive perceptions of all categories of role abilities in building harmony. From the table data, it can also be seen that the lowest views of stakeholders are in the category of skills of SAA graduates in building harmony. The above data can be concluded that although stakeholder perceptions are very positive in all indicators of the ability of SAA graduates to carry out their role in building harmony, the skills of SAA graduates are important to the attention of SAA study program education managers because they get the lowest percentage. On the same side the stakeholders' perceptions of the overall role of SAA graduates in building harmony also received an average percentage (85%) which was slightly above the percentage of perceptions of skills. Thus it can be seen that the perception of the research subject on the skills of SAA graduates relates to their perceptions of the role of SAA graduates in building inter-religious harmony.

### **Expectation of the roles and skills in analyzing the Harmony Situation**

The research subjects hoped that the SAA graduates had a forum with SAA graduates, one of whose functions is to periodically monitor the situation of harmony among people in the city of Medan. Another function of the forum is to increase the human resources of SAA graduates including SAA students with sufficient funds. The head of the Medan Ministry of Religion office said, "SAA needs to form a container for SAA graduates, and collaborate with others such as FKUB to involve alumni in harmony activities". Besides that stakeholders also hoped that SAA graduates who became lecturers and practitioners would do more research related to religious life that could be used as a guide for policy makers and the government.

However, the stakeholders also emphasized on UIN SU and especially SAA study programs to first have a harmony design and model in the city of Medan. So that the design and model that became a guide in education for SAA students and also became a model in the implementation of harmony in Medan, as a manifestation of community service. A research subject with a religious extension background said, "the role of SAA graduates in building harmony must be reflected from the UIN SU itself which should have a harmony design". This shows that UIN SU must be serious in determining the curriculum for education, research and community service in SAA study programs. so that it can be manifested in responding to the challenges of harmony

between religious people not only in the city of Medan but also in the province of North Sumatra.

### **Expectations on the Role of High School Graduates in Building Harmony**

The stakeholders' hope for the role of SAA graduates in building harmony is so that graduates become initiators in initiating dialogue and building religious harmony in the city of Medan. Likewise, SAA graduates are expected to increase dialogue between religious followers, and conduct community service. A stakeholder who is also a monk stated, "Religious studies graduates must play an active role in learning for the community and doing inter-religious activities so as to encourage mutual understanding and harmony".<sup>9</sup>

To fulfill this role, SAA graduates are expected to have knowledge of multiculturalism, local wisdom, and conflict management. Graduates are also expected to have conflict management skills. The expectations of these stakeholders are in line with the achievement of the specific competency standards of SAA study program graduates, namely being able to make alternative efforts in carrying out social engineering and harmony in religious life. The achievement of competencies is supported by courses in SAA study programs, namely pluralism and multiculturalism, sociology of religion, religions in Southeast Asia. Conflict cases in Indonesia and conflict resolution subjects and social workers.

### **Expectations on the Role of High School Graduates in Communication between Religion and Stakeholders**

SAA graduates are expected by stakeholders to play more roles in building dialogue with other religions and engaging in interfaith forums. Graduates were also encouraged to increase comparative studies to the College of Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian theology. The medium of communication forums is one of the media that can be used to strengthen communication not only between religious followers, but also with governments and organizations concerned with the issue of harmony.

For this reason SAA graduates are expected to have knowledge of the science of mass communication and communication, journalism, the history of religion, ethics and culture of the state, psychology of harmony, and relations between institutions and

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<sup>9</sup>The result of interview with bikhu theravada, Cemara Asri, Medan, September 2018.

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religious institutions. Interfaith practitioners expressed the knowledge of harmony communication that SAA graduates must possess is understanding theology of other religions, cultures and even religious customs so that they can sit together in building communication, and understand the psychology of religion.

On the skill side, SAA graduates are expected to have the ability to speak in public, master local and non-local languages, the ability to have dialogues, including discussions to learn and understand the teachings of other religions, organizational skills and public ethics and polite character. Other research subjects (pastors) revealed that SAA graduates must master science and technology, especially in social media.

Regarding the attitudes that must be possessed by graduates, the SAA study program has clearly regulated the learning outcomes and general attitudes of values, namely: 5) Respecting the diversity of cultures, views, religions, and beliefs and opinions or original findings of others. 6) Cooperate and have social sensitivity and concern for the community and the environment. " While related skills there is no written profile in the study program SAA communication skills competencies that must be achieved by SAA graduates.

### **CONCLUSION**

1. The population of Medan is 2,229,408 people, of which 50.61% are women, and have a Muslim population of 1,207,541 people, followed by the largest number of Protestants, Buddhists, Catholics, Hindus and other religions including Confucianism.
2. The Religion Study Program of the Faculty of Ushhuluddin and Islamic Studies UIN SU which has been established since 1974 has one of its missions to improve strategic, productive, innovative and functional departmental cooperation with various parties in the context of implementing the three principles of Higher Education (PT), especially in an effort to strengthen the management of religious life that is harmonious, harmonious and peaceful, both at the local and national level.
3. Stakeholder perception on the role of SAA graduates in analyzing, building, communicating between religions and stakeholders and managing harmony is very positive

4. Stakeholder perceptions of the abilities possessed by SAA graduates in analyzing, building, communicating between religions and stakeholders as well as managing harmony which consists of knowledge skills, attitudes and skills are very positive.
5. Stakeholder expectations on the role of SAA graduates include
  - The role of analyzing harmony: periodically monitoring the situation of harmony among the people, forming a container for SAA graduates, and collaborating with others such as FKUB to involve alumni in harmony activities, conducting research related to religious life.
  - The role of building harmony: became the initiator in initiating dialogue and building harmony among religious people in Medan, increasing dialogue among religious followers, and serving the community and playing an active role in learning for the community and inter-religious activities.
  - The role of communication between religious adherents and stakeholders: play more roles in building dialogue with other religions, engaging in interfaith forums and increasing comparative studies to the Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian Colleges of theology
  - The role of managing harmony: Active monitoring of inter-religious harmony, and educators and community educators related to harmony.
6. The expectations of stakeholders in the skills that must be possessed by SAA graduates to play a role in building religious harmony are
  - Harmony analysis: religious research skills and related religious sociology
  - Building harmony: Conflict management skills
  - Communication between people and stakeholders: public speaking skills, mastering local and non-local languages, dialogue including discussion to learn and understand the teachings of other religions, and organizational skills.
  - Manage harmony: skills in interfaith dialogue, skills in building harmony programs, social media communication skills, writing skills and research skills.
7. Although stakeholder perceptions are very positive in all indicators of the ability of SAA graduates to carry out their role in building harmony, but the perception

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of the skills of SAA graduates gets the lowest percentage. On the same side the stakeholders' perceptions of the overall role of SAA graduates in building harmony also received an average percentage (85%) which was slightly above the percentage of perceptions of skills. Thus it can be seen that the perception of the research subject on the skills of SAA graduates relates to their perceptions of the role of SAA graduates in building inter-religious harmony.

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