

Fiqh Learning Innovation in Vocational Schools through Transformative Ice Breaking Strategy Implementation

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ABSTRACT

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ice breaking strategy; Fiqh learning; participatory learning environment; vocational school education; classroom innovation

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Innovative pedagogical strategies are increasingly required to address the declining engagement of students in religious education, particularly in subjects such as Fiqh that are often perceived as theoretical and monotonous in classroom practice. This study examines how a transformative ice breaking strategy can create a more joyful and participatory learning environment in vocational high school Fiqh classes. The research aimed to explore the effectiveness of integrating structured interactive ice breaking activities into the learning process to enhance students' engagement and classroom participation. Employing an empirical field research design through Classroom Action Research, the study was conducted in a Grade XI Accounting class at a vocational school involving 36 students. Data were collected through participatory classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of students' learning outcomes, and analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. The findings reveal that the implementation of transformative ice breaking activities significantly improved students' enthusiasm, participation, and attentiveness during Fiqh lessons. The strategy also contributed to a more dynamic and collaborative classroom atmosphere that supported deeper conceptual understanding. These results highlight the pedagogical value of integrating interactive learning strategies in Islamic education and suggest that creative classroom management can play a crucial role in revitalizing religious instruction in vocational schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Tauhid, the doctrine of divine unity, occupies a foundational position within the architecture of Islamic education, functioning not merely as a theological concept but as the ontological axis upon which the entire Islamic

worldview revolves. Within classical and contemporary pedagogical discourses, Tauhid is widely recognized as the epistemological core that shapes moral consciousness, ethical reasoning, and spiritual orientation among Muslim learners (Fauzy & Junaedi, 2025; Nopita et al., 2026). The urgency of reinforcing Tauhid education has become increasingly evident in the modern era, where rapid globalization, technological acceleration, and cultural secularization exert profound influences on young learners' value systems. Numerous scholars have observed that the growing dominance of materialistic worldviews and fragmented moral frameworks can gradually erode students' spiritual awareness if not counterbalanced by robust religious education (Majid & Tamam, 2024; Ndasauka, 2024). In such circumstances, Tauhid instruction is not merely an academic subject within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) but a civilizational imperative that sustains moral integrity and spiritual resilience. Consequently, optimizing pedagogical strategies that effectively internalize Tauhid among students represents a non-negotiable priority within contemporary Islamic educational reform.

Despite this profound importance, educators across diverse Islamic schooling contexts face significant pedagogical challenges when attempting to convey abstract theological concepts to the contemporary generation of learners. Students belonging to Generation Z and Generation Alpha inhabit a digital ecosystem characterized by rapid information exchange, multimedia stimuli, and interactive learning environments, which fundamentally reshape their cognitive engagement patterns (Drody et al., 2025; Yaros, 2026). Traditional teacher-centered pedagogies predominantly reliant on lectures, memorization, and textual exposition often struggle to sustain students' attention or cultivate meaningful conceptual understanding. As a result, theological instruction risks becoming detached from students' lived realities, transforming profound spiritual principles into static doctrinal statements rather than dynamic moral frameworks. This pedagogical disconnect reveals a deeper crisis in Islamic education: the inability of conventional instructional models to translate theological abstractions into experiential understanding. Consequently, educators must explore pedagogical innovations capable of bridging the widening gap between doctrinal knowledge and transformative spiritual awareness among contemporary learners.

This pedagogical dilemma becomes particularly visible in junior high school classrooms, where Islamic Religious Education lessons frequently encounter passive student engagement and limited conceptual comprehension. Observational evidence from various educational contexts suggests that many students approach Tauhid lessons primarily as an exercise in rote memorization rather than a meaningful exploration of faith and belief (Rahmawati et al., 2023;

Ramadhan, 2025). Students may successfully recite the pillars of faith or define theological terminology, yet they often struggle to articulate how these principles influence ethical behavior, personal identity, and spiritual reflection in daily life. Classroom dynamics further reveal symptoms of disengagement ranging from inattentiveness and minimal participation to a general perception that religious lessons are monotonous and detached from real-world relevance. Such phenomena indicate that the issue lies not solely in students' motivation but also in the pedagogical frameworks through which theological knowledge is delivered. Without pedagogical transformation, Tauhid education risks remaining confined to cognitive recognition rather than evolving into a transformative intellectual and spiritual experience.

In response to this challenge, educational scholars have increasingly explored cooperative learning models as potential catalysts for active and participatory learning environments. Among these models, the Team Games Tournament (TGT) approach originally developed within the cooperative learning tradition has demonstrated significant effectiveness in fostering student engagement, collaborative problem solving, and conceptual understanding across various disciplines (Pohan & Khairuddin, 2025). Research in subjects such as mathematics, science, and language learning consistently indicates that TGT can enhance motivation, promote peer interaction, and create a dynamic learning atmosphere that encourages active knowledge construction (Wijaya et al., 2025). Within the broader discourse of Islamic education, several scholars have also experimented with gamified instructional strategies to stimulate interest in religious subjects. However, many of these efforts remain limited in scope, often emphasizing entertainment value or factual recall rather than cultivating deeper theological comprehension. Consequently, while the potential of game-based learning within Islamic pedagogy is widely acknowledged, its application to complex theological themes such as Tauhid remains relatively underdeveloped.

A closer examination of existing literature reveals a significant research gap within this emerging field. Although numerous studies confirm the effectiveness of TGT in improving academic performance and classroom participation, most investigations concentrate on cognitive mastery of factual or procedural knowledge rather than conceptual engagement with abstract spiritual doctrines (Fenezia & Armiami, 2025). Even within studies addressing religious education, the integration of cooperative game structures frequently emphasizes memorization of religious facts rather than facilitating reflective understanding of theological meanings. This limitation suggests that conventional implementations of TGT may not fully address the unique epistemological characteristics of Tauhid education, which requires not only cognitive comprehension but also emotional resonance and spiritual reflection. In light of

these shortcomings, there remains a pressing need to design innovative modifications of the TGT model that specifically align with the pedagogical demands of theological learning. Such innovations must transform competitive game mechanics into vehicles for reflective dialogue, collaborative reasoning, and experiential understanding of monotheistic principles.

In light of these exigencies, the present study advances the argument that an innovatively adapted Team Games Tournament (TGT) model can serve as a transformative pedagogical framework for deepening students' understanding of Tauhid within Islamic Religious Education. By integrating cooperative gameplay with reflective theological inquiry, this approach seeks to create a learning environment in which abstract doctrines are explored through dialogue, interaction, and experiential engagement. The study further posits that such pedagogical innovation can catalyze a paradigm shift in how students internalize monotheistic values, transforming passive doctrinal learning into active spiritual comprehension. Importantly, the present article is synthesized and academically refined from a comprehensive Classroom Action Research (Penelitian Tindakan Kelas / PTK) report conducted by a student researcher in a junior high school setting. Building upon the empirical insights generated through iterative classroom interventions, this article aims to critically analyze the pedagogical implications of innovative TGT implementation. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the evolving discourse of Islamic pedagogy by proposing an instructional model capable of revitalizing Tauhid education for contemporary learners.

METHOD

This study employed an empirical field research approach using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, widely known in Indonesian educational scholarship as Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK). The selection of this methodological framework was grounded in its suitability for addressing practical pedagogical challenges while simultaneously generating reflective insights into classroom transformation. Classroom Action Research enables educators and researchers to intervene directly in the learning process through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, thereby fostering both instructional improvement and theoretical understanding of pedagogical change. As articulated by (Kemmis et al., 2013), CAR operates through a cyclical process that allows teachers to diagnose classroom problems, implement strategic innovations, and evaluate their impact in a systematic and reflective manner. In the context of Islamic education, such an approach is particularly relevant because the internalization of theological concepts such as Tauhid requires not only cognitive engagement but also experiential and reflective

learning environments. The research was conducted at a junior high school Islamic education classroom, purposively selected due to the observable pedagogical challenges in students' engagement with Tauhid instruction and the accessibility of empirical data for systematic observation. The purposive selection of the research setting was academically justified by the presence of persistent classroom issues, including passive participation and limited conceptual comprehension of theological principles, which made the site an appropriate locus for pedagogical intervention and reflective practice.

To obtain comprehensive empirical data, the study employed multiple qualitative data collection techniques, including participatory classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of learning outcomes. Participatory observation allowed the researcher to closely monitor classroom dynamics, student interactions, and the implementation of the instructional strategy throughout the intervention cycles, capturing nuanced behavioral and pedagogical changes during the learning process. Complementing this, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected students and the classroom teacher to explore perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding the innovative instructional approach used in Tauhid learning. Documentation, including students' learning assessments, classroom records, and instructional materials, served as an additional source of empirical evidence to track changes in students' conceptual understanding and engagement. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by (Miles et al., 2014), which involves three interconnected stages: data condensation, where raw field data were systematically coded and reduced through thematic categorization; data display, where patterns of student participation and learning outcomes were organized into analytical matrices and descriptive representations; and conclusion drawing and verification, where emerging interpretations were critically examined through continuous comparison across data sources. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study implemented rigorous triangulation procedures, both in terms of data sources and data collection techniques. By cross-verifying observational records, interview narratives, and documented learning outcomes, the research minimized subjective bias and strengthened the reliability of its analytical conclusions, thereby ensuring that the reported pedagogical transformations were grounded in robust and verifiable empirical evidence.

RESULT

Implementation of Transformative Ice Breaking in Fiqh Learning

The implementation of the Transformative Ice Breaking strategy in Fiqh learning at the vocational school level was operationally designed as a structured

pedagogical intervention integrated into the learning sequence rather than as an isolated entertainment activity. In this study, the strategy was applied during three Classroom Action Research cycles within a Grade XI Accounting class in a vocational school setting. The instructional design placed ice breaking activities at three critical moments of the lesson: at the opening phase to activate attention, during the middle stage when students' focus began to decline, and occasionally at the closing stage to reinforce conceptual understanding. The types of ice breaking activities implemented included short interactive quizzes on Fiqh terminology, collaborative "Fiqh Quiz" group competitions, and movement-based simulations illustrating basic worship practices such as ablution and prayer procedures. These activities were intentionally connected to the Fiqh material being studied, particularly topics related to thaharah and shalat. Through this integration, the ice breaking activities functioned not merely as energizers but as cognitive bridges that linked emotional engagement with conceptual learning processes. The design allowed students to transition from passive listening to active participation, thereby creating a more dynamic classroom environment where theological concepts could be discussed, practiced, and internalized collectively.

Interview data revealed that the implementation of the ice breaking strategy significantly influenced the teacher's perception of classroom dynamics during Fiqh lessons. One teacher informant explained that the learning atmosphere changed substantially once the interactive activities were introduced. The teacher stated: "When the ice breaking activities were introduced, the students immediately became more enthusiastic. They were no longer silent listeners but started asking questions and responding to the lesson." This statement indicates that the strategy encouraged greater student participation during the instructional process. According to the teacher's account, the use of short interactive games made it easier to guide students toward understanding the learning material because the classroom atmosphere became more responsive and communicative. The data further shows that the teacher perceived the strategy not only as a tool for classroom management but also as a means to facilitate deeper student interaction with the subject matter. This perception suggests that the intervention influenced the teacher's instructional approach by shifting the focus toward more participatory learning practices.

Interviews with students also demonstrated a noticeable change in their learning experience during the Fiqh lessons. One student participant stated: "Usually the lesson felt boring because we only listened to explanations, but when the quiz games were used, it became more exciting and easier to understand the material." This statement reflects a shift in students' perception

of the learning process from passive reception to active engagement. The student's response indicates that the incorporation of game-based activities helped reduce monotony and increased interest in the subject. The interview data also revealed that students felt more confident participating in classroom discussions during the later cycles of the intervention. Several students reported that they were more willing to answer questions and collaborate with classmates during group activities. These responses demonstrate that the strategy influenced both cognitive and emotional aspects of the learning process by creating a more supportive learning atmosphere.

Classroom observations conducted during the intervention cycles also revealed measurable changes in student behavior and classroom interaction patterns. At the initial stage of the study, students tended to display limited engagement during Fiqh lessons, with many remaining silent and showing minimal participation in classroom discussions. However, observations during the intervention cycles indicated that students began to respond more actively to teacher prompts, particularly during the interactive quiz sessions and group activities. Students demonstrated increased participation in answering questions, discussing Fiqh concepts within groups, and responding to peer explanations. In addition, the overall classroom atmosphere shifted from a relatively passive environment to a more energetic and collaborative learning space. Observations also recorded improvements in students' attentiveness during instructional explanations following the ice breaking activities. Students appeared more focused and responsive to the teacher's explanations after participating in the interactive exercises.

Taken together, the interview and observation data demonstrate that the Transformative Ice Breaking strategy was associated with observable changes in student engagement and classroom dynamics during Fiqh learning sessions. Both teachers and students reported increased enthusiasm, improved participation in discussions, and greater willingness to interact during the learning process. The data also indicates that the strategy contributed to a more supportive learning atmosphere where students felt comfortable expressing ideas and participating in group activities. These findings highlight the role of structured interactive activities in facilitating more active classroom participation within the context of vocational school religious education.

The empirical findings derived from classroom observations and learning evaluations indicate a consistent improvement in student engagement and academic achievement across the intervention cycles. To provide a clearer representation of these changes, Table 1 presents a comparison of student engagement indicators before and after the implementation of the transformative ice breaking strategy.

Table 1. Comparison of Student Engagement Indicators Before and After Implementation

Indicator of Engagement	Initial Condition	Cycle I	Cycle II	Cycle III
Active participation in discussion	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Students asking questions	Rare	Occasional	Frequent	Very Frequent
Classroom attention level	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Average learning score	65	72	82	88
Observed engagement level	Passive	60% active	85% active	95% active

As shown in Table 1, the level of student engagement increased substantially from the initial condition to the final cycle, accompanied by a gradual improvement in the average learning score.

Further examination of the observational data reveals several consistent patterns emerging across the intervention cycles. First, student engagement appeared to increase immediately following the implementation of ice breaking activities at the beginning of the lesson. Second, the duration of student concentration during teacher explanations tended to be longer after the mid-session interactive activities were conducted. Third, group-based ice breaking activities were associated with increased peer interaction and collaborative discussion among students. These patterns suggest that the strategic timing of ice breaking activities may influence the level and duration of student engagement during classroom instruction.

In addition to observational data, students' perceptions regarding the learning experience were also documented through interviews. Their responses revealed several recurring themes related to cognitive, emotional, and social learning experiences. These themes are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Student Feedback Categorization

Category	Student Responses	Observed Impact
Cognitive Impact	Students reported that the material became easier to understand through quiz games and simulations.	Improved comprehension of Fiqh concepts
Emotional Impact	Students expressed enjoyment and enthusiasm during lessons.	Reduced boredom and increased motivation
Social Impact	Students interacted more frequently during group discussions and collaborative activities.	Stronger peer collaboration

The categorization demonstrates that the strategy influenced not only students' cognitive comprehension but also their emotional engagement and collaborative interaction during the learning process.

The patterns observed throughout the intervention cycles indicate a recurring instructional sequence in which moments of declining attention were followed by interactive stimulation and renewed conceptual engagement. Based on these empirical observations, Figure 1 illustrates the pedagogical flow of the Transformative Ice Breaking strategy in Fiqh learning.

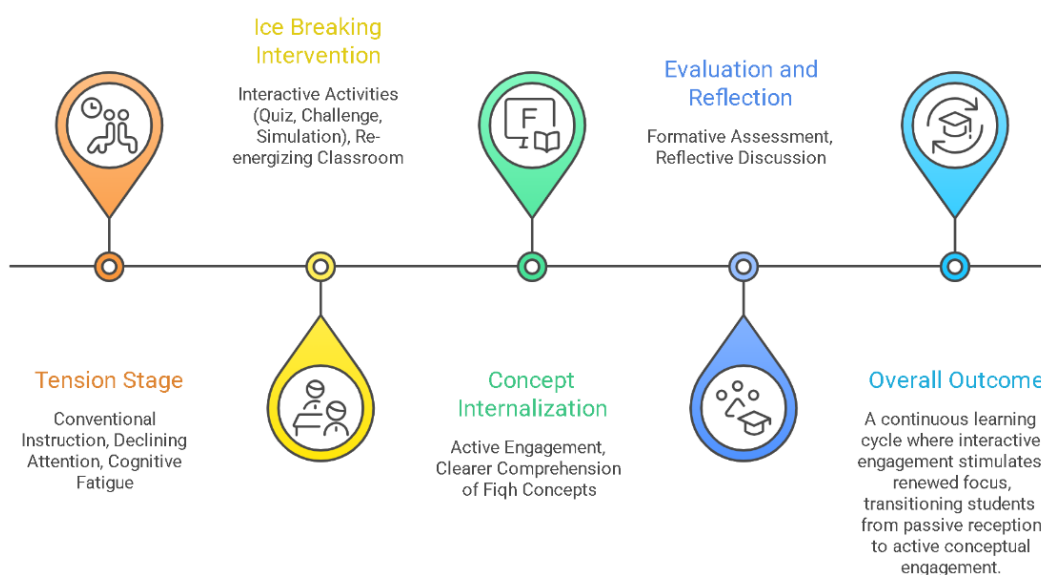


Figure 1. The Transformative Ice Breaking Flow in Fiqh Pedagogy

The figure illustrates the cyclical process in which classroom tension is alleviated through ice breaking activities, enabling renewed conceptual engagement and subsequent evaluation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a fundamental pedagogical shift in the dynamics of Fiqh learning within the vocational school classroom. Rather than functioning merely as a brief pause or recreational interlude, the implementation of a transformative ice breaking strategy acted as a pedagogical bridge that recalibrated students' emotional readiness and cognitive engagement during the learning process. The classroom observations and interview responses collectively suggest that moments of structured interaction helped dissolve the psychological barriers that typically limit participation in religious instruction. From the perspective of educational psychology, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the concept of the affective filter, which posits that students learn more effectively when emotional tension is reduced and positive engagement is fostered (Yana & Lib, 2024). Similarly, contemporary frameworks of joyful learning emphasize that emotional comfort and curiosity play a critical

role in sustaining student attention and facilitating deeper conceptual understanding (Cronqvist, 2024; Eriani et al., 2025). Within this context, the ice breaking strategy served as a deliberate instructional intervention that transformed the emotional climate of the classroom, allowing theological discussions in Fiqh lessons to unfold within a more open, participatory, and responsive learning environment.

These findings resonate with a growing body of literature on gamification and active learning strategies in education. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that interactive activities, collaborative tasks, and game-based elements can significantly enhance student engagement and participation in classroom learning (Raharjo et al., 2024; Tejada-Simon, 2024). However, most of these investigations have been conducted in fields such as mathematics, science, or language education, where the primary objective is cognitive mastery of procedural knowledge. The present study contributes a distinctive perspective by demonstrating how such approaches can also be effectively adapted within the domain of Islamic Religious Education, particularly in the teaching of Fiqh. Unlike purely academic subjects, Fiqh involves not only conceptual comprehension but also moral reflection and behavioral application. Previous research in Islamic pedagogy has noted that religious instruction often remains dominated by lecture-based approaches that limit student participation and experiential learning (Kistoro et al., 2023; Raharjo et al., 2024). In contrast, the findings of this study indicate that integrating structured interactive activities into Fiqh lessons can help bridge the gap between doctrinal explanation and participatory engagement. This suggests that the pedagogical potential of gamified strategies extends beyond secular disciplines and can meaningfully enrich the teaching of religious knowledge.

From a theoretical standpoint, the observed transformation in student engagement can also be interpreted through the lens of Flow Theory, which emphasizes the importance of balanced challenge, focused attention, and intrinsic enjoyment in sustaining deep learning experiences (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). When students encounter instructional activities that are both stimulating and achievable, they are more likely to enter a state of immersive engagement where concentration and motivation naturally intensify. The ice breaking activities implemented in this study appear to have created precisely such conditions. By introducing short, collaborative challenges linked to the learning material, the instructional process shifted from passive reception toward active participation. This dynamic also aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which argues that intrinsic motivation emerges when learners experience autonomy, competence, and social relatedness within the learning environment (Ryan & Deci, 2024). The interactive elements of the strategy enabled students to

express ideas, collaborate with peers, and respond to questions in a supportive atmosphere, thereby strengthening these motivational components. Within the context of Fiqh education, such motivational engagement is particularly significant because the subject requires students not only to understand legal concepts but also to internalize ethical and spiritual principles that guide everyday life.

The implications of these findings are particularly relevant for vocational high school (SMK) education, where students often prioritize practical or technical subjects over theoretical disciplines. In many vocational contexts, Islamic Religious Education is frequently perceived as peripheral or less engaging compared to vocational training. The implementation of transformative ice breaking strategies demonstrates that pedagogical innovation can significantly alter this perception. By embedding interactive elements within the learning process, teachers can create instructional environments that resonate with the learning preferences of vocational students, who often respond positively to collaborative and experiential activities. This suggests that teacher professional development programs should place greater emphasis on creative instructional design and active learning strategies within Islamic education curricula. Moreover, curriculum planners may consider integrating structured engagement techniques into official lesson plans for Fiqh and other religious subjects. Such initiatives could help ensure that religious education in vocational schools evolves beyond traditional lecture methods toward a more dynamic and student-centered pedagogical framework (Marta & Lawal, 2026; Nuss, 2022).

In light of these considerations, the present study offers a meaningful contribution to the evolving discourse on Classroom Action Research in Islamic education. While previous PTK-based studies have often focused primarily on incremental improvements in classroom practice, this research highlights the broader pedagogical significance of transforming the emotional and interactive dimensions of learning. The innovation introduced through the transformative ice breaking strategy demonstrates that even small instructional adjustments can fundamentally reshape the learning atmosphere and student participation in religious education contexts. By situating interactive engagement at the center of Fiqh instruction, the study challenges the long-standing stereotype that Fiqh is inherently rigid, abstract, or monotonous. Instead, the findings suggest that Fiqh learning can become a dynamic and participatory intellectual experience when supported by thoughtful pedagogical design. In this sense, the research not only extends the methodological tradition of Classroom Action Research but also contributes to a broader reimagining of Islamic pedagogy as a living, interactive discipline capable of responding creatively to the needs of contemporary learners.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of a transformative ice breaking strategy within Fiqh instruction can significantly reshape the learning atmosphere in vocational school classrooms. Rather than functioning as a mere recreational pause, the strategy operates as a pedagogical mechanism that recalibrates students' emotional readiness and cognitive engagement during the learning process. The classroom action research cycles revealed that interactive and contextually relevant ice breaking activities fostered a more joyful and participatory learning environment, encouraging students to become active contributors rather than passive listeners. The most important lesson emerging from this research is that meaningful learning in religious education is closely linked to the emotional climate of the classroom. When students experience enthusiasm, curiosity, and collaborative interaction, complex Fiqh concepts become more accessible and meaningful, ultimately strengthening both conceptual understanding and classroom engagement.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the discourse on creative classroom management and innovative Islamic pedagogy, particularly within vocational education contexts where traditional lecture-based methods often fail to sustain student attention. By demonstrating how interactive strategies can revitalize Fiqh instruction, this research expands the practical relevance of Classroom Action Research as a tool for pedagogical transformation. Nevertheless, the scope of this study remains limited to a single classroom setting and a relatively small group of participants, which may constrain the generalizability of its findings. Future research should therefore explore broader implementations across multiple schools, subjects, and educational levels, employing mixed-method or experimental approaches to further validate the pedagogical impact of transformative engagement strategies. Expanding such inquiry is essential to ensure that Islamic education continues to evolve in response to the learning needs of contemporary students.

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