

Redefining Loyalty: A Qualitative Exploration of the Job-Hopping Paradox and Occupational Commitment in Generation Z

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Abstract. Job hopping among Generation Z (Gen Z) is often viewed as evidence of weakened organizational loyalty, and traditional measures that define commitment in terms of job tenure do not adequately capture the changing values of the contemporary workforce. Therefore, the study aimed to determine how Indonesian Gen Z employees navigate the tension between frequent career mobility and organizational commitment. Through in-depth interviews (N = 6) with active job hoppers, thematic analysis showed a significant inconsistency. Although participants frequently left organizations, individual occupational commitment remained strong, with professional steadfastness persisting regardless of frequent job transitions. The results indicated that job hopping was not a rejection of responsibility but rather a strategic response to toxic leadership, excessive workloads, and career stagnation. For Gen Z, loyalty had shifted from “where one works” to “how one works,” prioritizing integrity and professional identity over institutional longevity. In this regard, the analysis challenged the prevailing “disloyalty” narrative and offered organizations a roadmap for moving from seniority-based retention toward supportive environments that promoted professional growth.

Keywords: Generation Z, Job hopping, Occupational commitment, Organizational commitment

Redefinisi Loyalitas: Eksplorasi Kualitatif Paradoks *Job Hopping* dan Komitmen Profesional pada Generasi Z

Abstrak. Meningkatnya fenomena job hopping pada Generasi Z sering kali disalahartikan sebagai krisis loyalitas. Namun, metrik tradisional yang menyamakan komitmen dengan durasi masa kerja gagal menangkap dinamika kerja modern. Studi kualitatif ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana karyawan Generasi Z di Indonesia memaknai komitmen di tengah mobilitas karier yang tinggi. Melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap partisipan yang aktif melakukan job hopping, analisis tematik mengungkap sebuah paradoks: meskipun partisipan berpindah organisasi secara frekuen, mereka menunjukkan komitmen okupasional (profesional) yang sangat kuat pada bidang yang sama. Temuan kami menunjukkan bahwa job hopping bukan dipicu oleh kurangnya integritas, melainkan sebagai respons adaptif terhadap lingkungan kerja toksik, beban kerja berlebih, dan stagnasi karier. Bagi Generasi Z, komitmen tidak didefinisikan oleh “di mana mereka bekerja,” melainkan oleh profesionalisme dan tanggung jawab pada “apa yang mereka kerjakan.” Studi ini menantang stigma ketidakloyalan dan mendesak organisasi untuk bertransformasi dari model retensi berbasis senioritas menuju lingkungan kerja suportif yang menghargai pengembangan identitas profesional.

Kata Kunci: generasi z, *job hopping*, komitmen organisasi, komitmen profesional

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Introduction

Job hopping is commonly defined as the voluntary movement of employees between employers in a relatively short period and has become increasingly prevalent in the current labor market. Younger generations, particularly Generation Z (Gen Z), show a greater tendency to change jobs in one to two years, while older generations often valued long tenure as a symbol of loyalty (Putri, 2021). This trend has been fueled by the rise of flexible work arrangements, digital job platforms, and shifting career values. In Indonesia and several countries, the pattern first gained a bad reputation with Millennials and continues to expand among Gen Z as labor markets become more flexible and digital job search frictions decline (Rivers, 2018).

The phenomenon has raised concerns because frequent turnover brings costs and consequences for organizations. Companies often experience disruptions in workforce stability, additional expenses in recruitment and training, as well as challenges in long-term planning (Tran et al., 2025). Furthermore, employees who remain may feel burdened as individuals take on the workload of colleagues who have left, which can affect morale and productivity (Ramadhani et al., 2023). These ripple effects make job hopping an urgent topic for organizations, particularly those that depend heavily on team-based collaboration and consistent performance.

Based on the description above, it is necessary to revisit the concept of organizational commitment, which has long been used to explain employee retention. Classic theories show commitment as a psychological bond between employees and organizations. The most widely used framework, developed by Meyer and Allen, describes three dimensions of commitment, namely, affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment of an employee to the organization, continuance commitment comprises the perceived cost of leaving, and normative commitment reflects a sense of moral obligation to stay (Wazni et al., 2022). Despite this multidimensional framework, much applied literature continues to operationalize commitment primarily through tenure, categorizing employees who remain in an organization for many years as having higher commitment (Agustina & Mahdi, 2025). For instance, Hadiyani (2024) recommended that employees who stayed for 10 to 15 years showed strong organizational commitment, reinforcing duration as the central indicator of loyalty.

The method may no longer provide a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary workforce. Gen Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, now represents a large portion of the working-age population, approximately 74.93 million individuals or 27.94% of the total population in Indonesia (Sawitri, 2023). As the newest

entrants into the labor market, Gen Z employees develop careers in contexts shaped by rapid technological change, social media, and recent global disruptions. All these factors influence the expectations and attitudes toward work and organizations.

Gen Z is often characterized as adaptable, open to diversity, and highly oriented toward continuous learning and self-development. The group tends to value meaningful work, personal growth, and work-life balance alongside financial security (Humaira et al., 2024; Zahari & Puteh, 2023). Similarly, Gen Z are frequently labeled as fragile or as part of a “strawberry generation” that easily gives up under pressure (Ghazaly et al., 2024). These characterizations risk oversimplifying workplace behavior and obscuring more nuanced forms of commitment that may not be reflected in long-term tenure.

Entering the workforce, Gen Z also faces significant challenges that complicate career trajectories. Competition for entry-level positions is intense, with digital platforms widening access and also expanding the applicant pool. As a Gen Z worker expressed,

“I would say what is more difficult for Gen Z is applying for the first experience. There is definitely way more competition with Gen Z compared to any other generation.” (Interview with Gen Z worker, 2025).

Outside entry barriers, the group often struggles with unsupportive supervisors, unclear feedback, and toxic work environments

that undermine psychological safety and motivation (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Zahari & Puteh, 2023). This enables job transitions to be a rational response rather than a lack of commitment.

Several studies continue to depend on tenure as the primary indicator of organizational commitment (Hadiyani, 2024; Srilugaivi & Nirmalasari, 2019). This dominant method leaves limited space to examine how younger employees conceptualize commitment outside staying in one organization. Developing patterns show that Gen Z may express commitment through responsibility, performance, and ethical conduct while employed, rather than through prolonged organizational attachment.

The analysis addresses the study questions, which are as follows. What factors drive the decisions to move between jobs? How do Gen Z employees perceive job hopping and organizational commitment? What implications do these perspectives have for organizations aiming to attract and retain Gen Z employees?

The objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing Gen Z job mobility decisions and to explore the perceptions of job hopping and organizational commitment among Gen Z employees. In addition, the objective is to identify the implications of the results for organizations aiming to attract and retain Gen Z employees.

Method

This study used a qualitative method with an instrumental case design. An instrumental case study allowed a particular event to be examined as a process of understanding a broader issue or phenomenon outside the case (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023). This design was considered appropriate for exploring how Gen Z employees interpreted job hopping, the fundamental reasons for the behavior, and the relationship with organizational commitment from an individual perspective.

Participants were members of Gen Z who were actively entering the workforce (Claristia & Etikariena, 2024). Inclusion criteria required participants to be employed in part-time or full-time positions, excluding freelancers, and to have previous experience of job hopping. The exclusion of freelancers was based on the consideration that these individuals were not bound by ongoing employment contracts, as the work typically ended upon project completion. In this study, job hopping was defined as changing jobs in less than two years of tenure in the same organization (Deti et al., 2023). Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, a non-probability method often applied in qualitative analysis to select individuals who possessed relevant experience and characteristics consistent with the study objectives (Suriani et al., 2023). The method enabled this study to obtain an in-depth understanding from participants who were

directly included in the phenomenon under study.

Data collection was conducted in two stages during the process of the analysis. The first stage comprised the distribution of an open-ended questionnaire, which functioned as a preliminary screening tool. This questionnaire was used to obtain demographic information and explore work histories and job hopping experiences of participants, ensuring consistency with the study criteria. Sample questions included *“Are you currently working in a company?”* and *“How long have you worked in the company?”* Responses from this stage also provided initial contextual information to inform the subsequent interview process.

The second stage consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants who met the inclusion criteria. Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow the analysis to follow a set of guiding questions while remaining flexible to explore developing themes following the responses of participants (Ruslin et al., 2022). For example, guiding questions included *“In your opinion, what does commitment to a company by an employee appear?”* Additional probing questions were asked as needed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of participants.

The study instruments were reviewed through expert judgment to ensure content validity before data collection. The interview

guide and questionnaire were developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks and then evaluated by an expert psychologist specializing in industrial as well as organizational psychology. Feedback from the expert was used to revise and refine the instruments to ensure suitability for capturing the experiences of participants accurately.

Ethical considerations were integrated throughout the study process. Informed consent was obtained during the questionnaire stage, with participants receiving explanations of the purpose, procedures, and the rights of the analysis. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing identities of participants in all records and reports.

Interview data were analyzed using qualitative coding methods to identify patterns and themes (Robbani, 2022). The analysis

included open coding to label major concepts and axial coding to group these codes into broader categories and examine relationships between the features. Source triangulation was used by comparing findings from the questionnaire and interview data to improve data credibility, strengthening the trustworthiness of the results (Nurfajriani et al, 2024).

Results

This study aimed to address three main questions, which were as follows. (1) The perspectives and fundamental reasons for job hopping by Gen Z, (2) understanding of individual of organizational commitment, and (3) the expectations as well as recommendations for companies to improve retention. The results of the analysis were presented in relation to these study questions.

Table 1*Questionnaire Participants*

Name	Age	Gender	Employment Status	Job Hopping Frequency
EH	25	Male	Currently employed	2
MT	25	Female	Currently employed	1
J	25	Female	Currently employed	3
CP	33	Male	Currently employed	Never
DA	25	Male	Currently employed	2
IM	25	Male	Currently employed	3
No	28	Male	Currently employed	2
A	26	Male	Currently employed	2
TKE	27	Male	Currently employed	2
JM	42	Female	Currently employed	1
R	25	Female	Currently employed	3
C	26	Female	Currently employed	2
CT	21	Female	Currently employed	2
F	26	Male	Currently employed	3
S	21	Male	Currently employed	2
Na	24	Female	Currently employed	2

An initial questionnaire was distributed to 16 individuals through Google Form to obtain basic demographic information to answer the questions. A subsequent screening process was later conducted to ensure consistency with the inclusion criteria, namely that participants belonged to Gen

Z, had work experience in part-time or full-time positions, and had previously engaged in job hopping. From this process, six participants met the criteria and agreed to proceed to the interview stage, as individual demographic characteristics were shown in Table 2.

Table 2*Demographic Participants*

Name	Age	Gender	Field of Employment	Job Hopping Frequency
CT	21	Female	FnB	2
C	26	Female	Graphic design	2
J	25	Female	Interior	3
TKE	27	Male	Administration	2
Na	24	Female	Barista	2
EH	25	Male	Manufacture and Constructions	2

The participants were aged between 21 and 27 years, represented both genders, and came from diverse occupational fields. Although all had changed jobs two to three

times, the participants remained in the same line of work, indicating continuity in career direction rather than random mobility.

Table 3*Factors Influencing Job Hopping*

Theme	Sub theme (1)	Sub theme (2)
Reasons/Factors for Job Hopping	Unhealthy Work Environment	Coworkers undermined each other.
		Personal conflicts with colleagues.
		Sense of seniority in the workplace.
	Mismatch with Supervisor	Different working styles with the supervisor.
		Supervisor provided tasks without guidance.
		Supervisor often blames or scolds.
		Lack of appreciation from supervisor when work was performed well.
	Excessive Workload/Pressure	Asked to work beyond normal hours.
		Given excessive jobs.
		Unequal task distribution among coworkers.
		Job description differed from what was promised initially.
	Compensation/ Salary Issues	Salary insufficient to meet living needs.
		Salary not consistent with job performance.
		Income not fixed (depended on events).
		Offered another job with higher pay.
	Stagnant Career	Prospects appear unpromising.
		Feeling stuck and desire for more challenging work.
		Wanting to step out of the comfort zone.
	Feeling of Boredom	Feeling bored and uncomfortable in the company.
	Self-Exploration	Improving CV and portfolios.
		Explore opportunities in other companies.

The results, related to the first study question, showed that job hopping among Gen Z was primarily driven by workplace-related push factors rather than impulsive behavior. As shown in Table 3, the most frequently

reported factor was an unhealthy work environment. Participants described experiences of interpersonal conflict, lack of support among coworkers, and the misuse of seniority, which formed discomfort as well as

emotional strain. These environments reduced the motivation of the group to remain in the organization despite efforts to adapt.

Another prominent factor observed during the analysis was mismatch with supervisors. Participants reported difficulties arising from unclear guidance, lack of appreciation, harsh communication styles, and blame-oriented leadership. These supervisory issues often intensified feelings of frustration and discouragement, leading participants to reconsider the employment. Excessive workload and job pressure also contributed to job hopping, particularly when tasks exceeded agreed job descriptions, working hours extended outside reasonable limits, or responsibilities were distributed unequally.

Compensation-related concerns influenced the decisions of participants, including salaries that did not meet living needs, inconsistent, or were perceived as disproportionate to the performance. Stagnant career prospects and feelings of boredom also inspired participants to pursue more challenging roles. Importantly, job hopping was associated with self-exploration, as participants viewed job changes as opportunities to improve skills, portfolios, and career clarity.

Participants generally perceived job hopping as a rational and responsible selection when preceded by effort and reflection, regardless of recognizing potential negative stigma. The group explained that leaving a job should not be impulsive but follow careful consideration of personal growth and workplace conditions.

Table 4

Perspectives on Organizational Commitment

Theme	Sub theme (1)	Sub theme (2)
Perspectives on Organizational Commitment	Professional Responsibility Commitment	Have a sense of responsibility for the assigned tasks Giving maximum effort for the company Demonstrating a level of quality that the company could depend on
	Ethical Contractual Commitment	Ability to maintain confidentiality of the company Avoiding any actions that could harm the company Committing in accordance with the agreed employment contract Obeying established rules and regulations

Regarding organizational commitment, participants defined commitment in terms of how individuals behaved and satisfied ethical obligations during employment, rather than through long-term attachment to a single organization. Table 4 showed two core domains that appeared, namely, professional responsibility and ethical contractual commitment.

The first domain was professional responsibility commitment, which referred to how employees conducted assigned roles with diligence, accountability, and quality. Participants associated organizational commitment with giving maximum effort, completing tasks responsibly, and maintaining a level of performance that the organization could depend on, regardless of the length of individual tenure.

The second domain was ethical contractual commitment, which prioritized

devotion to formal and moral obligations in the employment relationship. This included obeying organizational rules and regulations, maintaining confidentiality, avoiding actions that could harm the company, and performing responsibilities in accordance with the agreed employment contract. For participants, commitment was understood as honoring these obligations till the expiration of the contract.

This study showed that organizational commitment among Gen Z was bounded and situational, limited to the professional and ethical responsibilities in the organization. Outside the mentioned scope, participants presented a stronger orientation toward occupational commitment, characterized by sustained loyalty to the profession, skill development, and long-term career goals rather than attachment to a specific employer.

Table 5*Suggestions for Companies to Retain Generation Z Employees*

Theme	Sub theme (1)	Sub theme (2)
Recommendations to reduce the level of job hopping among Gen Z	Recommendations to improve employee welfare	Provide on-time salary payments and regular salary increases.
		Provide health benefits.
		Promote a sense of belonging/closeness in the company environment.
	Recommendations for improving company systems	Offer flexible working hours for employees, such as the option to work from home (WFH) for certain tasks.
		Improve company structure to be more evident and systematic.
		Form policies allowing employees to transfer between divisions in the company.
		Allow supervisors/managers to select personal team members during recruitment to ensure better work-style fit.

Participants expressed personal expectations and recommendations for organizations regarding employee retention, as shown in Table 5. The individuals prioritized the importance of employee welfare, including timely and fair compensation, health benefits, flexible working arrangements, and a sense of belonging in the workplace. Flexible systems, such as work-from-home options, were viewed as signals of trust and organizational support.

The need for evident and more structured organizational systems was requested by the participants. Recommendations included transparent career paths, opportunities for internal mobility across divisions, and allowing

supervisors to build teams with compatible working styles. These system-level improvements were observed as crucial for promoting engagement and reducing unnecessary turnover.

The expectations proposed that Gen Z employees were not disengaged from work, but were pursuing environments that supported growth, fairness, and psychological safety. According to the group, retention depended on supportive leadership, evident structures, and workplaces that enable both professional development and well-being. By adapting leadership practices and organizational policies to these generational needs, employers could

build stronger as well as more sustainable relationships with Gen Z talent.

Discussion

The results provided a comprehensive analysis of how Gen Z employees in Indonesia perceived job hopping and organizational commitment. Rather than perceiving job mobility as a form of disloyalty, the results showed that Gen Z viewed the action as a natural and even necessary part of career development. This perspective reflected a generational shift in how commitment was understood, which was no longer measured by the duration of employment, but by the sense of purpose, growth, and association between personal and organizational values.

The Key Drivers of Job Hopping

The most frequent reason behind the decision of participants to change jobs was related to an unsupportive or unhealthy work environment. Several participants mentioned interpersonal conflicts, lack of teamwork, and hierarchical tension that formed discomfort and affected psychological well-being. These results were consistent with Zahari & Puteh (2023), who found that Gen Z highly valued supportive, open, and collaborative workplaces. When these conditions were absent, motivation and satisfaction declined, increasing the probability of turnover.

Another important factor observed during the analysis was the relationship with supervisors. Participants described leaders who

failed to provide clear guidance, feedback, or appreciation for work. This result supported the assumption of Claristia & Etikariena (2024), who explained that perceived supervisor support significantly influenced the commitment of Gen Z to an organization. When leaders failed to show support and recognition, younger employees tended to feel undervalued and were more willing to pursue better environments.

Based on the description above, excessive workload and role ambiguity appeared as reasons for dissatisfaction. Some participants were required to handle multiple tasks outside the original job scope, leading to fatigue and frustration. This showed that job hopping was driven by external rewards and often originated from unmet psychological and developmental needs in the workplace.

A different recurring theme was the perception of limited career growth opportunities. Several participants expressed that leaving previous jobs was caused by stagnation, with few chances to learn new skills or take on new challenges. This result was consistent with Azinuddin et al. (2021), who found that limited opportunities for self-development pushed employees to pursue new experiences.

Boredom and the desire to leave comfort zone were frequently mentioned during the analysis. Gen Z participants expressed a strong motivation to explore new roles and environments as a way to gain broader

experience. This pattern was consistent with Humaira et al. (2024), who described Gen Z as an open-minded and exploration-driven generation, eager to try various opportunities before settling on a long-term career path. Compared to Millennials, who tend to be more idealistic and oriented toward climbing the corporate ladder (Sa'idah et al., 2020), Gen Z valued exploration and novelty.

The results showed that job hopping among Gen Z could be interpreted as a proactive effort to achieve self-development rather than as instability or lack of perseverance. The group viewed each transition as part of a learning journey to identify which environment best suits personal skills, interests, and aspirations.

Redefining Organizational Commitment

Traditional studies on organizational commitment often equated commitment with tenure, assuming that the longer an employee stayed, the higher the commitment level (Hadiyani, 2024). This perspective was associated with the three-component model from Allen and Meyer, which conceptualized organizational commitment as affective attachment, normative obligation to remain, and continuance commitment based on the perceived costs of leaving (Wazni et al., 2022). However, the results of the present analysis showed a significant shift in how Gen Z employees conceptualized organizational commitment.

Participants consistently indicated that commitment was not determined by how long

an individual stayed in a single organization, but by how responsibly and ethically an individual performed the role as an employee. In this study, organizational commitment was best understood as **professional responsibility commitment**, which referred to performing tasks diligently, delivering reliable work quality, and following organizational rules and expectations. Commitment was shown through concrete actions rather than emotional attachment or long-term intention to stay. This result indicated a shift from affective and continuance commitment, as participants did not associate commitment with emotional bonds or perceived costs of leaving, but with maintaining professionalism during the tenure.

A different domain that appeared was ethical obligation commitment, reflected in the importance of integrity, confidentiality, and avoiding actions among participants that could harm the organization. Compared to normative commitment in the framework of Allen and Meyer, which implied a moral obligation to remain with an organization, ethical obligation commitment in this study was bounded to the employment period. Gen Z employees felt ethically responsible to act correctly as part of an organization, and this responsibility did not change into long-term loyalty.

An important complementary result was that all participants who engaged in job hopping remained in the same occupational field. This strengthened the argument that Gen Z showed stronger occupational commitment than

organizational obligation. As explained by Wibowo (2022), occupational commitment referred to loyalty and identification with the profession of an individual rather than with a specific organization. In this study, as organizational commitment was expressed through professional responsibility and ethical conduct, long-term loyalty and identity were directed toward career development as well as expertise in a selected field. This shift had important implications for how organizations conceptualized, measured, and promoted commitment among younger employees, particularly in contexts characterized by increased job mobility as well as career exploration.

Emotional experience and psychological resilience

This study showed that the emotional experience surrounding job hopping varied widely among participants. Several individuals expressed sadness, guilt, or confusion before deciding to leave, while others felt relieved and optimistic once a better opportunity was found. These emotional responses showed that the decision to move was rarely impulsive, rather, the action included considerable reflection and emotional processing.

Contrary to the stereotype of Gen Z as the “strawberry generation”, fragile and easily broken under pressure (Ghazaly et al, 2024), the analysis showed the opposite. Several participants reported attempting to adapt, communicate, or negotiate changes before

eventually deciding to resign, signifying resilience and self-awareness. Rather than passively enduring unhealthy situations, the participants prioritized mental well-being and personal growth when the workplace became unsupportive. As a result, job hopping among Gen Z should not be interpreted as weakness or impatience but as a conscious and adaptive response to maintain psychological balance and professional satisfaction.

Based on the description above, the results should be interpreted in the context and scope of this study. The investigation was conducted with a relatively small number of participants, all of whom were members of Gen Z and resided on Java Island. This geographic limitation influenced the perspectives obtained, as workplace dynamics and job market conditions varied significantly across regions in Indonesia. Since this study depended on qualitative interviews, the data obtained reflected personal and context-specific experiences rather than generalizable patterns. Future studies with a broader and more diverse participant base will provide a more comprehensive understanding of job hopping and organizational commitment among Gen Z across different social and cultural contexts.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study explored the perspectives of Gen Z on job hopping, organizational commitment, and expectations toward companies. The results showed that job

hopping among Gen Z was not an act of disloyalty, but rather a deliberate strategy to pursue supportive environments, career growth, and personal well-being. As participants defined organizational commitment in terms of responsibility, professionalism, and integrity, the individuals showed a stronger orientation toward occupational commitment. The group remained loyal to the selected line of work rather than a single institution. This shift distinguished the participants from previous generations who often equated commitment with tenure and upward mobility in one company. Gen Z employees prioritized the importance of supportive leadership, evident career development pathways, and healthy work environments as conditions that promoted retention. This understanding showed the need for organizations to adapt the practices and reframe how commitment was viewed in contemporary workplaces. Future studies are required to expand the investigation by including larger and more diverse samples across regions and industries, allowing deeper comparisons as well as broader generalization of the results.

Suggestion

Future studies are encouraged to include a broader range of participants across different regions in Indonesia to provide a more comprehensive understanding of job hopping among Gen Z. Mixed methods can also be applied

to strengthen the analysis, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Moreover, future studies are required to explore the relationship between job hopping and occupational commitment, as this study found that Gen Z tended to be more loyal to the field of work rather than a specific organization.

Companies should recognize that Gen Z defines commitment not simply by tenure, but through opportunities for growth, a healthy work environment, appreciation, and supportive relationships with supervisors. Organizations should develop adaptive retention strategies, such as clear career pathways, mentoring, and spaces for exploration that are consistent with the interests of employees. Gen Z should view the results as a reminder that while job hopping can offer valuable experience, maintaining professionalism, consistency, and work quality in any organization is crucial. Acting appropriately helps build trust, credibility, and a strong professional reputation in the long term.

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